

**GOD DESIRES THE SALVATION OF ALL
GOD DECREES THE SALVATION OF SOME**

God Decrees The Salvation Of Some

God has chosen some people in Christ before the foundation of the world for salvation (**Ephesians 1:4**). In simple words, God the Father decreed to save the elect, all the elect and only the elect. (For elaboration on this doctrine of *election*, please visit <http://www.shalomrb.com/bygrace/> and read the two articles on 'Election' and 'Election Objection').

In due course, God the Son Jesus Christ came into this world and died on the cross for the elect to accomplish their salvation (**Matthew 1:21, Isaiah 53:11**). In simple words, Jesus did not die for all people on the cross but only for the elect. (For elaboration of this doctrine of *particular atonement*, please read the two articles 'For Whom Did He Die' and 'He Died For His People found here: <http://www.shalomrb.com/bygrace/>).

God Desires The Salvation Of All

Consider:

- (1) **Ezekiel 18:23, 32** ~ *"Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord God, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?" . . . For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord God. "Therefore turn and live"*

The word 'pleasure' in **verse 23** and **verse 32** is the same Hebrew word (*chaphets*), which can be translated as 'delight', 'desire' or 'pleased with'. So in **verse 23**, God is asking if He has any delight, any desire, if He is pleased with the fact that the wicked should die? The question is asked in such a way that the expected answer is 'No'. And that is exactly what He Himself said in **verse 32** - *I have no pleasure, no delight, no desire in his death. I am not pleased with the death of the wicked. Hence, turn and live!*

God desires the salvation of the wicked. This is why He says He takes no delight in his death (which will take place if he remains wicked). This is why He commands the wicked to turn and live. There is no qualifier to the 'wicked'. The verse did not say 'elect' wicked, meaning he is wicked

but because he is elected, he will finally turn and live. It is just plain, mere 'wicked'. Whether he is elect or not, the verse says nothing.

In the light of this, I will therefore tell every sinner that God desires their salvation, that God is pleased if they turn and live. I will declare this because I believe this is what **Ezekiel 18:23, 32** teaches.

- (2) **Matthew 23:37** ~ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

These are the words of Jesus Christ the Son of God. The two words underlined (*wanted, willing*) are the same word in Greek: *thelo*. This explains why some more literal Bible translations like the American Standard Version has it as "how often would I . . . and ye would not!" The word '*thelo*' can either mean 'determine/intend/purpose' or 'wish/desire/delight'.

The key question here is how should we translate this word with respect to Jesus - *how often I _____ to gather . . .* Should it be (a) 'determine/intend/purpose or (b) wish/desire/delight?

It cannot be (a) because if Jesus determines/intends/purposes that these Jews be gathered to Him, then they would have been gathered to Him. And to be gathered to Jesus would mean coming to Him in faith for salvation! We are therefore left with (b), meaning Jesus wishes, desires, delights to have them gathered to Him.

The second part of the verse tells us that that they have no wish, no desire, no delight in coming to Him! If God has decreed that they come, they would! But He didn't! Yet God in the Person of His Son desires that they would come to Him that they may have life! Does God desire their salvation? Yes! Did God decree their salvation? No!

- (3) **Isaiah 65:2** ~ I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts. The underlined part is a figure of speech -- God is here speaking after the manner of man. What does it convey? At the very minimum, it must

mean that He longs and yearns for them to turn from their rebellious ways, that He patiently waits for them to return to Him.

Luke 19:41-44 ~ *Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Here we read of our Lord weeping over impenitent Jerusalem. What does it say? That He is sad and grieved that they would remain in their sin, that He would rather they turn and hence have peace?*

In both instances, we know that the people remained in their sins and perish. Hence it is clear that God has not decreed their salvation. But don't the '*stretching out of hands all day long to them*' and '*weeping over them*' convey a desire that they would be saved? *If you disagree, then how would you explain them?*

I will leave aside passages like **1 Timothy 2:3-4** and **2 Peter 3:9** where Christians who hold to God's decree of election are divided as to whether the two passages teach God desires the salvation of all men. For example, concerning **1 Timothy 2:3-4**, Charles Spurgeon insists that '**all men means all men**' (See <http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols25-27/vols25-27.htm>, Volume 26 Sermon #1516) while John Calvin believes it means '**all classes of men**' (See <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom43.iii.iv.i.html>, Commentary of Calvin on 1 Timothy 2:4).

God decrees the salvation of some while desires the salvation of all. This is an example of parallel truths. This is an instance of God desiring what He has not decreed. As humans, we may have difficulty 'reconciling' them. But that is only a human difficulty. There is no difficulty or tension with God. In eternity, He may be pleased to show us how.

