

*The last enemy that will be abolished is death.
(1Cor 15:26)*

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Universalism and Paul's epistles

The theological term “universalism” denotes the belief that God, being infinitely good and loving, would not condemn humanity to infinite torture in the afterlife. According to Hosea Ballou 2nd (in his treatise “The Ancient History of Universalism”), many Christians were Universalists in the early years of Christianity. Universalism has been asserted at various times in different contexts throughout the history of the Christian church, as for example by Origen in the 3rd century. The belief in eternal damnation for the wicked gained currency not long after that, for by the fifth century, according to Ballou, Universalist theology was sufficiently unpopular, at least with the church authorities, to be declared a heresy. As a heresy it endured, however, until the Reformation, when it reasserted itself, becoming part of the theology of many groups of the Protestant believers all over Europe in the 1500s. But Universalism as a distinct movement did not come along until late in the 18th century, when it spread to America.

Universalism, sometimes called Universal Salvation or Universal Reconciliation, is expressed clearly in Paul's epistles. The scriptures quoted in this chapter are taken from Young's Literal Translation.

Epistle to the Romans

The gospel committed to Paul sees beyond the terrestrial sphere to the heavenly one, looking from the eyes of God on all of God's creation past, present and future. In the “Good News of God” (*Romans 1:1 YLT*) to which Paul was separated to proclaim, it looks back to the time before the “disruption of the world”^{*1} and looks forward to future ages when an initial group of believers enjoys with Christ His headship over all things and beyond still to the consummation when God will be “all in all,” – God then being completely reconciled with His

creation. God's view looks far and wide: on both the body of believers called now and the nations at large. The words used by Paul directed to those called at this time are also in many ways directed to all the nations under heaven.

Paul says (*Rom 3:29*) that God is not only the God of the Jews but also God of the nations. Note the introduction to the Book of Romans:

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"Through whom we did receive grace and apostleship, for obedience of faith among all the nations, in behalf of his name; among whom are also ye, the called of Jesus Christ". (*Rom 1:5-6*)

This epistle, like most other Pauline epistles, addresses the present believers known as the "Body of Christ" and it breaks out to address the nations as well.

For I am not ashamed of the good news of the Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to every one who is believing, both to Jew first, and to Greek. For the righteousness of God in it is revealed from faith to faith, according as it hath been written, 'And the righteous one by faith shall live,' for revealed is the wrath of God from heaven upon all impiety and unrighteousness of men [Greek: *anthropos*, human being], holding down the truth in unrighteousness. (*Rom 1:16-18*)

Because that which is known of God is manifest among them, for God did manifest *it* to them, for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world, by the things made being understood, are plainly seen, both His eternal power and Godhead – to their being inexcusable; (*Rom 1:19-20*)

God's creation or "nature" reveals God to all since the creation of the world, and everyone since that time would have in his lifetime come in contact with "nature" and inferred from its grandeur that there is a God behind it all. Current researches have inferred that men are "hard-wired" for God. There is an innate inkling in the human psyche that there is a creator God. Conscience also has been given to all by God (*Rom 2:15*)

"Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man [Greek: *anthropos*] – every one who is judging" – (*Rom 2:1*)

Paul here addresses every human being, believers and non-believers alike, especially “everyone who is judging.”

God judges all men and found that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (*Rom 3:23*). The scriptural point that not one is righteous or good is mentioned twice for emphasis (*3:10-12*). Then Paul introduces Justification by Faith, not by works. We have established in chapter one that faith in God is primary in our search for knowledge. Everyone who genuinely believes in a creator God is eminently justified to begin with faith in God’s declarations.

And God doth commend His own love to us, that, in our being still sinners, Christ did die for us; much more, then, having been declared righteous now in his blood, we shall be saved through him from the wrath; for if, being enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in his life. (*Rom 5:8-10*)

Believers, among humans, were once sinners and considered enemies. They are now declared righteous through belief and they shall be saved from wrath (God’s anger). We note from *Romans 6:23* that the wages of sin *is* death; – this is the wrath – death – not eternal life in some place of torture.

The Spirit himself doth testify with our spirit, that we are children of God;
(*Rom 8:16*)

Believers are children of God. This does not mean that the non-believers at this time are not also children of God. Paul conceded that the pagan Athenians (Greeks) too are offspring of God (*Acts 17:22-28*).

