

1 Timothy 2:1-5

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Date: 06 June 2017

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[0 : 00] And there are times on there when you're reading through the Bible, you read the Bible, and you count parts of the Bible that summarise the whole, maybe one or two verses, and it summarises the whole message of the Bible.

I wonder what you think the Bible is all about. If somebody said, what is the message of the Bible? I wonder whether you could think of a verse that gives you a clear summary. And as I was reading 1 Timothy these last couple of weeks, I think verse 1 and verse 4 and verse 5 are great summaries of the whole of the Bible.

First of all then, Paul says, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people. You pray for everybody with every sort of prayer. Can you see that? For kings, for those who are in authority, for queens, for prime ministers, for presidents.

And so you pray for peace in the land. And you pray for those who are in authority, for healing counsel even. And you pray that so that, can you see, we may be able to get on with one another. And that we may live peaceable lives, quiet lives, godly lives. So what is a peaceable life, a life that's at peace, and holiness, what have they got to do with each other?

[1 : 30] Well, the reason why I think that Paul links them here is not just because he wants an easy life. I think he writes this here because when there is civil strife, when people are scared all the time, when people are terrified, on which side you ought to be on, is your family going to be safe?

The last thing you'll be thinking about is telling other people about Jesus and living the Christian life. And so Paul says, I want you to be crystal clear about what matters in life.

I want your minds to be clear and for you to understand what is really important. And I think that's what's behind verses 1. And then there follows a lovely summary of what the Christian life is about. What does it mean to live a life of quietness and godliness? Look at verse 3. It is good and pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour. Who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Because there is one God and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony of the proper time.

[2 : 45] And because it's such a good and such a clear and succinct statement, I want to ask two questions of the passage this lunchtime. I want to ask, number one, what does it tell us about God?

And when we've discovered what God is like, I want us then to ask a second question. What is it that God has done? What has God done in the light of his character? What is God like? And what has he done?

Basically, what is God like? Now it's not definitive, is it? It doesn't tell us everything, but it is a clear summary of two things about God, I think. Number one, God is for real.

And God cares about sinners. He cares about us. And he is for real. Now, let me put this another way.

That means he takes you seriously. And he loves you seriously. This is good and pleases God our saviour. He wants all people to be saved.

[3 : 44] I don't think it's talking about every single human being. You can talk to me about that afterwards. I think when it talks about there is one God, one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

There's not lots of ways. And he is the one saviour for all people, for all kinds of people. But you can fight with me about that afterwards. But he loves seriously.

He wants you, this lunchtime, to come to a knowledge of the truth. He takes us seriously. He wants us to understand the truth. Because he wishes to rescue us. Can you see that? This is good, verse 3.

And pleasing in the sight of God our saviour. Of God our saviour. Now I think this tells us about something in reverse. If we flip this round.

It tells us something about ourselves. It tells us about God. But it tells us something about ourselves. It tells us firstly that we are in danger. Why does it tell us we're in danger?

[4 : 42] Because we need to be rescued. We need a saviour. And it tells us that actually we're in the dark. That we need to be enlightened. We need to come to the knowledge of the truth.

That assumes, doesn't it, that at the moment we are not in the knowledge of the truth. We're in the dark. So what is God like? What is God like? God wishes us to come to a knowledge of the truth. That is, without him revealing it, we have no knowledge of what he is like. And he wishes to rescue us. To be saved. As I need to backtrack for a moment.

And say to you. What is the nature of the danger that you and I are in? What is the nature of the darkness from which I need to be enlightened and come to a knowledge of the truth? And right at the very core of these things about God, they tell me, the Bible tells me that I have pushed God away from his central place.

We talk about saying that the heart of our sinfulness is the desire to replace God. And we replace God with ourselves. So do you remember in the Garden of Eden, right at the start of the Bible, in Genesis chapter 3, that chapter, which is only one page, but it changes the whole of history.

[5 : 57] He says, is it a fact the devil comes in the form of a serpent in the Garden of Eden? And he says, is it a fact that you are not allowed to eat of any tree, any fruit in the garden?

And he says, well, that's not right. You didn't get that correct. We are not allowed to eat any of the fruit of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we may not touch it lest we die. And do you remember how the devil responds?

The serpent responds. It's very famous, isn't it? He says, you will not die. That's the big lie. Do you see what he's saying? He's saying, you will not die. There is no hell. So when people tell you there is no hell, do you know where they learned that from?

