

# A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

**Chapter 13- Luke 13:31-34**

252- O Jerusalem, Jerusalem- Part 1

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August 24, 2014

## Luke 13:31-35

**31** Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, "Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You."

**32** And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I reach My goal.'

**33** "Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next *day*; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem.

**34** "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it*!

**35** "Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*; and I say to you, you will not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, '**BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!**'"

To the Glory of God

Now when anyone is climbing up from the deep luscious valleys into the highest mountains on earth- many times- they actually pass through the clouds. And that is the way it has been for me for most of my Christian life- as I have tried to get the best views of the Glory of God- I often pass through the clouds.

And when you enter a layer of clouds- it helps to have a guide to keep you away from falling over the side and from getting lost.

That's one way to view this section of God's Word. The Truths of Scripture in this section- in fact, all of this 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter- soar above us as a mighty mountain in great majesty and glory. And yet for human

beings- to try to grasp these Truths sometimes requires that during our struggle upward toward God and His Glory- we pass through clouds that seem to throw us off and confuse us.

And I pray that I might be used as a guide to help you go upward through the haze and the confusion about two of the deepest and most profound Truths in all the Bible:

1. Sovereign Election
2. God's Saving Will

And by extension- the collision of these two Truths affect how you understand two other aspects about the one, true, and living God:

- ❖ God's Mercy
- ❖ God's Righteousness

Now right off the bat let me say that I admit that some of the paths of this series in Chapter 13 of our Journey through Luke are steep. And some of the steepest places are through the thickest clouds. So this climb is not for everyone. We all have different gifts, and not everyone is called to this kind of climb. And I don't mean that the non-climbers are less saved or that they will see less Glory or that they worship God with less passion. There are glories down in the valleys. And there are paths into the awesome Beauties of God that are far easier than this. And I also do not believe that all those who do this sort of climbing will always see or enjoy more Glory than those with wider eyes for the Glory that is right there in the meadow.

Nevertheless, we are compelled to make this climb- clouds or not, confusion or not, hardship or not. And we are compelled because Chapter 13 of Luke's Gospel Account is in the Canon of Scripture, and that means that it was exhaled by God the Holy Spirit as He moved upon Dr. Luke to write it down. So this Chapter is inspired and that means that it is infallible, and that also means that it is inerrant, and that also means that it is relevant for us today. And so from that perspective- it is incumbent upon us to seek to grasp what this is saying. And this is also the next section of our Journey through Luke and six years ago- I promised you that I would go through every word of every verse in this Gospel Record- so we have this to do.

Here Jesus weeps over Jerusalem and He speaks tenderly about this great city, and yet- as God- surely Jesus knew that at this very moment- as He cries about how He would have gathered this great city into His Arms to save her- the rulers of Jerusalem were plotting the horrific Death of the sinless Lamb. And Jesus also would have known- as God Incarnate- that at this very moment- God the Father was sovereignly working events in causing a man- who had not yet been born- to cause this man- to rise through the ranks and become the Emperor of Rome- and who- about 42 years from this very date- would command over 80,000 soldiers to utterly destroy Jerusalem.

And history reveals that this destruction would be complete as it would make all other attacks and sieges and wars against Jerusalem up to this one- pale in comparison. Because this destruction would end all Temple worship- to this day, and it would remove the Levitical Priesthood from existence, and it would stop all animal sacrifices, and it would bring to a cataclysmic end- the entire function and operation of the Old Covenant upon the earth along with the entire Jewish way of life. And let me be clear about this- after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD- there was not one shred of doubt that God Almighty had poured out His Divine Judgment upon this city.

We need to understand that in 70 AD- all records in Jerusalem were destroyed, and today there is not a single Jew on earth that can trace his lineage back beyond this date, and so, in reality- no Jew actually knows what tribe they're from or who their ancestors were beyond this date.

And yet Jesus cries over her and He talks about what He wanted to do; what He longed to do when He said,

**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it!***

So how do we explain this? On the one hand- should we think that the human self-determination that so many people in the modern Church espouse is correct and it was simply up to the people of Jerusalem to somehow *override* their own fallen condition by the power of their own will and simply choose to repent and trust in Jesus, and since they didn't- God judged them? Is *that* how we should understand

this Passage? And if that is true- what do we do with Sovereign Election?