And if children, also heirs, heirs, indeed, of God, and heirs together of Christ – if, indeed, we suffer together, that we may also be glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory about to be revealed in us; for the earnest looking out of the creation doth expect the revelation of the sons of God;
(*Rom 8:17-19*)

The creation (Greek: *ktisis*) earnestly expects the revealing of the sons of God. Who are these sons of God? The body of believers is *an* answer. Could there be others? This question is not answered here... but look at the next verse.

for to vanity was the creation made subject – not of its will, but because of Him who did subject *it* – in hope, (*Rom 8:20*)

It is God who subjects the whole creation to vanity, and He subjects it in hope. Yes, there is hope for the creation, not just for present-day body of believers.

that also the creation itself shall be set free from the servitude of the corruption to the liberty of the glory of the children of God; (*Rom 8:21*)

Here the answer is given – that the creation itself will be set free from the slavery of corruption (the vanity to which it was subjected by God), and move towards the freedom of the glory of the children of God. This points to the creation itself (all humans, who are made in the image and likeness of God) becoming full-fledged children of God.

for we have known that all the creation doth groan together, and doth travail in pain together till now. (*Rom 8:22*)

And not only *so*, but also we ourselves, having the first-fruit of the Spirit, we also ourselves in ourselves do groan, adoption expecting – the redemption of our body; (*Rom 8:23*)

Here we see the contrast: the whole creation contrasted and compared with the Body of Believers (church or elect believers). Meaning, the whole creation is not the church or elect. Here also, we see that the church is the *first-fruit* of the Spirit. This implies that there are other fruits to come. The context here shows that the other fruits to come are the rest of the creation. Typical in the creation of God, trees bearing fruits for the first time yield a small number before yielding a greater crop in subsequent seasons. God's creation such as this conveys an important spiritual truth (*Rom 1:20*).

for in hope we were saved, and hope beheld is not hope; for what any one doth behold, why also doth he hope for it ? (*Rom 8:24*)

It is in hope that the body of believers was saved. This does not dismiss the hope of the rest of creation, which is also subjected in hope, as earlier verse 20 says clearly. If we look at all peoples of the world, every culture, we see an innate hope in them of a future life, expressed in whatever form that each culture may perceive it.

Now, we come to the preaching of the gospel of God being made to the whole creation, according to Paul.

so then the faith *is* by a report, and the report through a saying of God, but I say, Did they not hear? yes, indeed – ‘to all the earth their voice went forth, and to the ends of the habitable world their sayings.’ (*Rom 10:17-18*)

Notice Paul’s all-important phrase “BUT I SAY.” Paul, given a special commission and looking from God’s view, has every right to expand upon Old Testament scriptures, as he did so on many occasions. The gospel of God did go to the whole world, as clear as this verse has it! But could I believe it? This was hard for me to believe until I found an earlier verse in this same first canonical book of Paul giving me God’s definition of what Paul is trying to say. The answer is in *Romans 4:17*, below.

[Abraham] who is father of us all (according as it hath been written – ‘A father of many nations I have set thee,’) before Him whom he did believe – God, who is quickening the dead, and is calling the things that be not as being (*Rom 4:17*).

In another rendering (GLT) of *Rom 4:17*:

According as it has been written, “I have appointed you a father of many nations” before God, whom he believed, the *One* making the dead live, and calling the things that are not as *if* they were.

In the immediate context – see *Rom 4:18-25* – Sarah’s womb was dead, Abraham’s body was dead also, but Abraham believed, hoping against hope, that the promise of God will definitely come true – the

promise that he will be the father of many nations by this faith of his. God's promises are sure to come to pass, therefore God calls the things that are not (the future nations to come from Abraham that are not yet born) as though these nations are already born. And in the same breadth God will make the dead live. By this same principle, the preaching of His Gospel to every creature is as good as achieved because every human will definitely hear this Gospel even if he has not heard it in this lifetime. Whoever the dead who has not heard, he will be resurrected some time in the future to hear it. After hearing it, everyone will eventually through God's grace believe it. It is a matter of time. To those who hear it and believe it in their lifetimes before Christ's Second Advent, they become the early bird, the privileged people. Nevertheless, the Gospel is still considered having gone out to all.

