

Lecture 11- Election and Paradoxical Passages Part 2; Does God desire to save all or have more than one will?

***All Bible references are from NASB unless noted otherwise.**

Review of Previous Lectures

Lecture 1- 2 Peter 1:10 (Eph 4:1). Every Bible-believing Christian must affirm predestination and election. It is in the Bible. How they define the doctrine differs between believers and even scholars.

Lecture 2- God is sovereign. He rules from heaven and no one can thwart His rulership. Even man's so called free will cannot thwart God's supreme rulership as seen in Scripture.

Lecture 3- Free will or free agency in the Bible is evident, but the defining description of this free will is that it is not libertarian free will. It is an enslaved will that needs to be freed. Mankind makes willful choices from the preceding desires of their heart. God is able and does influence mankind's desires to accomplish His purposes. This includes restraining sin (Gen 20:6) or hardening hearts (Rom 9:18; 11:7, 25) amongst many other things as we saw in this lecture.

Lecture 4- Jesus taught clearly that man is unable to come to Him unless the Father draws Him (John 6:44-45, 65). Only those who are given to Jesus by the Father will come and be saved (John 6:37; 17).

Lecture 5- The Bible is replete that mankind is dead, enslaved, by nature children of wrath and do not seek after God out of their own capacities. Some scholars posit that prevenient grace is given as a remedy to neutralize the inability of mankind, but was found to be without explicit Biblical evidence.

Lecture 6- God clearly has a decree/plan and purpose in our world for all things (including salvation). He is not absent and is working all things according to the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11).

Lecture 7- One of the ways God is keeping His Word to Israel (and humanity) is through the principle of sovereign election which can be defined as God electing and predestining individuals from eternity past based on His choice alone. This choice is not based on the good or evil foreseen by God, nor does this election involve the will or works of man, but of God's choice alone (9:11, 16). This principle was at work in OT times and is currently at work in NT times as God is actively and mercifully saving those whom He has called (the remnant from both Jews and Gentiles) while hardening others according to His own sovereign purpose and for the sake of glorifying His own name. Exposition of Romans 9:1-23.

Lecture 8- The purpose of God's election choices was to promote His own glory. Part of God's ordained means of salvation was through faith alone. Additionally, God has ordained the means of prayer, evangelism, preaching in order to effectualize His plan for the elect/remnant from the Jews and Gentiles. Most of Israel remains in unbelief and disobedience because they sought to establish their own righteousness as by works and not by faith. Exposition of Romans 9:24 – 10:21.

Lecture 9- Election and God's Plan for the Chosen Remnant of Jews and Gentiles; Romans 11:1-36. Paul picked up the theme that he started in Romans 9 by teaching that the doctrine of election/remnant according to God's own purpose was active also in the prophetic ministry of Elijah (1 Kings 19). Therefore, we should not be surprised that the elect has obtained righteousness by faith and the rest were hardened/blinded and that is by grace, not works of any kind (Rom 11:5-7). Exposition of Romans 11:1-36.

Lecture 10- Election and the paradoxical passages Part 1. We saw the thoroughness of the difference between God's elect and non elect is that of God's choice, calling, mercying, and being chosen according to God's own secret purpose and will. We also observed that the nature of God's love can be described in the Bible in various ways (not types). This topic is not simple, but complex and includes various passages that are paradoxical (seem like contradictions, but are not).

***NOTE-** If you want a free, but full in-depth study of the topic of Lecture 10-11, Google search "are there two wills in God crossway pdf"

We have seen that God's purpose and will/desire cannot be thwarted. What God sovereignly decrees will come to pass according to His overall purpose to bring Glory to His name (see Lecture 6).

- **Psalm 115:1** Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to **Your name give glory** Because of Your lovingkindness (mercy), because of Your truth.
- **Isaiah 48:11** "For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can **My name be profaned**? And **My glory** I will not give to another. (see 48:9 for more about God's concern for His name)
- **Job 42:2** "I know that You can do all things, And **that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted**.
Isaiah 14:24-27 The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand,"²⁵ to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulder.²⁶ "This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations."²⁷ "For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"
Daniel 4:35 "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'
- **Psalm 33:10-11** The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples.¹¹ The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.

