

“ONE” and “ALL”

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5th "1740"

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TWO WORDS, which seem to be frequently used by the Apostle Paul in his writings, are **one** and **all**. They are at opposite ends of the scale. The lowest complete number that we can have is **one**. The highest complete number that we can have is **all**.

No two words can be clearer in their meanings, yet, times without number, men have tried to make them mean something else. Where Paul speaks of **one**, men would often rather change it to **many**, and where he uses the word **all**, they would change it to **some**.

ONE

Let us look at the word **one** first, and see how Paul employs it. We turn to 1 Cor. 8 : 4, where we read :

“We are aware that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God except **One**. For even if so be that there are those being termed gods, also, whether in heaven or on earth, even as there are many gods and many lords, nevertheless for us there is **one** God, the Father, out of Whom all is, and we for Him, and **one** Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom all is, and we through Him.”

Here the apostle states plainly that there is **one** God and **one** Lord—one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ. Yet men will have **many** gods and **many** lords. Some nations make gods of all kinds of idols, and even of living creatures. The Egyptians worshipped almost everything that moved—flying creatures, quadrupeds and even reptiles. Other nations made a god of the sun, under various names such as Baal, Tammuz, Apollo, etc. Diana of the Ephesians was a moon goddess. The planets gave their names to many gods of ancient Greece, like Jupiter and Mercury, for whom Paul and Barnabas were once mistaken (Acts 14 : 12).

It has ever been the tendency of men to swerve away from the one true God, and give their affections to others. Even Israel, the people of God's own choice, were frequently guilty of idolatry. Yes, even while Moses was receiving the law from God Himself on Mount Sinai—a law which was to contain as its first commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”—they were fashioning a golden calf to worship.

And if, today, few would actually make a literal calf of gold, it is still true that there are many figurative golden calves—things to worship, and on which to bestow affection, in place of God—things like money, business, ambition, social status, and sport. Does not the apostle say in another place, that in the last days men will be fond of their own gratification rather than fond of God? And if they will have many gods to worship, it is equally true that they will have many lords to which they will make obeisance.

But for us, says Paul, there is one God and one Lord, and we will give the one God the glory that is His as the Supreme, and the one Lord Jesus the acclaim that is His due, as the One Whom His Father has appointed to be Sovereign, and to receive it.

But now let us look what Paul says in Eph. 4, verses 4-6 :
“ . . . keep the unity of the spirit with the tie of peace ; **one** body and **one** spirit, according as you were called also with **one** expectation of your calling ; **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all.”

Men would have **many** faiths, but Paul knows only **one** faith ; at the end of his ministry he declares, “ I have kept **THE** faith.” Because there are many faiths among Christians today, there are many denominations—many bodies of believers. Paul puts all the believers in this administration of the grace of God into **one** body, one church—the ecclesia which is the body of Christ. He stresses that there is **one** body and **one** spirit, according as we are called with **one** expectation of our calling. The Lord knows those who are His, irrespective of what church they attend, or to what denomination they belong. His saints of today are all part of that ecclesia, which is His body, the ecclesia of God. They are all chosen and called by God, and Whom He calls, these He also justifies, and whom He justifies, these He also glorifies (Rom. 8 : 30). Attendance at any particular place does not in itself make one a member of this ecclesia of God ; the true indication is the indwelling of God's spirit, for whoever are being led by God's spirit, these are sons of God (Rom. 8 : 14).

Again, the apostle sees only **one** Saviour of the universe, and he emphasises, in Romans 5 : 19, that it is through the obedience of the **One** that the many shall be constituted just.

Men would like to make the acts of **many** the basis of justification; they would like to think that they could justify themselves before God, and thus save themselves from the consequences of sin. But God, through His apostle, says No! It is the obedience of the **One** that counts. That **One** Man is Jesus Christ. The **one** Sacrifice is enough to take away **all** sin; the **one** death is enough to secure life for **all** eternity. The **One** not knowing sin becomes a sin offering for our sakes (2 Cor. 5 : 21).

The **One** not knowing sin! But what about the rest? Well, they are covered by the word, "all," and, in order that we may perceive this, let us give attention to Paul's inspired use of the word, "ALL," in the following quotations from his letters.

ALL

Romans 3 : 23, "**All** sinned, and are wanting of the glory of God." "**All**" here means all humanity, all descendants of Adam. The **One** not knowing sin was not of Adam's stock; He received His life direct from God; He was conceived by the holy spirit. But those who have descended from Adam have sinned, and because they have sinned, they are found wanting.