Romans chapter 11 takes on a national perspective, comparing the Israelite nation with the Gentile nations.

I say, then, Did they stumble that they might fall? let it not be! but by their fall the salvation is to the nations, to arouse them to jealousy; (*Rom 11:11-15*)

According to Paul, Israel's temporary fall results in the salvation coming to the nations. If the fall of them *is* the riches of a world, and the diminution of them the riches of nations, how much more blessings for all then when full blessings are bestowed to them in the future? (*Rom 11:12*)

By Israel's full restoration in the future, much greater, nay, greatest fullness will be the riches of the nations. It is so superlative! What is fullness if not eternal life with Christ?

For to you I speak – to the nations – inasmuch as I am indeed an apostle of nations, my ministration I do glorify; (*Rom 11:13*)

Paul is speaking to a mixture of believers and non-believers, and here he is speaking to the nations directly which includes the ever increasing number of believers among them. There is no need, in fact wrong, to re-interpret the nations as the believers only, as is done in some circles. The scripture is clear taken at face value.

if by any means I shall arouse to jealousy mine own flesh, and shall save some of them, for if the casting away of them is a reconciliation of the world, what the reception – if not life out of the dead? (*Rom 11:14-15*)

The world (not just the believers only) is reconciled to God, from God's viewpoint – whilst part of Israel is temporarily blinded. When Israel is fully received back, there will be life out of the dead for all. All will eventually become believers.

for God did shut up together the whole to unbelief, that to the whole He might do kindness. (*Rom 11:32*)

The whole here is the Greek *pas* which is all-inclusive. All mankind has been shut up by God in unbelief, that He over time might show kindness to all mankind, first: to part of Israel and part of Gentiles, then: to all of Israel and all of Gentiles.

because of Him, and through Him, and to Him *are* the all things; to Him *is* the glory – to the ages. Amen. (*Rom 11:36*)

All things without exception are OF HIM (came into existence from Him) and THROUGH HIM (channelled through Him) and will eventually go back TO HIM – in glorious form – towards the end of the ages to come.

for it hath been written, 'I live! saith the Lord – to Me bow shall every knee, and every tongue shall confess to God.' (*Rom 14:11*)

Epistles to the Corinthians

Let's consider another text, *1Cor 15:20-28*

And now, Christ hath risen out of the dead – the first-fruits of those sleeping he became, (*verse 20*)

The second part of this verse clearly states that the resurrected Christ is the first of those to rise from the dead, and the implication, at this

point, is that the rest of the dead will also rise from the dead, but their fate at this point is not stated.

for since through man *is* the death, also through man *is* a rising again of the dead,
(verse 21)

For even as in Adam all die, even so in the Christ all shall be made alive.
(verse 22)

We all know that all humanity came from Adam without exception and all die without exception, which is what the first part of the *verse 22* is saying, and then Paul is saying that similarly all humanity, all of whom are created by Christ, will be made alive. The comparison between the two parts exactly parallels. *Verse 22* explains the earlier *verse 21*, also in parallel fashion.

and each in his proper order, a first-fruit Christ, afterwards those who are the Christ's,
in his presence,
(verse 23)

The order of timing of the resurrection of every man differs, Christ being the first fruit already resurrected, and afterwards "those who are the Christ's, in his presence."

then – the end, when he may deliver up the reign to God, even the Father, when he may have made useless all rule, and all authority and power – (verse 24)

Then Paul projects into the next order of resurrection of mankind at the consummation. How long this will be after the present-day believers' resurrection is not mentioned here. At the consummation, Christ would have "made useless all rule, and all authority and power." This is the sign that the consummation would be at hand.

for it behooves him to reign till he may have put all the enemies under his feet – (verse 25)

This verse expands on the earlier one, and indicates that Christ's reign will last "till" all enemies are placed under his feet, that is, no more enemies at that point of the consummation. All enemies then

would be subject to Christ, that is, they are converted, not eliminated at death, as the next verse shows.

the last enemy is done away – death; (*verse 26*)

Death here is stated as an enemy and the last one to be destroyed. If death itself is destroyed, what remains is life only for all who died previously.

for all things He did put under his feet, and, when one may say that all things have been subjected, *it is evident that He is excepted who did subject the all things to him,* (*verse 27*)

Here we see the extensiveness of the “all things”: only the Father is excepted from “the all” that are subject to Christ. Apart from the Father, there is everybody else, the chosen ones earlier, the rest of humanity, etc who have been made alive from the dead, as presented in the earlier verses.

and when the all things may be subjected to him, then the Son also himself shall be subject to Him, who did subject to him the all things, that God may be the all in all. (*verse 28*)

Here we see the Son Himself being subject to His Father at the very end of the scheme of things. So that the Father may be “all in all.” This is how extensive salvation is.

