

draw on the treasury of the good works of the saints, making them provide part of our ransom. Likewise, Rome teaches that Mary (not the holy woman in the Bible, but a goddess of its imagination) is a mediatrix, since people are to pray to and through her. More and more, Mary is being thought, and spoken, of as a redemptrix who pays a ransom for sinners.

Our “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ... gave himself a ransom *for all*” (5-6). You know what the Arminians do with the words “for all.” They claim that this means absolutely everybody head for head. They quote “for all” with glee, as if this established their heresy. You ask them for proof that “all” here means each and every individual human being who has ever lived or will live. They give no proof but they appear unfazed. You cite passages in the Bible—dozens of them!—where the word “all” does not mean everyone head for head and again you ask them for proof that the word here means what they claim it means. Again, no proof is given.

You ask them if Jesus really died for those who commit the unpardonable sin, for whom we are commanded not even to pray (Matt. 12:32; I John 5:16). You enquire why Christ would shed His precious blood to redeem those already and irremediably in hell (Luke 16:26). Why would the Lord atone for the sins of the Antichrist, the son of perdition, whose eternal destruction is already predestined and prophesied (II Thess. 2:3, 8; Rev. 19:20; 20:10)?

The Arminians “err ... not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matt. 22:29). First, they do not know the power of God in Christ’s ransom. The Lord Jesus paid the ransom but, according to Arminianism, it did not ransom most of those for whom it was made. Jehovah received the ransom but He did not release most of those for whom it was paid! Remember that this was a real ransom made and accepted 2,000 years ago. Thus Arminianism denigrates the power (and wisdom) of God the Son, who paid the ransom, and the power (and faithfulness) of God the Father, who failed to release many for whom He received the ransom.

Moreover, what sort of a mediator does Arminianism make of Jesus Christ? A terrible failure! He is a largely impotent mediator for He does not succeed in reconciling to God most of those people for whom He mediates, for most remain at enmity with Jehovah in this world and the next.

Second, the Arminian heresy of a universal ransom also shows that they do not know the Scriptures, for there are many texts which prove the particularity of Christ’s ransom (e.g., Isa. 53:10-12; John 10:11, 15; 15:13-14; Eph. 5:25). Moreover, I Timothy 2:6 must be understood in its context. “All men” in verse 1 is explained as all types or sorts of men, especially, in this instance, “kings” and “all that are in authority” (2). And so we must pray for them, even if they are wicked and persecute us (1-2). God wills to save all sorts of men (4), even civil rulers, and there is no other Saviour or salvation for rulers and magistrates, since there is “one mediator” (5) who “gave himself a ransom for all” types of people (6). Thanks be to the Triune God, for Christ, our only mediator and our only ransom, is our only hope!

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Christ Our Ransom

You know what a ransom is. A ransom is a price paid to effect the deliverance of captives. You have heard of many instances of kidnappers or terrorists seizing people and imprisoning them. Then they demand a ransom: “If you pay us (a specified amount of money), we will release your loved ones.”

I Timothy 2:6 states that the Lord Jesus “gave himself a ransom.” Christ’s cross is not merely some figurative or metaphorical ransom; it is a real ransom. There are real captives in a real captivity or bondage: under sin (Rom. 3:9), under the condemnation of the law (19), under the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10), in bondage to death, under the fear of death (Heb. 2:15), in slavery to Satan (Eph. 2:2), in bondage to the world and under the fear of hell.

There is the payment of a real ransom for real captives in real bondage. This is a ransom of an infinite price: the incarnate Son of God, who was always obedient and who never sinned. He bore the punishment due to us for our iniquities by giving Himself a ransom, in willing submission to His Father and in boundless love for us, as a voluntary payment for our sins.

This real ransom is paid for real captives in real bondage to a real captor. The ransom is paid to God and not to Satan, contrary to the old ransom-to-Satan theory of Christ’s atonement. The ransom is paid to the same One as Christ’s offering and sacrifice is made. “Through the eternal Spirit,” Christ “offered himself without spot *to God*” (Heb 9:14). “Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice *to God* for a sweetsmelling savour” (Eph 5:2). The ransom is paid to the Almighty, considered as the lawgiver, ruler and judge, the just and holy One against whom we have sinned, so that satisfaction is rendered to His righteous law and character.

Notice the connection between the mediator and the ransom. Our Lord Jesus Christ is both our mediator and our ransom, since He is the mediator who gave Himself as our ransom, as the apostle says, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom” (I Tim. 2:5-6). The truth of the “one mediator” leads us to His one ransom. Why? Because the mediator between God and men can only destroy the enmity between us and effect fellowship between us on the basis of His ransom of us from Jehovah’s avenging holiness.