But on the other hand- if God had not chosen these people for Salvation and it was God's Will to destroy them and their city to usher in the New Covenant- why is Jesus talking here as though they had a chance and a choice?

Now let me say that almost every time we open our Bibles- we see challenges. The Word of God is filled with Puzzles and Mysteries and Paradoxes- mountain paths that call us to come up higher and yet they seem to lead in opposite directions.

So I would like to invite you to take a climb with me beginning this morning and going over the next several weeks. And as we travel together through this Passage and just what it means- I do not claim to be superior, but it may be that on this mountain I've gone up and down it enough times to be of some help.

Now keep in mind as we go up together that there are clouds ahead. And it can get really murky on the way to the brightness on the other side. And I would simply like to help- if I can.

Now the two paths that beckon us on this mountain are these:

- The path of God's *Decree* of Sovereign Election
- The path of God's *Desire* for all people to be saved

So there are two things to consider:

- A Divine *Decree*
- A Divine *Desire*

Now as we have already discovered in this Chapter- Sovereign Election says that God has a people whom God has set His Love upon- *before* they were born and *before* they did anything "good" or "evil", and even *before* God made the Universe. And because God has put His Own Reputation and His Own Name on the line in choosing these unworthy sinners- God sees to it that all of them come to Christ and are saved.

But the other path seems to say that God loves *everybody*- at least to some extent. And the Scriptures also tell us that God invites *everybody* to come, and that- at least to some extent- God actually

*desires* them all to be saved. And we have Scriptures that provide us glimpses into both paths.

So, for example- on the mountain path of Sovereign Election- Jesus says things like this in **John 17:6**:

**I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.**

... and in **John 6:34** that says:

**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.**

... and again in **John 6:65** where Jesus said

**... no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.**

... or as the Apostle Paul reasons in **Romans 9:15-18**:

**15 ... I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."**

**16** So then it [Salvation] *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

**17** For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "**FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.**"

**18** So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

But on the mountain path of God's Desire for all- Jesus says here in our Passage- to the city that is about to kill Him:

**Luke 13:34**

**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it*!**

And He seems to offer an open and free invitation to everyone who is heavy laden, thirsty, and perishing when He said in **Matthew 11:28**:

**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest**

... and in **John 7:37**, when He said:

**If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink**

... and again when He said in **John 3:16**:

**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**

Now this is an old paradox. It is as old as the Book itself. And I didn't climb this mountain by myself. Wiser and more seasoned climbers than I have helped me along the way- and I'll introduce them to you as we go along.

Now let me also say to you that the goal of this series is *not* intellectual satisfaction, and that should never be your goal either. So if that is all you get out of this series- then you have missed my entire purpose. My goal in this series of trying to understand two seemingly contradictory positions, and God's Goal in putting both of these positions in His Word is "worship".

God gets more Honor when we worship Him on the basis of what we know about Him that is true than He does if we worship Him on the basis of our confusion about Him. So if our effort to know God more clearly is not an effort to love Him more dearly- it is sin and will only add to the confusion.

**1Corinthians 8:1b**

**... Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.**

And this means that the only knowledge that is worth having in the end is a knowledge that leads to love- a love for God and a love for people. So even though there is no doubt that some will use this series to try to win an argument with other people- that is *not* what I am writing it for and that is not why I am preaching it.

My earnest desire is to simply show- from the Scriptures- that the simultaneous existence of God's Desire for "**all persons to be saved**" as He wrote in **1Timothy 2:4** and His Will to unconditionally elect those who will actually be saved- is not a sign of some sort of "Divine Schizophrenia" or exegetical confusion. It is my intent to prove that Sovereign Election does *not* contradict any Biblical expressions of God's Compassion for all people and does *not* nullify sincere offers of Salvation to everyone who is lost among all the peoples of the world.