At this point, recall **Deuteronomy 29:29** that says: *The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.* Has God revealed to us that He decreed the salvation of some? Then it belongs to us to believe and preach it. Has God revealed to us that He has desires the salvation of all? Then it belongs to us to believe and preach it. This I seek to do. So God help me!

JOHN CALVIN ON EZEKIEL 18:23

Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?

He confirms the same sentiment in other words, that God desires nothing more earnestly than that those who were perishing and rushing to destruction should return into the way of safety. And for this reason not only is the Gospel spread abroad in the world, but God wished to bear witness through all ages how inclined he is to pity. For although the heathen were destitute of the law and the prophets, yet they were always endued with some taste of this doctrine. Truly enough they were suffocated by many errors: but we shall always find that they were induced by a secret impulse to seek for pardon, because this sense was in some way born with them, that God is to be appeased by all who seek him. Besides, God bore witness to it more clearly in the law and the prophets. In the Gospel we hear how familiarly he addresses us when he promises us pardon. (Luke 1:78.) And this is the knowledge of salvation, to embrace his mercy which he offers us in Christ. It follows, then, that what the Prophet now says is very true, that God wills not the death of a sinner, because he meets him of his own accord, and is not only prepared to receive all who fly to his pity, but he calls them towards him with a loud voice, when he sees how they are alienated from all hope of safety. But the manner must be noticed in which God wishes all to be saved, namely, when they turn themselves from their ways. God thus does not so wish all men to be saved as to renounce the difference between good and evil; but repentance, as we have said, must precede pardon. How, then, does God wish all men to be saved? By the Spirit's condemning the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment at this day, by the Gospel, as he did formerly by the law and the prophets. (John 16:8.) God makes manifest to mankind their great misery, that they may betake themselves to him: he wounds that he may cure, and slays that he may give life. We hold, then, that; God wills not the death of a sinner, since he calls all equally to repentance, and promises himself prepared to receive them if they only seriously repent. If any one should object — then there is no election of God, by which he has predestinated a fixed number to salvation, the answer is at hand: the Prophet does not here speak of God's secret counsel, but only recalls miserable men from despair, that they may apprehend the hope of pardon, and repent and embrace the offered salvation. If any one again objects — this is making God act with duplicity, the answer is ready, that God always

wishes the same thing, though by different ways, and in a manner inscrutable to us. Although, therefore, God's will is simple, yet great variety is involved in it, as far as our senses are concerned. Besides, it is not surprising that our eyes should be blinded by intense light, so that we cannot certainly judge how God wishes all to be saved, and yet has devoted all the reprobate to eternal destruction, and wishes them to perish. While we look now through a glass darkly, we should be content with the measure of our own intelligence. (1 Corinthians 13:12.) When we shall be like God, and see him face to face, then what is now obscure will then become plain. But since captious men torture this and similar passages, it will be needful to refute them shortly, since it can be done without trouble.

God is said not to wish the death of a sinner. How so? since he wishes all to be converted. Now we must see how God wishes all to be converted; for repentance is surely his peculiar gift: as it is his office to create men, so it is his province to renew them, and restore his image within them. For this reason we are said to be his workmanship, that is, his fashioning. (Ephesians 2:10.) Since, therefore, repentance is a kind of second creation, it follows that it is not in man's power; and if it is equally in God's power to convert men as well as to create them, it follows that the reprobate are not converted, because God does not wish their conversion; for if he wished it he could do it: and hence it appears that he does not wish it. But again they argue foolishly, since God does not wish all to be converted, he is himself deceptive, and nothing can be certainly stated concerning his paternal benevolence. But this knot is easily untied; for he does not leave us in suspense when he says, that he wishes all to be saved. Why so? for if no one repents without finding God propitious, then this sentence is filled up. But we must remark that God puts on a twofold character: for he here wishes to be taken at his word. As I have already said, the Prophet does not here dispute with subtlety about his incomprehensible plans, but wishes to keep our attention close to God's word. Now, what are the contents of this word? The law, the prophets, and the gospel. Now all are called to repentance, and the hope of salvation is promised them when they repent. this is true, since God rejects no returning sinner: he pardons all without exception: meanwhile, this will of God which he sets forth in his word does not prevent him from decreeing before the world was created what he would do with every individual: and as I have now said, the Prophet only shows here, that when we have been converted we need not doubt that God immediately meets us and shows himself propitious. The remainder tomorrow.