Romans 6 : 10. "He died to sin once for **all**." This, of course, is speaking of Christ, the **One** through Whom the grace of God will abound to the many. Notice how the **One** is coupled to the **all**. The **One** died that the **all** might live; the **One** suffered that the **all** might benefit. And so we can carry the thought forward into 1 Cor. 15 : 22.

"For even as, in Adam, **all** are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall **all** be vivified." Here the effects of Christ's sacrifice are being proclaimed; its benefits reach out to **all**. In the first Adam, **all** are dying, but in the last Adam (Christ) **all** are vivified—made alive beyond the power of death—for the last Adam, the **One** "roused from among the dead, the Firstfruit of those who are reposing" (1 Cor. 15 : 20) and Who is "Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead" (Col. 1 : 18), became a vivifying Spirit.

1 Tim. 2 : 3, "This is ideal and welcome in the sight of our Saviour, God, Who wills that **all** mankind be saved and come into a realisation of the truth." This passage shows us what is the driving force behind salvation, the will of God. Not our wills, though they may be in accord with the will of God in this respect. We may be desiring salvation, but it is God Who is the Saviour, not us, and it is the will of the **One** that is the decisive factor that results in the saving of **all**.

With this conviction, Paul is able to say later in the same epistle (1 Tim. 4 : 10), "We rely on the living God, Who is the Saviour of **all** mankind, especially of those who believe." Let us note, "the Saviour of **all** mankind," not **merely** of those who believe, though **especially** of those who believe. Because God is a living God, Whom the ravages of death cannot even approach, we can rely on Him to carry out His will, and complete His purpose. He, the **One**, Who is God, will be the Saviour of **all** mankind, because He will do all Himself, and not leave any part of it to human endeavour.

There is a true story of a young man who came to Ebenezer Wooton, an evangelist who preached many years ago, and asked him, "Mr Wooton, what must I do to be saved?" "Too late, my friend, too late," came the startling reply. And then the evangelist continued, "Yes, it's too late! You want to know what you must **do** to be saved, and I tell you that you are hundreds of years too late! The work of salvation is done, completed, finished! It was finished on the Cross; Jesus said so with His last breath! What more do you want?"

And Paul, in 2 Cor. 5 : 18, confirms that "**All** is of God," when he carries us a stage further by introducing a new element, that of conciliation. "Yet **all** is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself." We remember how, in Romans 5 : 8, Paul reminds us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for our sakes. But, in the next verse, he goes further, and says that we, being enemies, were conciliated to God through the death of His Son. There is a difference here. Christ, as God's Anointed, died for us as sinners; it was as God's Son that He died for us as enemies. In other words, God broke up His own family in order to bring us back into His family. Through the death of His Son, the Chief of His own family, He brings us back into family relationship with Himself.

If a High Court Judge were to say to a man whom he had just tried and liberated, "Come and be my son, and live with me in my home," would not the newspapers carry big headlines, "Judge invites Prisoner into his home," "Remarkable Story of a Judge," "Judge adopts former felon," etc. Yet this is what God is doing all the time and nobody seems to take any notice. God, as Judge, has justified the sinner through the death of His **sinless Anointed**, Christ. Now, as Father, He banishes all enmity and estrangement between Himself and His loved one through the loving Sacrifice of the **Son of His love**. He holds out the hand of conciliation, and will not be satisfied until we have accepted it.

Conciliation is one-sided. God is already conciliated, and shows it by holding out His hand in friendship. We may become conciliated to God by simply accepting the hand which He is holding out. When both sides are conciliated, the result is reconciliation, which is always two-sided. And this happy state of reconciliation is eventually to be widened to include the whole universe, as we read in Col. 1 : 20.

“ And through Him (Christ) to reconcile **all** to Him, making peace through the blood of His cross through Him, whether those on earth or those in the heavens.”

This brings us right up to the goal of God's purpose, which is that He may be **All** in **all** (1 Cor. 15 : 28). Notice here how the **One** (God) has become bound up with the **all** (creation). The **One** becomes **All** in **all**.

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Now in none of the Scriptures that we have quoted may the word “ all ” be modified to “ some,” yet that is what humanity (including many believers) is continually trying to do. Humanity will have **some** to be saved, some to be reconciled ; God will have **all** to be saved, **all** to be reconciled. He will be **All** in **all**, not **All** in **some**. Humanity insists on the word “ some ” because it will make human endeavour a part of salvation ; it will not recognise that human endeavour is, of itself, vanity, and that **All** is of God.

He, the **One**, does everything for the **all**, that in each He may display His grace. Let us not claim for ourselves the glory of our salvation, but give it wholly to Him, Who has given **all** for our sakes.

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Concordant Publishing Concern
P.O. Box 449
Almont, Michigan 48003