So it is my desire to prove to you- from the Scriptures- employing the concept of "Sola Scriptura"- that Jesus was not simply being sentimental here in **Luke 13** by regretting that Jerusalem would not repent while at the same time knowing full well that it was God's Will to destroy this city. In other words- I intend to show you that while it is true that God does not delight in the death of the wicked- choosing to give some unworthy sinners His Mercy for Salvation while passing over others- does please God- even though that means that God leaves the rest for Justice. Now there are basically two groups of people today:

- Those who passionately hold to the self-determination of Man
- Those who passionately hold to the absolute Freedom of God

... with the first group being dominant in the modern Church, while the second group was dominant throughout Church history. And throughout time- **1Timothy 2:4**, and **2Peter 3:9**, **Ezekiel 18:23**, and our Passage here in **Luke 13** have been called "*proof texts concerning the self-determination of Man*". So let's see if that is true. Over in **1Timothy 2:1-4** Paul says that the reason we should pray for kings and all those in high positions of authority is that this may bring about a quiet and peaceable life which:

**... is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

Now this appears to be very straightforward- and people rush off to build a doctrine around this Passage that exalts and rejoices over Man's own self-determination- until we get into two very important aspects of this Passage:

- A. The context of *why* Paul said this
- B. His use of a particular Greek word

Now the correct context of **1Timothy 2:14** is that the Church in Ephesus- over which a young man, named Timothy, is the Pastor- is being horrible persecuted by the ruling authorities. And the natural and normal response to this horrific persecution is that some of the saved people of this Church are becoming very bitter and angry and discouraged at the fact that many of those in authority are doing such great damage to them and the Cause of Christ.

And the fear is that out of this fleshly anger and bitterness and discouragement- the people of this Church would neglect to pray for the ruling authorities and even neglect preaching the Gospel to them, and some are even descending into such consuming hatred that they are actually wishing and hoping and even praying that God would kill or remove these political and social authorities rather than save them- even though they have been well taught that God has sovereignly placed these leaders into their positions. And this would be the very same hatred that consumed the Jews during Jesus' Day as they hated the Romans and prayed for God to kill them and had no heart for their souls.

So Paul- being very aware of the Grace of God in his own life as God mercifully forgave and saved him even though he himself persecuted the Church at one time- having several hundred men, women, and children killed and imprisoned- and was even instrumental in getting some weak souls to renounce Jesus under threat of death- is reminding these people in this Passage that even some of these pagan, vicious, unmerciful, and evil leaders could very well be chosen by God for Salvation and yet they will never be saved unless and until other saved people pray for them and preach the Gospel to them.

Now what is interesting is that the Apostle Paul *purposely* used the Greek word "*thelei*" here that was translated into English as "**desires**". So by using very careful exegesis- the sentence that says:

**... who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

... should be understood as saying:

**... who desires all [kinds of] men [even evil rulers] to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**

... since that is what the Greek word "*thelei*" means. So both contextually and exegetically- this seemingly straightforward verse does not *undermine* Sovereign Election at all- rather it *verifies* it.

So what Paul is actually saying here is that since Salvation *always* comes about through Sovereign Election and *not* based on human choice and not based on how evil or how good that person is or is not- therefore- even ruling authorities who are horribly persecuting the Church could end up being saved, and, therefore, already saved people need to pray for their evil Presidents and Governors and other rulers- and preach the Gospel to them- because they just might be elected by God for Eternal Life.

Now keep that in mind and go with me to **2Peter 3:8&9**. Here the Apostle is moved by God the Holy Spirit to say that the delay of the Second Coming of Christ to this earth is due to the fact that with the Lord- one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day. And then in verse 9- Peter says:

### **2Peter 3:9**

**The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**

Again this appears to be very straight forward and seems to undermine Sovereign Election big time by saying very clearly that God doesn't wish for "**any to perish but for all to come to repentance**".

And so because this appears to be so crystal clear- people rush off and build a doctrine around this verse, too- a doctrine that allows for Man to have self-determination as it pertains to his own Salvation- while removing God's absolute Freedom in "**having Mercy on whom I will have Mercy**".

And this verse is very clear. That is- until you once again get into the correct context of the Passage and until you get into the original Greek words. Let's see.

### **2Peter 3:9a**

**The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness...**

Now the "Promise" here is Jesus' Promise to come back to this earth and end all suffering and remove all evil from the world by removing all unrepentant evil people. So the Promise of His Return is sure and certain. Yet many years have gone by at the time Peter wrote this and Jesus has not come back, and the persecution is even worse now that it was when Jesus was here- and there is more evil that appears to be triumphing over all good- so how long should they be expected to wait?

And so Peter is telling these people that God is not "slow" about His Promise to come back in the sense of "slow" having to do with *forgetting* or being *neglectful*.

So Peter is encouraging these people by saying that since God is *not* a human being- He doesn't "forget" and He will not be "neglectful" or "slow" or "slack" to fulfill the Promise of returning to this earth.