In contrast to Scripture, there is the idolatrous system of Roman Catholicism. Rome teaches that people ought to pray to and through the saints, making them mediators, contrary to the truth that Christ is the “one mediator.” Also, people can supposedly

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Revivals and Magistrates (2)

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (I Tim. 2:1-2).

In the December 2013 issue of the *Covenant Reformed News*, we considered the admonition in I Timothy 2:1-2 to pray for our rulers. The text does not tell us what the content of these prayers we are called to make for our rulers ought to be, but it does tell us, more importantly, why we ought to pray for our magistrates. Two reasons are given.

The first reason is, “That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour” (2-3). The second reason is, “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (4).

Taking verse 4 first, we repudiate the notion that this text means that God earnestly desires to save every man, loves him dearly and offers him the possibility of salvation. This is so far from the truth that even Augustine in the early part of the fifth century did not believe this; nor is this the interpretation of I Timothy 2:4 given by Gottschalk, John Calvin, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Jerome Zanchius, Theodore Beza, Jacobus Kimedoncius, William Perkins, Christopher Ness, Francis Turretin, Herman Witsius, Abraham Kuyper, A. W. Pink, Robert L. Reymond, etc. (www.cprf.co.uk/quotes/1timothy2v4quotes.html).

What it does mean is that God saves all kinds of people, including even civil magistrates. No type of people, including rich or poor, high or low, adult or child, aged or a baby, Asian or African, popular or despised, husband or wife, farmer or slave, entrepreneur or janitor, prime minister or policeman—or any kind of person—is left unsaved. It is not surprising that, in the light of the corruption and cruelty of Rome’s Caesars, God’s people thought that civil rulers could not be saved. Paul says that we must not make distinctions that Jehovah does not make.

The Triune God saves a universal church, for it takes many different kinds of people to reveal the fullness of the riches of His grace and love.

The first reason that Paul gives is also important (2-3). It is not merely that the Almighty wills to have a wealthy and prosperous church or a church free from persecution that Paul mentions the need for God’s people to live a quiet and peaceable life. It is rather that, if the church is to perform her calling, quietness and peace are important. That calling of the church is to preach gospel: to its own members, to its covenant children, to the nations. The church finds it difficult to do this, if its office-bearers are imprisoned and tortured, if its members are forced to flee for safety, if God’s people see their families torn apart by persecution, if the male members cannot find work to support the causes of the kingdom. So it has also been in history. Although persecution is necessary for salvation, times of severe persecution force the church to hunker down to survive and her calling is, at least in part, somewhat postponed.

Christ puts men in civil office to maintain order in society, that is, to punish evil doers and praise them that do well (Rom. 13:3-4). Even though the magistrates themselves do not serve God or His Christ, they can and often do make society under their rule a peaceful and quiet place in which to live.

If I may add, parenthetically, a warning: It is a great calamity when God’s people can work and earn enough to live luxuriously and that He gives them more than enough money, and they use their riches to serve mammon, when the reason why He enriches them is not for themselves, but for the cause of His truth: the spread of the gospel, the work of missions, the care of the poor and the support of Christian schools.

I think there is some misunderstanding here on the part of God’s people. They are reluctant to pray for their magistrates because they know only magistrates who are morally bankrupt and who live very wicked lives. They do not want to pray for those who are not God’s people. In addition to that, they know from experience that it is true what Paul writes in I Corinthians 1:26-31: civil rulers are, after all, among the mighty, of whom not many are effectually called, as a general rule.

Two remarks have to be made in this connection. The text is not talking only about such magistrates who rule nations and kingdoms, but also lesser magistrates who have authority over small villages and isolated areas. God has His people among them and they too serve the Lord and rule in Christ’s name. The second reason is that magistrates, whether righteous or wicked, serve a purpose broader than they themselves realize, for they serve the church by maintaining law and order, even if they are wicked.

God can and does prosper them for the church’s sake—just as He blessed the house of Potiphar for Joseph’s sake (Gen. 39:5). God enriched Pharaoh and Egypt with an abundance of food for the sole purpose of keeping Jacob’s family (the church at that time) alive (50:20).

God does not always put such believing magistrates, as Joseph, in power; it is His will (as when Paul wrote the book of Romans) to put men in power who cause the church to be persecuted, for persecution is also necessary for the church’s salvation. Nor must we shrink from that truth, but rejoice that we are worthy to suffer for Christ’s sake (Acts 5:41). If we cannot live quiet and peaceful lives because of persecution, God can still accomplish His purpose—even through persecution. Or, the church is about to be brought into heaven, because her calling is nearly finished—as will be the case when the great persecution comes under Antichrist’s rule.

And let it be clear: persecution is near. If we listen, we can hear the rumble of the thunder of persecution on the horizon. Christ is coming and His coming is at the door. Let us heed this important admonition of Scripture.

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