

and thanksgiving for *everyone*. There is nothing that God wants more than for us to pray for people—*all people*—that they might believe in their Savior too. I know what Donald Trump needs more than anything else: Prayers! If Christians don't pray for the government, who is going to? If Christians don't pray for their bosses, who's going to? If Christians don't pray for their spouses, who's going to? *"This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."* Jesus is the One! Knowing the One allows me to give thanks for all.

One of my favorite ways to thank God is the hymn we sang at the beginning of our service. "Now thank we all our God, with hearts and hands and voices..." What do you think was the reason that hymn was written? Thanksgiving, right? "That's the Thanksgiving song!" Here's the story: "Now Thank We All Our God" was written in the 1600s by a pastor named Martin Rinkart. He lived in Germany in the middle of the Thirty Years War, a war that left eight million people dead. As if that weren't bad enough, in the middle of the war, a terrible plague swept through his town. At the beginning of one year, there were four pastors in his town. By the end of that year, one had quit and Pastor Rinkart had presided over the funerals of the other two.

During that year, Pastor Rinkart conducted funerals for up to 50 people a day, including the funeral of his own wife. In that one year, nearly 4,500 residents of the town died of disease. And he was the only pastor. If Martin Rinkart had practiced selective thanksgiving, he would have thrown the Bible out the window and gotten a new job. Instead, at some point during those difficult years, he wrote down these words: *"Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices: Who wondrous things hath done, in whom this world rejoices. Who, from our mother's arms, has blessed us on our way, with countless gifts of love and still is ours today."*

How could he write that? For the same reason that Paul could pray for Emperor Nero. For the same reason that you and I can give thanks in all circumstances. For Pastor Rinkart, Jesus was the One. In the midst of unimaginable hardship, Pastor Rinkart trusted that he had a gracious God who had saved him through Jesus his Savior. So he could thank God for everyone and everything. Hardships in life don't put an end to thanksgiving, they point us to Jesus. They point us to the One! If that's the case, I can even thank Jesus for life's difficulties. *Dios es el único*, my friend would say. Jesus is the One. I pray you remember that tomorrow and every day. You always have a reason to give thanks. Jesus is the One!

1 Timothy 2:1-6
Pastor Nathan Nass

Thanksgiving
November 24, 2016

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.

Jesus Is the One!

It's a great Thanksgiving tradition—maybe you do this in your family too. A large, extended family is sitting around an enormous table. There's a perfectly browned turkey and stuffing and potatoes and bread and something with cranberries.... Everyone's about to dig in, but somebody says, "Let's all say what we're thankful for...." So you go around the table: "Family, turkey, no snow, football...." You can picture it in your mind. Maybe in your stomach too.

So as the thanksgiving makes its way around the table and comes to you, how many of you are going to say, "Government!" Not at the top of your Thanksgiving list? I doubt it! Some of you are cringing that I even said the word. "Thankful for government? We're thankful, but not that thankful!" I heard on the radio a very serious discussion about how to navigate Thanksgiving with relatives whom you've unfriended on Facebook over politics. Thankful for government? It's best not to talk politics at all! Except did you hear our lesson? *"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."*

Paul encourages us to say prayers and offer thanks for everyone—especially for our government. "Their government must have been a lot better back then, right?" Well, have you ever heard of a guy named Nero? He was a Roman emperor. Let me tell you a little about Nero. After becoming emperor, he executed his stepbrother. Then his own mother got in the way. So she was gone too. Nero wanted to do some major building projects, so he decided to start a huge fire that burned down much of the city of Rome. Then, when he needed someone to blame for the fire, he decided to blame this new group of people—the Christians. He started the persecution of Christians in Rome. The fire happened in 64 AD. Paul wrote 1 Timothy in 65 or 66 AD.

Yet, what did Paul write? *"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession*

and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority....” The government wasn’t any better back then. It was worse! So how could Paul write that? There was something different about Paul’s thanksgiving than our thanksgiving today. When Christians gather together to worship, Paul encourages them to not just pray and give thanks for things, but to pray and give thanks for people—all people. Including the government. Including people who were personally causing them hardship and problems. He encouraged Christians to pray and thank God for *everyone!*

I don’t know about you, but I don’t do that! Have you ever heard someone talk about “selective listening”? That’s when your spouse or kids conveniently only hear you say the things they want to hear—selective listening. I think we’re guilty of “selective thanksgiving.” Can you guess what I mean? We only thank God for the things that go our way. We’ll thank God for a turkey, but not for that coworker. We’ll thank God for our families, but not for that president. We’ll thank God for her but not for him... It doesn’t take faith to be thankful in front of a huge Thanksgiving dinner. Everyone’s thankful for *something*. It takes faith to thank God for *everyone*.