*"Okay, Peter- that's just peachy keen- the Lord has not forgotten us- but why doesn't Jesus come back now? Doesn't He see all the evil that is going on? Doesn't He care about us? I mean, how could it possibly be God's Will to allow such great persecution and evil to go on and Him not come back to stop it?"*

And that's a good question- so look at Peter's response in the next part of verse 9:

**... but is patient toward you...**

What? Patient toward us? What has that got to do with why Jesus doesn't come back to end all the evil that is going on? This makes sense when you realize that the **"you"** here is *not* the already saved people of this Church to whom Peter is writing, but is those who are chosen to believe- the elect. The King James Version actually uses the word:

**"Us-ward"**

... which means: *"people like you"*- which is a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Elizabethan way of saying the same thing. These are people who are chosen to be "you" but who are simply not saved yet. So the "you" here are those who are chosen to become part of the Church at some point in the future

- those to whom God has set His Love upon- but who have not- as of yet- been saved.

So Peter is saying that while God has certainly not forgotten those who are already saved, and He has not forgotten and is not being neglectful of His Promise to return and stop all the evil that is going on- nevertheless- He has also not forgotten and He is also not neglectful about His Promise to save all those He has chosen. And since all of them have not yet been saved (or even born) yet, God sovereignly *allows* the evil in the world to go on until all His elect can be saved. And then to cap it off- Peter goes on to say:

**... not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance**

Now again this appears to be very straightforward and it appears that Peter is saying that God does not wish for anyone to perish but that God wants everybody to come to repentance and Salvation. So once again- this also appears to undermine Sovereign Election and promotes human self-determination- until we get into the original Greek.

The words that were translated here into English as “**any**” and “**all**” actually come from the very same Greek word “*tis*”. And “*tis*” does not mean “*everybody*” and “*anyone*” as “**any**” and “**all**” seem to suggest. The Greek word “*tis*” means:

all of a particular group

So we should understand **2Peter 3:9** as saying:

**The Lord is not slow about His promise** [to come back and to end all the evil], **as some count slowness, but is patient toward you** [those who will be saved in the future], **not wishing for any** [of His elect] **to perish but for all** [those whom God has set His Love upon from before the foundation of the world] **to come to repentance.**

So we have seen by putting these two Passages into their proper context and by utilizing correct exegesis- that **1Timothy 2:4** would lead us to believe that “God's willing all persons to be saved” does not refer

to every individual person in the world, but rather to all *sorts* of persons- like "**kings and all in high positions**".

And we have seen that the "**you**" in **2Peter 3:9** refers not to every person in the world but to those who will one day be saved as one of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century foremost leading Evangelical theologians- Adolf Schlatter says,

"... are people who only through repentance can attain to the grace of God and to the promised inheritance."

... and that "**any**" and "**all**" in this verse does *not* mean "everybody" but all of a particular group. So as far as I am concerned- we can completely eliminate **1Timothy 2:4** and **2Peter 3:9** as being "proof" that Man has "free will" in his own Salvation because- as I have shown you- both of these two verses actually prove the validity of Sovereign Election.

Nevertheless, this case for Sovereign Election has never been convincing to those who seek to uphold human self-determination through the Centuries and likely will not become convincing simply because I preach it this morning- especially since we still need to deal with **Ezekiel 18:23& 32** and **33:11**- because these Passages are much harder to grasp in context with Sovereign Election. So let's go there:

#### **Ezekiel 18:23**

**Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord GOD, rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?**

#### **Ezekiel 18:32**

**For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord GOD. "Therefore, repent and live."**

#### **Ezekiel 33:11**

**Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'**

... again these verses look very straightforward- God does not delight in the death of the wicked- end of statement. So based on that- Jesus

must have wept over Jerusalem in **Luke 13** because the Jews of that city all had a "chance" to be saved and they simply rebelled and chose not to repent and trust in Jesus and *that* is why God destroyed the city.

But wait. If that is correct- then that position exalts the sovereignty of Man's own self-determination as it pertains to Salvation and it categorically rejects the concept of Sovereign Election- which we have already proven to be true.

We have already seen over the last two weeks that the Bible clearly and repeatedly says that God has chosen to only save His elect- which means that some people will die and perish. But if that is true- why does God say that He doesn't delight in doing that here and why did Jesus weep over Jerusalem?