Second epistle to the Corinthians

But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation; namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, *not reckoning to them their trespasses*, and having committed to us the word of reconciliation. (*2Cor 5:18-19*)

Almost unbelievable as it may sound, the whole world’s trespasses are not being reckoned to them, as God is now reconciling the world to Himself through Christ.

We are therefore ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2Cor 5:20-21)

There is an ambassadorial role or “ministry of reconciliation” committed to believers today. They are assisting Christ in the reconciliation of the whole world. Everybody’s trespasses are now no longer reckoned to him after the crucifixion of Christ who paid the penalty of sin for all. Everyone is now urged to do their part to be reconciled to God.

Epistle to the Ephesians

In whom [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (Eph 1:7)

In Christ, the believers (“we”) are redeemed through His blood, that is, their sins are forgiven. This verse does not *ipso facto* exclude the others. In the light of an earlier text quoted above (1Cor15:20-28), in the harmony of scriptures, the growing body of believers is only a subset of people to be redeemed.

in which He did abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, (Eph 1: 8)

Christ lavishes in the believers (“us”) all wisdom and prudence; this is why the believers today hold a special relation to Christ at this time, but this does not exhaust God’s love to all.

having made known to us the secret of His will, according to His good pleasure, that He purposed in Himself, (Eph 1:9)

To the believers is made known the secret of Christ’s will, and the content of that secret is in the following verse.

in regard to the dispensation of the fullness of the times, to bring into one the whole in the Christ, both the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth – in him; (Eph 1:10)

The content of the secret is that in the dispensation of “the fullness” of the times (that is, what’s coming up way ahead in God’s plan, confided to the believers now), God will “head up” (literal) all things to be in Christ, and the extensiveness of the “all things” confided to the believers includes all those in heaven and all those on earth, as seen in the first epistle to the Corinthians. Christ is not only the head of the Body at the present time, but also the future head of all things as well.

in whom also we did obtain an inheritance, being foreordained according to the purpose of Him who the all things is working according to the counsel of His will, (*Eph 1:11*)

Here Paul assures the believers that they indeed have obtained an inheritance, being foreordained to it. Again this does *not ipso facto* exclude the rest of mankind.

for our being to the praise of His glory, *even* those who did first hope in the Christ, (*Eph 1:12*)

That the believers should be to the praise of Christ’s glory among all the audience, because the believers “first trusted” (Strong: to hope in advance of other confirmation), or pre-hoped, in Christ – that is, the advanced hope.

in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth – the good news of your salvation – in whom also having believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, (*Eph 1:13*)

In Christ the believers also trusted and were sealed.

which is an earnest of our inheritance, to the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory. (*Eph 1:14*)

The sealing with the Spirit is a pledge of our inheritance in anticipation of its full redemption – the inheritance which He has purchased to be specially His for the extolling of His glory.

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of the glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the recognition of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, for your knowing what is the hope of His calling,

and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us who are believing, according to the working of the power of His might, which He wrought in the Christ, having raised him out of the dead, and did set *him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,
(*Eph 1:17-20*)

far above all principality, and authority, and might, and lordship, and every name named, not only in this age, but also in the coming one; and all things He did put under his feet, and did give him – head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fullness of Him who is filling the all in all,
(*Eph 1:21-22*)

The “all things” given to Christ (per Strong) includes “all the forms of declension, all, any, every, the whole; whatsoever, whosoever, whole.”