Various Aspects of the Will of God as Seen in the Whole Counsel of God

- Just as is seen in the various ways that God's love is exemplified in the Biblical text, so also theologians recognize there are various ways in which God's will or desire is represented in the Biblical text. Consulting most systematic theology textbooks will highlight these labels: decretive will, permissive will, perfect will, preceptive will, secret will, hidden will, undesired will, sovereign will, efficient will, will of decree, will of command, moral will, antecedent will, consequent will, absolute will, conditional will, will of good pleasure (desiderative will), etc.

Deuteronomy 29:29 "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

Proverbs 25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

Even though there are numerous facets of the will of God, all of them are usually summarized under three headings:

- **Decretive Will** (sovereign will, secret will, etc.) This will of God contains His blue print for history and is the working out of all things for His ultimate purpose and plan. **Ephesians 1:10-12**,¹⁰ *with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him*¹¹ *also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,*¹² *to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.* God's decretive will involves all things, but we must recognize that there are two types of actions that God had decreed/ordained to be included in His sovereign plan to the praise of His glory.
 - **Compliant Actions**- God's decretive will includes actions that are in agreement with His other desires/will. God decreed Paul to repent and believe in Jesus which is in agreement with God's command to repent.
 - **Non-Compliant Actions**- The easiest way to define this is the decree to have evil in God's world. God could have created a world without evil, but He chose to create a world and to include evil/disobedience in it. God is careful to not be the immediate cause of evil, but He is the ultimate determiner who decided to include evil. God does decree evil actions which violate His other desires/wills (His perceptive will as an example).

- **Preceptive Will** (will of command, moral will, revealed will, etc.) This will of God is primarily rooted in God’s commandments or precepts. God has commanded that no one lie, or murder, or get drunk, or have pride, etc. Additionally, God commands everyone to repent and believe in Jesus (Acts 17:30).
- **Benevolent Will of Disposition** (will of good pleasure, will of good inclination, good desires to all, etc.)
 - **God’s good nature-** God’s inclination is one of goodness. This coincides best with His love of benevolence and beneficence. God doesn’t desire or seek evil for His creatures. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desires for them to choose life and blessing (Ezek 33:11; 18:23, 32; Deut 5:29, 33). This is seen in Jesus’ heart also when He desires to gather the people like a hen and her chicks (Matt 23:37). His nature desires for all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4) and that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9). God is love (1 John 4:8, 16).
 - **God’s nature is in perfect balance with His other attributes and wills/desires-** This means that God makes choices out of His perfect being that don’t seem perfectly consistent from our human perspective. These choices can often be paradoxical (seemingly contradictory). Notice this passage in **Deut 28:63**, *This is what will happen: Just as the LORD delighted (Hebrew- sus) to do good for you and make you numerous, he will take delight (Hebrew- sus) in destroying and decimating you. You will be uprooted from the land you are about to possess.* (NET). What we will see is that God’s benevolent will/desires do not thwart Gods sovereign decrees.

“God’s will is not therefore at war with itself, nor does it change, nor does it pretend not to will what it wills. Even though **his will is one and simple in him, it appears manifold to us because, on account of our mental incapacity**, we do not grasp how in various ways it wills and does not will something to take place” (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*).

It is extremely important to understand the nature of God’s decrees and His acts of Providence.

- *1. God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.*
(Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. 3:1)
- *1. God—the great Creator of all things—upholds, directs, disposes, and governs all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least. He exercises this most wise and holy providence according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and unchangeable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.*
2. Although—in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause—all things come to pass unchangeably and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he orders them to occur according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.
3. In his ordinary providence, God makes use of means, yet he is free to work without, above, and against them as he pleases.
4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God manifest themselves so completely in his providence that it extends even to the first fall and all other sins of angels and men—not by a bare permission, but by a permission which has joined with it a most wise and powerful limiting, and otherwise ordering and governing of them in a varied administration, for his own holy purposes. However, the sinfulness comes from the creatures alone and not from God, who, because he is most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.
(Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 5:1-4)

Biblical examples where one facet of God's will/desires seems to be working in contrast to His other will/desires.