They learned that from the devil. Do take that on board. The devil is the one who first invented that idea that there is no hell. And he's kept it going, hasn't he, in religious circles for a long, long time. You will not die. You will be God. You will be as God. Now that is a very appealing thought, isn't it? You will be as God.

[7 : 04] You will rule. You will reign. You will call the shots. The only trouble with that is I can't do the God things, can I? Try creating the universe on a wet and windy Tuesday afternoon on Ealing Broadway.

Go out into Ealing Broadway on Xbridge Road and call the worlds into being just by speaking. Try it now, you don't even agree. Sing the universe into being the way it's described in Job for us.

Solve the problems of the world like Jesus did. Just wander around. Heal the sick. Put the broken pieces back together again. Raise the dead. Try and do any of the God things.

You will be God. It's a terrible, terrible lie, isn't it? For you see, what happens when I take up that posture, when I pretend to be God?

It is deadly and it is destructive in my relationships. As our relationships break down. If you are pretending to be God, and I am pretending to be God, when we meet together, who is going to be God?

[8 : 14] We had some people in our congregation for a little while who struggled with mental health problems. And they would go into the mental health unit at Ealing Hospital.

And I would go visit them after a Sunday's preaching. And it was great, actually. It was a great antidote to depression on a Sunday night. I would go in there. You would kind of go through the security doors. And I would sit there.

And I remember being in there once. And there was a man who said, I'm Jesus. Suffering from mental delusions. The only problem was, there was another man in that room who shouted, I am Jesus. You can't be Jesus because I am Jesus.

And off it kicked off. These two Jesus characters fighting the other. That is the problem, isn't it? If you are pretending to be God, and I am pretending to be God, when we meet together, who is going to be God?

And it is so destructive, isn't it, in our relationships together. Have you ever wondered why it is in your office people don't get along? Have you ever wondered why it is there are people in work that really rub you up the wrong way and you actually don't like?

[9 : 14] We know, don't we? We'd be much happier if we got along with people. If only I could live peaceably with everyone.

Well, it would be fine. But we can't. We can't solve problems. Why do we have to work so hard at keeping a lid on our lips?

Why do relationships continue to go wrong if there isn't something fundamentally wrong with them?

Yes, of course. But also with you. We know, don't we, in our heart of hearts, that we are not God.

You know that. You can't say that openly, would you? But we persist in being deceived, in thinking, if only I can get my own way, I'd be happy. If only everybody was like me in the office, would it be a great place to work.

So I behave as if I am God, all the while knowing I'm not. It's one of the things about sin, isn't it?

[10 : 20] Sin is fundamentally deceitful. It's deceitful. And it deceives us into thinking, this is the big lie, it doesn't really matter.

It doesn't matter that much. If I reject God, it just doesn't matter. But sin in the end puts us on a collision course with God, and that's why it's so serious.

That we need to be rescued from it, and we need to be enlightened to it. To even know that we're in difficulty. So let me just say up front, if you do not think this lunchtime that you need to be rescued from the consequences of your sin, it's a measure that you're still in the dark.

Don't think that you're enlightened. You need to be forgiven. And the reason people think that they do not need to be forgiven is because they're blind.

And they cannot see. It's basically in the New Testament, it says the goal of this world, the devil, has blinded the eyes of unbelievers. So they don't see their need. And a God who takes us seriously.

[11 : 35] And so I want you to understand, and I want to understand exactly the position we're in.

What do you think of the doctor? The doctor, you went to him, you had a problem, you were sent away for extensive tests, you're run to come into the surgery, and the doctor says, you have cancer.

You have a very serious form of cancer, but there's a very good chance, if they operate really quickly, you could be healed. But then he says, my advice to you is, here is some paracetamol, take that twice a day and you'll be alright.

What would you think of him? You'd say, that is the height of a responsibility. And so I want to say to any preacher, or minister, or clergyman who tells you that all is well, if you're not forgiven, if you're not forgiven by putting your trust in Jesus, and they say, don't worry about that, all is well, what they're doing is they are giving you paracetamol when they ought to have you on the operating table under the knife.

What is God like? He is a God who takes us seriously and he tells you the truth. What is God like? God is a God who loves sinners seriously.

And he wants to deal with the condition which keeps us from friendship with him and forgiveness, and ultimately from being part of the new creation. And this pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

[13 : 09] There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself up as a ransom for us all. So ask yourself this question, well what did God do?

What did God do? Who is God? He's a God who takes you seriously. He is for real. He's a God who loves sinners. So what did God do? Well it tells us, doesn't it, can you see the word?