For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you the nations,
(*Eph 3:1*)

Note that Paul addresses the nations directly, here again, as in his epistle to the Romans.

if, indeed, ye did hear of the dispensation of the grace of God that was given to me in regard to you, that by revelation He made known to me the secret, according as I wrote before in few *words* – in regard to which ye are able, reading *it*, to understand my knowledge in the secret of the Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it was now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit – (*Eph 3:2-5*)

To the sons of men (every human being) previously is not made known the Secret but to the sons of men (every human being) now it is made known through his holy apostles and prophets.

that the nations be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in the Christ, through the good news, of which I became a ministrant, according to the gift of the grace of God that was given to me, according to the working of His power; to me – the less than the least of all the saints –

was given this grace, among the nations to proclaim good news – the untraceable riches of the Christ, and to cause all to see what *is* the fellowship of the secret that hath been hid from the ages in God, who the all things did create by Jesus Christ,
(*Eph 3:6-9*)

Again accepting scriptures at face value, the “nations” not only the believers now are to be joint-heirs, etc. Paul insists that He is the minister of the good news among the nations. Note also the phrase “untraceable riches of the Christ.” It is superlative. Paul is trying to cause ALL created beings to see the previously hidden secret, now revealed.

that there might be made known now to the principalities and the authorities in the heavenly *places*, through the assembly, the manifold wisdom of God, according to a purpose of the ages, which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have the freedom and the access in confidence through the faith of him, wherefore, I ask *you* not to faint in my tribulations for you, which is your glory.
(*Eph 3:10-13*)

Through the assembly of believers today, the secret plan for reconciling everybody is to be made known to the spirit powers... so that they know the manifold wisdom of God ... according to a “purpose of the ages” determined in Christ beforehand and unfolding through each age, or the outworking of the purpose of each age since creation.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in the heavens and on earth is named, (*Eph 3:14-15*)

Every family everywhere (heaven and earth) is named of Christ – they all came into existence from Him in the first place.

that He may give to you, according to the riches of His glory, with might to be strengthened through His Spirit, in regard to the inner man, that the Christ may dwell through the faith in your hearts, in love having been rooted and founded, that ye may be in strength to comprehend, with all the saints, what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, to

know also the love of the Christ that is exceeding the knowledge, that ye may be filled – to all the fullness of God; and to Him who is able above all things to do exceeding abundantly what we ask or think, according to the power that is working in us, to Him *is* the glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus, to all the generations of the age of the ages. Amen.

(Eph 3:16-21)

These are comforting words to the saints (believers), the privileged first-fruit, who has a great job ahead, and it may not be an easy job.

Epistle to the Philippians

and in fashion having been found as a man, he [Christ] humbled himself, having become obedient unto death – death even of a cross, wherefore, also, God did highly exalt him, and gave to him a name that *is* above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee may bow – of heavenlies, and earthlies, and what are under the earth – and every tongue may confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. *(Phil 2:8-11)*

Look at the extensiveness of the beings who will eventually be bowing to Christ, accepting Christ, becoming true believers. Those in the celestial sphere, those on the earth, and those in the subterranean. Where else in space can anyone else be found?

Epistle to the Colossians

because of the hope that is laid up for you in the heavens, which ye heard of before in the word of the truth of the good news, *(Col 1:5)*

The hope of the believers is already assured...

which is present to you, as also in all the world, and is bearing fruit, as also in you, from the day in which ye heard, and knew the grace of God in truth; *(Col 1:6)*

The truth of the gospel comes to the believers, AS ALSO into the whole world (Greek: *kosmos*), and is showing results, according to this statement of Paul.

Giving thanks to the Father who did make us meet for the participation of the inheritance of the saints in the light,
(Col 1:12)

Green's Literal Translation: "... who has made us fit for a share (Strong: a portion) of the inheritance of the saints in light." The Father has enabled the believers today to be fit, competent for "a share" of the inheritance. That is, they don't wholly own the inheritance, but only share it among the "saints in light."

[Christ] who is the image of the invisible God, first-born of all creation,
(Col 1:15)

Christ is the "firstborn" of all creation, implying logically that there will be subsequent-born creatures. The next verse confirms this.

because in him were the all things created, those in the heavens, and those upon the earth, those visible, and those invisible, whether thrones, whether lordships, whether principalities, whether authorities; all things through him, and for him, have been created, (Col 1:16)

This is the deep secret in the content revealed to the privileged believers at this time. What is that secret content? That everything created, those in heaven and in earth, visible people, invisible angels, whatever/whoever they are, were created by Christ and FOR Christ. The clear implication is: none will be lost.

and himself is before all, and the all things in him have consisted. And himself is the head of the body – the assembly – who is a beginning, a first-born out of the dead, that he might become in all *things* – himself – first, (Col 1:17-18)