The government can be a test of our selective thanksgiving. Can I be thankful for the government I have—whether I voted for it or not? Or, to put it clearly, have you thanked God lately that Barack Obama is our president? Have you thanked God that Donald Trump is going to be our president? Anyone can thank God for one or the other—selective thanksgiving. It’s hard to imagine anyone other than a Christian being thankful for both. But this is what God calls us to do! Can you trust that God is really able to use anyone and anything to do his will in the world?

That’s really the problem with our selective thanksgiving. To thank God for some things and not others is a clear sign that we trust in God for some things and not others. Just try this out: “God, when you do things my way, I will trust in you and thank you. But God, when you don’t do things my way, boy am I going to be worried and upset.” How does that sound? That’s not faith talking! You could say that whatever area of your life you’re not thankful for is a part of your life that you haven’t put into God’s hands. Whether that’s your government or your marriage or your job.... Selective thanksgiving is a sign of selective trust in God. To not thank is to not be willing to trust God.

What if God treated us the same way? What if he just selected whom he was going to love? Just the people who do everything he wants. How would work out for us? Thankfully, we don’t ever have to think about that, because there is nothing selective about God. “*God our Savior...wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*” God is not like us. There are no limits on his love. God loves every single person. And that means he loves you. He doesn’t just love you, he wants you to believe in Jesus and be saved and live forever in heaven. He wants that for you! If God had a Thanksgiving Day, he would give

thanks for you, and for everybody else.

Here’s what God’s love for all led him to do: “*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.*” God doesn’t punish us for our lack of thankfulness—or any of our other sins. He punished Jesus. Jesus stood between us and God the Father and he paid with his life for all people. Notice again that word “all.” For you and every single person whom you know—your spouse, your kids, your family, your friends... Jesus forgave you. Jesus saved you. Jesus loves you. The greatest thing that we can be thankful for is our salvation through Jesus.

“*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*” Jesus is the One. Jesus is the only One you need. Believing that will make all the difference in your life. Remember how hard it is for us to trust and thank God for everything? I think it’s because we’re slow to believe that Jesus really is the One. We need Jesus *and* our person in the White House. We need Jesus *and* a better boss than we have now. We need Jesus *and*... No we don’t. Jesus is the One. The apostle Paul could give thanks even for Emperor Nero—the emperor who would later have Paul executed—because Paul knew that not one bit of his life was really under Nero’s control. Jesus is the One. Knowing and trusting in the One—Jesus—allows you and me to be thankful for *all*.

There’s a lady here in town who reminds me of that every time I talk with her—“Jesus is the One.” She’s not a member of our church yet, but I hope she will be someday. She has a phrase she likes to say, “*Dios es el único.*” That means, “God is the only One.” When her husband died, I remembered asking her how she was making it. She said, “*Dios es el único.*” God’s the only One. When she struggles to make ends meet, she says, “*Dios es el único.*” God’s the only One. When her furnace stopped working last winter, she said, “*Dios es el único.*” Her struggles in life have taught her that truth—the same truth that Paul had learned—God is the only One. But God is the only One I need!

I want you to apply that to all the things that we struggle to thank God for. If our government worries us, or our leaders concern us, what should we do? The answer is clear: Move to Canada. No! Remember that my trust is not in government. I don’t need Jesus and a certain leader. Jesus is the One! So I can be thankful for whatever government God gives me. Do you see how this works? My trust is not in my job. I don’t need Jesus and that one position. Jesus is the One! So I can be thankful for whatever job Jesus uses to provide what I need. My trust isn’t even in my family. I don’t need Jesus and a certain relationship. Jesus is the One! I can be thankful for whatever family God gives me.

And whatever area of concern is still on my heart—God knows that there will still be concerns on my heart—God invites me make requests and prayers and intercessions