

# God's Love For All People

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## Introduction – I Tim 2:1-4

This must have been a difficult command for Christians who were facing intense persecution from their governments and fellow man. Those people were splitting their families, torturing them to the point of blasphemy, imprisoning them, killing them in the most cruel ways simply for what they believed: and the apostles commanded them to pray for all men, and pray for their civil rulers. Notice the reason given by God: He desires all people to be saved.

### I. How long has God been interested in the salvation of all people?

- Would you say since the Great Commission?
  - **Matt 28:18-20** – An important passage to focus on, but God's concern that all people would be saved must have started before then, because this was the *reason* for Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, that might have this authority
- Would you say, then, since the birth of Jesus?
  - **Luke 2:10; Matt. 1:21** – It must have been before then – this is the purpose for which Jesus came to this earth!
  - So, God's plan to save all people from their sins must go back to even before the birth of Jesus...
- How long would we have to go back in the Bible to see God's desire to save all people of all nations, races, places, languages, etc.?

We see God's concern for all people of all nations as early as the first book in the Bible:

- **Gen. 12:1-3** Sequence of promises to Abraham that took many years and generations to complete.
- *All families* – not just Hebrew families, rich families, etc.

In fact, even back in the first few chapters of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, God's relationship with Adam and Eve implied His desire to have a relationship with all their descendants.

- Cain had no special blessing over Abel or Seth, for example
- We can infer that at least since God created man and woman, God wanted to have a pure relationship with all people: He wanted to share His blessings with them.
- But Adam and Eve were tempted, and evil destroyed the relationship with man that God so eagerly desired!

The Great Commission was nothing new or original – the promise to Abraham showed God's vision to use his one family to bless all nations, with a *worldwide* vision!

### II. Israel never understood this vision

The Scriptures reveal that the majority of Israel thought God's love and concern was meant only for themselves. They couldn't believe that God loved anyone but them.

- **Exodus 19:5,6** – Israel wrongly concluded from statements like these that God loved them more than anyone else on the earth
- **Deuteronomy 9:4-5** – God drove out the Canaanites because of their wickedness and gave Israel the victory *because of the promises* – NOT because Israel was most loved!

- Israel was stiff-necked, rebellious, and unwilling to change!
- But the Jews wrongly formed the conclusion that they could not fall into the displeasure of God, that they could not be abandoned by Him, that they could not find displeasure in His sight
- **Romans 10:1-3** – Paul learned, in a very difficult way, that God loves all people – and he recognized in the Jews that they were zealous, studious believers in the Scriptures as the word of God, believer in God’s personal involvement in the history of Israel
  - **BUT** they did not understand that God was concerned for ALL people – they were convinced that God’s love for them **excluded every one else!**
  - God’s love doesn’t exclude **anybody!**
  - **John 3:16** – Whoever, or whosoever, means anybody!

Now, herein lies a warning for all Christians everywhere: we are not better than the Israelites of old; we’re subject to the same temptations and pitfalls. We experience God’s personal attention and the privilege of all His blessings, yet we can fail to see the obvious, too: **the Bible is full of evidence of God’s concern and love for every person on earth!**

#### *A. Israel Failed To See The Obvious*

God knew everything about every people on the face of the earth, not just Israel. He tells the spiritual climate of every nation; He knew who loved right and who loved wrong!

##### *1. Consider the example of Jonah*

Jewish prophet commissioned to preach to Assyrian Gentiles – ‘*God has endured all of your unrighteousness and He demands: repent or be destroyed*’ (**Jon 1:1-3**)

- Jonah didn’t want to go, and tried to do everything to escape this responsibility
- II Kings speaks many times of how oppressive Assyria was even before the captivity
- But God forced Jonah to go (with the aid of a specially prepared big fish)
- Jonah was as pessimistic as possible, preaching a hopeless message of doom (**3:1-4**)
- Note that he did not preach a gospel message – there was no good news, no hope...
- Camps out on the East side of the city to watch what God would do (**4:5**)
- Almost unthinkably, Nineveh repented (**3:5-10**)!
- Jonah points his finger at God – ‘*I knew this would happen! You’re being too good, nice, forgiving! You’re treating these Gentiles as though you love them!*’ (**4:1-4**).
- Jonah couldn’t stand it: he’d rather die! He throws a toddler’s tantrum: ‘*If I can’t be your favorite, I’d rather die*’ – showing forth his jealous heart.

##### *2. Jewish Christians had trouble accepting Gentiles as Christians*

The Jews had many advantages (**Rom 3:1**):

- But they thought it was their position, that God loved them and no one else; they felt separated from the world because God *belonged* to them.
- NOT SO! Their advantage was simply that they had the OT Scriptures, they knew the one true and living God, they knew they could have a relationship with the Creator of the Universe, to them was delivered the promises of the Messiah:
- But through the Messiah, they were told that the whole world would be blessed!
- Some of the Gentiles, who didn’t know this beforehand, were more thankful!

### *B. Christians Can Miss The Obvious, Too!*

We must be warned! It is easy for Christians to make the same mistake, to fall into the trap of believing that God loves us more than all other people:

- I Pet 2:9; II Tim 1:8-9 – We are the people of God:
- BUT God doesn't belong to us, and He doesn't love us more than everyone else!

We have advantages:

1. We know Christ, and have a relationship with God through Him (Phil 3:8-11)
2. We know through the Scriptures how we should live to please God (II Tim 3:16-17)
3. We can spread the good news to others (Matt 28:19; II Cor 5:11; Matt 5:16; II Cor 3:2)

However, we absolutely do not have the advantage of experiencing God's love more than anyone else!

- Would we stand before the Lord in judgment, proudly boasting that we're the people of God?
- Certainly not! We're sinners, weak, tempted, stumbling – yet we stand different simply because of God's grace and mercy, having been saved by the blood of Jesus
- We must not make the mistake of Israel of thinking that we're high and holy since we're God's people
- We are NOTHING without the grace of God (**Rom. 3:21-24**)
- Saved by God's grace in Christ through faith – that's why we're thankful to be Christians!

I am thankful that I am a Christian; I am thankful that God allowed us the opportunity to hear His gospel; and I am thankful that God gave us time to come to repentance and salvation; and I am thankful to God for His patience with us when we have worn the name of Christ but acted like the world. Yes, I am thankful that we are Christians. But thank God that He loved us even when we were not!

### **Conclusion – Eph 5:1**

Let us do all we can do to fulfill God's will and purpose, and to show His love and light in this world of lost souls stumbling around like men in the darkness, like sheep with no shepherd. By God's mercy and grace we can be the people He wants us to be. BUT all is said and done, and when we have done all that is our duty to do, let us remember that we are no more than unprofitable servants who are totally dependent upon God...and we share this dependence with all other people.