Christ is not only the head of the Body, he is also the beginning, commencement or chief; he is the firstborn from the dead, so that "in all things" he has preeminence – confirming verse 16.

because in him it did please all the fullness to tabernacle, and through him to reconcile the all things to himself – having made peace through the blood of his cross – through him,

whether the things upon the earth, whether the things in the heavens. (*Col 1:19-20*)

Peace has already been made at the Crucifixion. How extensive is the application of this Peace? The earlier verses emphasizing the extensiveness of the “all” would indicate that Peace must be equally extensive to include everything Christ made. And this Peace is to reconcile “all things” found on earth and in the heavens.

And you – once being alienated, and enemies in the mind, in the evil works, yet now did he reconcile, in the body of his flesh through the death, to present you holy, and unblemished, and unblameable before himself, (*Col 1:21-22*)

The believers, previously alienated and enemies, has been reconciled and assured of being without blame before God.

if also ye remain in the faith, being founded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the good news, which ye heard, which was preached in all the creation that *is* under the heaven, of which I became – I Paul – a ministrant.
(*Col 1:23*)

Paul’s gospel is considered to have been preached to ALL the creation under heaven – obviously not to the believers only. Paul became the preacher in this proclamation. By the principle laid out in *Romans 4:17* (God’s calling those things that are not as if they were), we understand from the end-view that God sees, the gospel or good news mentioned by Paul would have gone out to everyone. See explanation earlier.

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and do fill up the things lacking of the tribulations of the Christ in my flesh for his body, which is the assembly, of which I – I did become a ministrant according to the dispensation of God, that was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, (*Col 1:24-25*)

the secret that hath been hid from the ages and from the generations, but now was manifested to his saints, (*Col 1:26*)

What is the secret revealed to the saints? The answer is in the next verse.

to whom God did will to make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this secret among the nations – which is Christ in you, the hope of the glory, (Col 1:27)

Note that the riches of the glory of this secret are found among the Gentiles or nations. “Christ in the believers” at the present time is the hope of glory. Christ in the future believers is also their hope of glory.

whom we proclaim, warning every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, for which also I labour, striving according to his working that is working in me in power.
(Col 1:28-29)

The triple mention of EVERY here is the same emphasis as the ALL of verse 23, and this verse is consonant with every other verse of this set of scriptures. (See Strong’s note referred to earlier.)

On the second part of this verse, Green’s Literal Translation says: “that we may present every man full-grown in Christ Jesus.” Growing fully in Christ takes time. And other scriptures enumerated above (e.g. *1 Corinthians chapter 15*) tell us of future time periods available for the outworking of God’s salvation of every man.

First Epistle to Timothy

for this *is* right and acceptable before God our Saviour,
(1Tim 2:3)

What Paul is about to say next is prefaced with the words “right and acceptable before God.” Note the gentle nudging of the Spirit in the above verse to Timothy and by extension to believers. The deep truth, the often-difficult-to-believe truth, that is to be stated immediately hereafter, is prefaced by double emphasis “good” and “acceptable” in the sight of God (that is, not in the sight of men).

who does will all men to be saved, and to come to the full knowledge of the truth;
(1Tim 2:4)

Again here we have the Greek all-inclusive *pas* for all men, not just the current believers. All men are to be saved, as Pauline scriptures indicate.

for one *is* God, one also *is* mediator of God and of men, the man Christ Jesus, (*1Tim 2:5*)

We see Christ here as the mediator between God on the one side and men (*anthropos*, human beings) on the other.

who did give himself a ransom for all – the testimony in its own times – (*1Tim 2:6*)

The *all* is again the all-inclusive Greek *pas*. Christ will be testified to the *whole all* in the course of time, because He has given Himself a ransom for the *whole all*. Today is not the only day of salvation. Christ will be witnessed to whatever remaining of the *whole all* eventually. The growing sub-set of believers will expand continually to become the full set at the end of times.

in regard to which I was set a preacher and apostle – truth I say in Christ, I do not lie – a teacher of nations, in faith and truth. (*1Tim 2:7*)

Paul emphasizes that he is telling the truth, as repeatedly seen from his other writings that he is the teacher of the Gentiles or the nations, not of the believers only.