Verse 5, he sent a mediator. When do you need a mediator? When do you need a mediator? You don't need a mediator when things are going really well, do you?

You don't need to call the mediator in at work, when you're happy and you're getting a bonus. You don't need a mediator unless there's problems, unless there's trouble, unless there's war.

You only need a mediator when there's a dispute. You don't need a mediator when there's no dispute. If the seriousness of our condition before God was not great, why would God send the mediator?

[14 : 15] What does a mediator do? A mediator brings warring parties together. He brings warring parties together into a happy solution, hopefully.

And the better he is at mediating a situation, the quicker he brings the warring parties together. Now we know, don't we, that that happens in work, doesn't it?

Arbitration, I think it's called, where there's a mediator brought in. And he brings two arguing parties together when there's strikes with Transport for London, doesn't it?

Always mediators are brought in with the tube strikes. We sometimes see it in war, or when there's a conflict situation, doesn't it? A politician steps in.

It seemed to be Jimmy Carter when I was growing up. And he would be brought in, and he would be a catalyst to bring both sides together. The mediator says to the parties, let's get together again.

[15 : 18] To suggest that all is well between us and God, that there's nothing to worry about, is to fly in the face of God sending the mediator. You wouldn't need a mediator, would we?

If all was well. And the fact that God says, there are not many mediators, there's not one mediator for Jews and one mediator for Gentiles, one mediator for blacks, one mediator for whites.

There is one mediator, the man Christ Jesus. It is Jesus himself who brings peace between the warring parties, between us and God. And you ask the question, well how does God do that?

How can you, who are an enemy, and alienated, and hostile in your mind from God, how can you be brought back to peace and friendship and the family of God? Well this part of the Bible tells us explicitly, it says there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.

What is it that will bring peace between God and us? Well, full punishment for what we deserve, the sin that we have committed against God by saying actually I'll be God, thank you very much.

[16 : 28] The full punishment for that is met in the death of Jesus. That which pushed us apart from God, our sin and the consequences of it are now fully taken by the mediator.

No mediator can tell I've had a job than that. He actually meets the full requirements of the law.

Jesus steps in between the warring parties and he is able to bring peace.

He is able to bring peace with God and the way to get peace with one another is to get peace with God. He takes the punishment that our sins deserve. That's what the cry on the cross is about.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? The one who was without sin became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God. Well, that's the end of the talk basically.

Normally I give you a bit of warning. But the question is what are you going to do about it? Well, we are to pray, aren't we, verse 1, that we will live peaceable lives.

[17 : 35] Verse 2. Quiet lives. Godly lives. And dignified in every way. And amazingly, we've got time like today to meet and to sit and to think it through.

If you lived in Iran or Afghanistan or parts of Pakistan, you'd be fearful of coming here. Well, actually, we wouldn't be able to come here, we'd be.

If you lived in Iraq, you might be fearful of being thrown to pieces. If you lived in other parts of the world, you might find that you didn't have the time to be here today. All these benefits God has showered us on us in this land.

Free assembly. We can meet, can't we? We can rent the town hall, a public building. Freedom to teach the Bible. Time to stop in a busy life and think it through about a God who is real.

A God who takes us seriously. And a God who tells us the truth. Isn't that a relief? Tells us the truth about ourselves and the truth about himself. And as we read this, we say, well, that's right.

[18 : 50] This is right. I'm like that. I need to be forgiven. And he is like that. He is a God who is there and is real and is loving. What a God who cares and loves.

And there is time to think it through. And there is a mediator who brings us back together. He who has died for sinners. And so if you're here at this lunchtime and you can say, yes, I know that to be true in my own life.

What a day of rejoicing this is. And so we thank God, don't we, for stable government. Whether you're Tory, Labour, UKIP, Lib Dem, Green, Monster, Reagan, Looney Party, whichever one you are.

We thank God, we thank God for stable government. We have time to stop and to think and to reflect. And we thank God for the wonder of what we've been able to reflect on.

Peace with God because of the mediator. And if you don't know peace with God, what a happy day it is, isn't it? It took time to think it through. Isn't today the day to come back to God and say, thank you, Lord Jesus, for dying for me.

[20 : 04] Isn't today the day to swing your trust and your confidence behind Jesus who brings you back into a relationship with God. There are enormous benefits that have come to us.

Ones that are sure to keep thankfulness welling up within us. Because to live a life which is quiet and peaceful, and godly undignified, well this pleases God our Saviour who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

There is one God and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for us all. And so let us pray.