

1 Timothy 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

Analysis

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Paul grounds the command to pray for all people in God's character and will. "This" refers to the practice of praying for all people, including governing authorities. Such prayer is "good" (kalon, καλόν)—intrinsically right, noble, and beautiful. It is also "acceptable" (apodekton, ἀπόδεκτον)—pleasing or welcomed by God. The phrase "in the sight of God" (enōpion tou theou, ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ) emphasizes divine perspective—what ultimately matters is God's approval, not human opinion.

God is identified as "our Saviour" (tou sōtēros hēmōn, τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν), a title Paul uses frequently in the Pastoral Epistles for both God the Father and Christ. Here it refers to the Father as the source and initiator of salvation, whose saving will extends to all humanity (v. 4). God's character as Savior explains why He desires universal prayer—He loves all people and desires all to be saved, making it appropriate for His people to pray accordingly.

This verse establishes a crucial theological principle: Christian practice must align with God's character and will. We pray for all people because God loves all people. We seek others' salvation because God seeks others' salvation. Our prayers, desires, and actions should reflect and express God's revealed character and purposes. Theology shapes practice; knowing God's nature directs our behavior.

Historical Context

The description of God as "Savior" would resonate distinctly in the Roman world where emperors were acclaimed as "saviors" bringing peace and prosperity. Christians' counter-claim that God alone is Savior, accomplishing true salvation through Christ, represented both theological truth and subtle political statement. Caesar might maintain civil order, but only God saves from sin, death, and judgment.

Jewish theology emphasized God as Israel's Savior, delivering them from Egypt and establishing covenant relationship. Early Christian theology expanded this understanding: God's saving purposes extend beyond Israel to all nations. The universal scope of prayer (for all people, including Gentile rulers) reflects this broadened understanding of God's saving will, grounded in Christ's work for the world (John 3:16).

The concept that human practices should be "acceptable" to God pervades biblical religion. Old Testament sacrifices had to meet specific requirements to be acceptable (Leviticus 1:3-4; 22:19-25). New Testament Christians offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ (1 Peter 2:5). Prayer, like all worship, must conform to God's revealed will to be truly acceptable. Sincerity alone doesn't suffice; our worship must align with God's character and commands.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How consistently do you evaluate practices and decisions by whether they please God rather than merely what benefits you?
2. In what ways does understanding God as "our Savior" shape your identity, priorities, and relationships?
3. How do you guard against people-pleasing while maintaining appropriate concern for Christian witness and others' welfare?

Interlinear Text

τοῦτο γὰρ καλὸν καὶ ἀπόδεκτον ἐνώπιον τοῦ σωτῆρος
this For is good and acceptable in the sight G3588 **Saviour**
G5124 G1063 G2570 G2532 G587 G1799 G4990

ἡμῶν θεοῦ
our of God
G2257 G2316

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 13:16 (Good): But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

1 Timothy 1:1 (Salvation): Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;

Romans 14:18 (References God): For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

1 Peter 2:20 (References God): For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

Colossians 1:10 (Good): That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

1 Thessalonians 4:1 (References God): Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

Luke 1:47 (Salvation): And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

1 Peter 2:5 (References God): Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:11 (References God): Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

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