Thus in four verses, Paul presents concisely and clearly that God will save all mankind. He now tells us how we should react to what he just said.

I wish, therefore, that men pray in every place, lifting up kind hands, apart from anger and reasoning; (*1Tim 2:8*)

Paul concludes with more nudging of the Spirit – that everyone everywhere to pray in praise of God for the GRAND TRUTH just stated very clearly, *without being angry at it, without doubting, disputing or reasoning against it, and by implication without bringing foreign thoughts into it or reinterpreting it (such as to limit its scope).*

Thus we see the GRAND SCOPE of “the GOOD NEWS of the glory of the blessed God” with which Paul was entrusted (*1Tim 1:11*), and with which he exuberantly proclaimed.

The good news granted to Paul to preach to everyone today is based upon the sure foundation of Jesus Christ.

When Christ was still on earth, He said:

And I, if I may be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.
(*John 12:32*)

Abolishment of Death

In Paul’s epistles, we hear of God’s purposes being put into effect “before the ages” began (*1Cor 2:7, 2Tim 1:9, Titus 1:2*). Paul also provides to us a view of the consummation of all things, the end of the ages, in the far remote future when Christ “will have abolished all rule and all authority and power” (*1Cor 15:24*). Christ “must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (*1Cor 15:25*).

The last enemy that will be abolished is death.
(*1Cor 15:26*)

For, “He put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when he says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that he is excepted who subjected all things to him. When all things have been subjected to him, then the Son will also himself be subjected to him who subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all.
(*1Cor 15:27-28*)

The Book of Revelation, written by John, ends with a glorious scene which is short of the consummation view presented by Paul. The concluding scenes in the Book of Revelation do not provide the ultimate view of an “eternal state.” The final endpoint has not yet been reached.

There is a Great White Throne judgment some time after The Millennium (*Rev 20:11*), in which all the dead are raised and judged (*verses 12-13*). Those whose names are not found written in the Book of Life are cast into the Lake of Fire to die a second time. Death and Hades (hell) are personified and they are cast into the Lake of Fire, which is considered the second death (*Rev 20:14-15*). From this point on, there will be no more further deaths.

In the last scenes we find:

- a) The existence of a Lake of Fire which is the second death (*Rev 20:14, 21:8*).
- b) The heavens and the earth are made new (*Rev 21:1, 5*).
- c) The “holy city, new Jerusalem” comes down from heaven with God who then comes to dwell with men (*Rev 21:2-4*), fulfilling the prophecies and hope of the prophets.
- d) There are kings and their subjects who bring their glory and honour into the New Jerusalem (*Rev 21:22-24*).
- e) There are people serving God and Christ (*Rev 22:3, Rev 7:13-17*). There are no more curses, tears, sorrows and pain (*Rev 21:4*). The Paradise lost by Adam is regained. A tree of life is restored for healing of the nations (*Rev 22:2*).

The most ideal worldwide community living conditions are present, but the consummation of God’s plan is not yet attained. We note that at the conclusion of the Book of Revelation, the last enemy has not been abolished yet (a portion of mankind being still dead), neither has “all rule and all authority and power” (*1Cor15:24-26*).

The second death is still a death state of the people who died albeit a second time. If a single person remains in the death state, death is still a victor. The Son of God came that He might destroy death, the works of the devil (*1John 3:8, Heb 2:14*). When the death state is abolished, all people will (after being already judged and adjudicated at the Great White Throne) be finally made alive at the very end of the ages. The last enemy, death, will then be truly abolished by the perfect efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice.

All rule and authority will be relinquished back to God alone, Who will then be “all in all” (1Cor 15:27-28), fully reconciled with all His creation without exception. What is left of rule is but cordial family relationship among free and individualistic spirit children of God – lives that are “governed” not by rule but by true love, all submitting filially to their only Father, with the greatest of respect for their eldest brother Jesus Christ (Heb 2:11). What a great reunion that will truly be! It will take an eternity to individually get to know and fellowship with one another among this huge and glorious cosmic family.

The very appearance of initial small amounts of first fruits typical of fruit trees and numerous other plants is the Gospel in Nature. Greater abundance is to follow after the first fruits or first harvests.

Anticipating the abolishment of death the last enemy, the first-fruit believers could tauntingly croon:

O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?
(1Cor 15:55 KJV)