

EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

God’s Desire, Man’s Debt, Christ’s Payment
1 Timothy 2:3–7



LET’S BEGIN HERE

It’s easy to forget foundational truths. We are so familiar with them, we tend to take them for granted. This is especially true of salvation. Some of us have walked with Christ for so long, the joy of our salvation wanes more than it waxes. It’s not that we’re ungrateful; it’s just that we’re forgetful. In the work-a-day world of daily life, it’s simple to overlook the significance of the gospel. Paul, of course, never did, and in this section of 1 Timothy—one of the most practical and clearest presentations of the gospel in the New Testament—he challenges us to open our eyes and our hearts, once again, to its wonder.



LET’S DIG DEEPER

1. What’s So Important about a Mediator?

Mediation is as old as humanity. The first mediator was God. When Adam and Eve sinned, God sacrificed an animal and made clothes for them, covering not only their physical shame but their spiritual shame as well (Genesis 3:21). Our need for a divine mediator is further developed in the book of Job.

2. How Does This Relate to the Gospel (1 Timothy 2:3–7)

The gospel is so simple a child can understand it. Yet it’s so profound a philosopher can’t comprehend it. At its heart, the gospel can be spoken in a few words. “The Son of Man,” Jesus said, “has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). “To seek and to save”—there you have it, the gospel in a nutshell. Or as Paul put it: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). Easily said. But what does all this have to do with mediation? Everything.



Quotable

God is holy. We are unholy. That’s why we need a mediator in order for God to accept us. That mediator is Jesus.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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A CLOSER LOOK

The Shocking Truth of Jesus—the God-Man

In Mary’s womb, divinity slipped on the suit of humanity. The divine Word became human flesh (John 1:1, 14). In theological jargon, Jesus became (and is) the *theoanthropic* person—the God-Man. In Him, absolute deity was fused with absolute humanity—humanity as God intended: without sin. Theologians call this welding of two natures—heavenly and earthly—into one person the “hypostatic union.” In the unipersonality of Jesus, the hypostasis, the essential natures of both God and man are unified in perfect harmony.

Confounding, isn’t it? Mysterious. Shocking, even. Theologians struggle to make sense of it . . . and fail. But since its earliest days, the church has affirmed this truth. In AD 451, church fathers met at Chalcedon and declared:

We unite in teaching all men to confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and also in human-ness; this selfsame one is also actually God and actually man, with a rational soul and a body. He is of the same reality as God as far as his deity is concerned and of the same reality as we are ourselves as far as his human-ness is concerned . . . sin only excepted. Before time began he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and . . . born of Mary the virgin . . . in respect of his human-ness.¹

Modern-day theologians fill thousands of pages trying to unravel the mystery. But the hypostatic union remains just as incomprehensible and shocking. Like the church fathers of old, we are left to boldly declare its truth.

He was weary; yet He called the weary to Himself for rest. He was hungry; yet He was “the bread of life.” He was thirsty; yet He was “the water of life.” He was in agony; yet He healed all manner of sicknesses and soothed every pain. He “grew, and waxed strong in spirit”; yet He was from all eternity. He was tempted; yet He, as God, could not be tempted. He was self-limited in knowledge; yet He was the wisdom of God. . . . He dies; yet He is eternal life. . . . His earth-life, therefore, testifies as much to His humanity as to His Deity, and both of these revelations are equally true.²



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LET’S LIVE IT

The foundation of our faith is that Jesus, the mediator between holy God and unholy humanity, gave His life on the cross as a willing sacrifice to atone for our sins and offer us peace with God. Pleased with Jesus’ sacrifice, God raised Him from the dead and promises heaven for all who believe (1 Thessalonians 4:14). It’s that simple. Yet this bedrock truth points to three other important truths.

First, *it reveals the heart of God.*

Second, *it announces the plan of salvation.*

Third, *it verifies and validates world evangelism and missions.*

Using your own words and style, write the gospel in one short, succinct sentence.

ENDNOTES

1. “The Definition of Chalcedon,” trans. Albert C. Outler, as quoted in *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*, 3rd ed., ed. John H. Leith (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 35–36.
2. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Chafer Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena, Bibliology, Theology Proper* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary Press, 1983), 369, 70.



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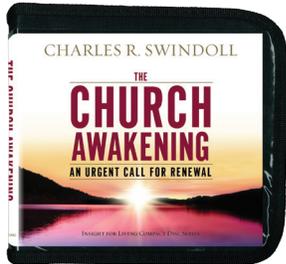
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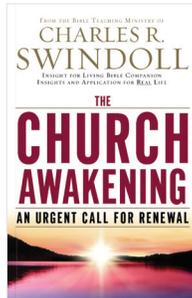
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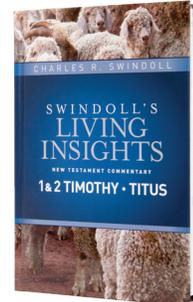
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