1 Kings 22:19-23 Micaiah said, "That being the case, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, with all the heavenly assembly standing on his right and on his left. ²⁰ The LORD said, 'Who will deceive Ahab, so he will attack Ramoth Gilead and die there?' One said this and another that. ²¹ Then a spirit stepped forward and stood before the LORD. He said, 'I will deceive him.' The LORD asked him, 'How?' ²² He replied, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.' The LORD said, 'Deceive and overpower him. Go out and do as you have proposed.' ²³ So now, look, the LORD has placed a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours; but the LORD has decreed disaster for you." (NET)

- Doesn't God desire all people to be saved (1 Tim 2:4)? Why is God seemingly "encouraging" deception? Doesn't God's **sovereign decree** and command to the lying spirit seem contrary to His **preceptive will** not to lie?
- God reserves the right to judge wicked Ahab. God uses the wicked and lying spirit to accomplish His goal of judging Ahab with death. God is not the immediate cause of this wickedness. God can do no evil. His decretive will to kill and judge Ahab to vindicate His glory (justice) took precedence over His benevolent will of disposition.

1 Samuel 2:25 "If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the LORD **desired** [literal Hebrew- "**delighted**"- *chafatz*] to put them to death.

Ezekiel 18:23 Do I actually **delight** (*chafatz*) in the death of the wicked, declares the sovereign LORD? Do I not prefer that he turn from his wicked conduct and live? (NET)

- Doesn't God desire all men to be saved? Eli's sons were wicked and were deserving of death. God's disposition is one of goodness towards them, but He reserves the right to judge wicked people.
- They were not able to listen to their Father's wise counsel, because God decreed to kill them. His **decretive will** to kill them to vindicate His glory (justice) took precedence over His **will of disposition**. God can grant repentance to anyone He desires (2 Timothy 2:25). He can restrain sin anytime also (Gen 20:6) and turn the heart of the king (or anyone else) in the direction He desires at any time (Proverbs 21:1). In this case, He chose not to.
- **In one sense**, God desired (took delight) in the death of the two sons and **in another sense** He did not.

Matthew 11:21-22 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² "Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.

- Jesus clearly acknowledged that to see salvation and repentance occur in the people of Tyre and Sidon, He simply had to go and do miracles there. Yet He chose not to. Is Jesus wicked or not good because He deliberately chose not to go there and provide the necessary elements for their salvation?
- We see here that God's sovereign decree did not include Jesus going and doing miracles there in order for them to be saved and coincide with God's benevolent will of disposition. God's decretive will had a greater purpose in vindicating and demonstrating God's glory than we are allowed to know. God did not reveal His secret will in this.

Deuteronomy 7:3 "Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. (see also 7:1-16; Ex 34:10-16; Josh 23:11-13)

Judges 14:1-4 Samson went down to Timnah, where a Philistine girl caught his eye. ² When he got home, he told his father and mother, "A Philistine girl in Timnah has caught my eye. Now get her for my wife." ³ But his father and mother said to him, "Certainly you can find a wife among your relatives or among all our people! You should not have to go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines." But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, because she is the right one for me." ⁴

Now his father and mother did not realize this was the LORD's doing, because he was looking for an opportunity to stir up trouble with the Philistines (for at that time the Philistines were ruling Israel). (NET)

- God's preceptive will included specific instructions not to intermarry with pagan neighbors.
- God's decretive will included Samson seeking a pagan Philistine wife. His parents were unaware that God's decretive will was working behind the scenes through Samson's evil desires.
- God decreed judgment on the Philistines and determined to use Samson's free choices of wickedness to accomplish His goals. Once again, God did not do any evil directly, but used contingent/secondary causes.

Isaiah 53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the **LORD has caused** the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

Isaiah 53:10 Yet it was the **LORD's will** [delight] to **crush him and cause him to suffer...** (NIV)

John 13:2 During supper, the **devil having already put into the heart of Judas** Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, to betray Him,

John 13:27 After the morsel, **Satan then entered into him.** Therefore, Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

Luke 22:3 And **Satan entered into Judas** who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.

Matthew 26:24 "The Son of Man *is to go*, **just as it is written of Him**; but **woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!** It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

Acts 2:23 this *Man*, delivered over by the **predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God**, you nailed to a cross by the **hands of godless men** and put *Him* to death.

Acts 4:27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both **Herod and Pontius Pilate**, along with the **Gentiles** and the **peoples of Israel**,²⁸ to do whatever **Your hand and Your purpose predestined** to occur.

- God's preceptive will (moral law) forbids premeditated murder. God's benevolent will doesn't delight in human death (especially the innocent). Yet we see clearly that it was the Lord's decretive will to crush Jesus (Is 53:10).
- God decreed that the Son of man would die as it was written of Him (Matt 26:34) and that there would be a betrayer to accomplish God's sovereign will (Ps 41:9). God decreed this to be, but was not the immediate cause of temptation. Satan was the cause (similar to David's sin of the census; 2 Sam 24:1; 1 Chron 21:1). Judas is still responsible.
- God's decretive will included a predetermined plan, foreordination, and predestination to accomplish God's purpose. Once again, God was not the immediate agent, but used a cohort of sinful people with wicked desires.
- Did God desire/will for Jesus to die? In one sense, the answer is yes. In another it is no.

Revelation 17:12-17 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.¹³ "These **have one purpose**, and they give their power and authority to the beast.¹⁴ "These will **wage war against the Lamb**, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him *are the called* and **chosen** and faithful."¹⁵ And he said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.¹⁶ "And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.

¹⁷ "**For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose**, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, **until the words of God will be fulfilled.**

- The ten kings have one purpose and that purpose is to empower the beast and wage war against the Lamb (v.14).
- The beast is the personification of evil who arises out of the abyss and whose purpose is perdition (17:8).
- All those people who are the non-elect will marvel at the beast. Those who are the elect and have their names written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world will not be impressed with the beast (17:8).
- To wage war against the Lamb violates God's preceptive will of obeying Jesus (Matt 28:18-20; Luke 6:46).
- In God's sovereign decree, He has put in the hearts for the ten horns to give their kingdom to the satanic beast in order to accomplish His sovereign decree which will execute His purpose until His words are fulfilled.

- In this case, God sovereignly wills for an evil action to take place which is contrary to His preceptive will.

Many more examples could be brought forward to show that God's will from our perspective is multifaceted and not as simple as some might assert. Did God desire Pharaoh to be saved? Yes and No. Does God desire/will to save other people that He has hardened (Deut 2:25-26; Josh 11:18-20; Romans 9:18; 11:7-8)? Yes and No. In one sense He does (His will of benevolence) and in another He doesn't (His decretive sovereign will).

Does God desire all to be saved? The two main NT passages that can be confusing:

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing** (Greek- *boulomai*) for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who **desires** (Greek- *thelo*) all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Howard Marshall who is a noted NT scholar (and leans towards Arminianism) writes this concerning 1 Timothy 2:4, "To avoid all misconceptions it should be made clear at the outset that the fact that God wishes or wills that all people should be saved does not necessarily imply that all will respond to the gospel and be saved. We must certainly distinguish between what God would like to see happen and what he actually does will to happen, and both of these things can be spoken of as God's will" (*A Case for Arminianism*, 56).

- NT scholars will note that there is no decisive difference between the two Greek words being used in these passages. Therefore, an appeal to the Greek does not help to explain the theological nuances of God's multifaceted will.
- It is clear that of the "three" wills we have discussed above, neither God's decretive will nor preceptive will make any sense in the above two passages.
- The only one that makes any sense is to see the passage speaking of God's benevolent will of disposition.
- Does God desire all people to be saved? In one sense He does (benevolent will) and in another He doesn't for the sake of His greater glory accomplished through His sovereign decretive will.

If God can save all, must He in order to be righteous/good?

Often times, we see humanity say YES to this question. We expect God to run His universe in ways that are similar to how we would run it. Yet God rebukes mankind for assuming that He is like us (Ps 50:21) and reminds us that His ways and thoughts are higher than our ways in the same proportion that the heavens are higher than the earth (Isaiah 55:8-9). May we be reminded also that we have no capability of fathoming the size of our universe and heaven is above that.

If God doesn't save all, is it because He can't?

Arminian theologians will often say YES to this question because they elevate human freedom and self-determination to the place of asserting that God cannot violate it. We have seen how God overrides human freedom at His sovereign discretion. Reformed theologians will also say YES to this question but for different reasons. They say that God cannot save all because this would violate the purposes, plans, and decrees He set up before the world was to magnify His name and glory which includes vessels of wrath. God could have created a world free of evil and vessels of wrath, but He would have had to change His purposes. His purposes for that potential world would be different than this actual world.