Are we to assume that God chooses to save people *in opposition to* His Own Pleasure? Does God operate through Sovereign Election in Salvation in *defiance* of what pleases Him? Is *that* what we should get out of this? No. And here's why. We need to *contrast* the verses we just read in **Ezekiel** with these verses in **Psalms**:

**Psalms 115:3**

**But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.**

**Psalms 135:6**

**Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.**

So, when we put all this together- we see four absolutely correct and true Statements- all of them out of the Mouth of the same God:

- ✓ **For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies... Therefore, repent and live.**
- ✓ **'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'**
- ✓ **But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases**
- ✓ **Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.**

Now one of two things is true:

- I. Either we have now uncovered a huge glaring contradiction in the Word of God (which means that the Bible cannot be trusted and our faith is in vain)
- II. We are looking at two sides of the very same God that appear on the surface to be in contradiction, and, therefore, must be solved.

... and I am firmly in the second position. So as a hearty believer in Unconditional, Individual, Sovereign Election- I rejoice to affirm to you today that:

God is absolutely Sovereign over everything- all the time- and He does all that He pleases, and is, in no way, ever defeated in achieving His Will- while at the same time- God does *not* delight in the perishing of the impenitent, and the God of the Bible has Compassion on all people.

... and my goal in this sermon series is to show to you that this is not double talk.

Now my assignment in this Sermon Series is not to defend the Doctrine that God chooses unconditionally whom He will save- *per se*. I have tried to do that before today at great length. However- I *will* try to make a credible case that while these so-called "proof texts of human self-determination" may indeed be examples for "God's Universal Love"- they are *not* weapons that can defeat or even wound- Sovereign Election.

And if I succeed in accomplishing my goal- then there will be an indirect confirmation for the thesis that people have erred in trying to take examples of God's Universal Love and turn them into weapons against Sovereign Election.

Now I understand that by my affirming the Will of God to save *all* while also affirming the unconditional Election of *some*- I am implying that there are at least "two Wills" in God, or at least two ways of us *understanding* God's Will, or better put- there are two sides to God's Will. One side implies that God sovereignly decrees that one state of affairs *is*- while also willing and teaching that a different state of affairs *should be*.

Now even though this may be new to many of you- this is hardly the first time somebody in the Ministry of Jesus Christ has tried to

tackle this issue. The distinction in the way that God Wills has been expressed in various forms throughout the Centuries by many people- especially those who think deeply about the Things of God. And the fact that not many leaders in the modern Church have dealt with this issue is really just “par for the course” as we live in a day of great compromise and a great push to de-emphasize Divine Truth and replace it with human emotional passion.

So this is not a new struggle. For example, good and godly theologians down through the 2,000 years of the Church from Augustine to Jerry Falwell have spoken of the difference between:

- God’s “Sovereign Will” and His “Moral Will”
- God’s “Perfect Will” and His “Permissive Will”
- God’s “Secret Will” and His “Revealed Will”
- God’s “Will of Decree” and His “Will of Command”
- God’s “Decretive Will” and His “Preceptive Will”
- God’s “*Voluntas Signi* (God’s Will of Sign) and His “*Voluntas Beneplaciti*” (God’s Will of Good Pleasure)

... so men who are smarter and more Biblical than I am have tried to understand this apparent contradiction while faithfully holding on to what the Bible teaches about Sovereign Election. For example- almost 300 years ago- America’s greatest theologian- Jonathan Edwards said,

"The Arminians ridicule the distinction between the Secret and the Revealed Will of God, or, more properly expressed, the distinction between the Decree and the Law of God; because we say He may decree one thing, and command another. And so, they argue, we hold a contrariety in God, as if one Will of His contradicted another."

But, in spite of Arminian attacks- the distinction stands- not because of a logical or theological deduction- but because it is inescapable in the Scriptures.

Now the closet issue that I know of to this one that also invites both struggle and controversy is The Doctrine of the Trinity which states that:

God is “one” in His Essence while being eternally manifested in three distinct Persons of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit”.

... and while it is true that the Scriptures do not use the word, “Trinity”- this Doctrine is correct because it takes all that the Scripture *does* say about God and puts it together. But after almost 2,000 years of the Church teaching and promoting this Doctrine- controversy and conflict still surrounds it because some verses seem to uphold it rather easily while others seem to take away from it- until you put those Scriptures in context. So it is with Sovereign Election.

Now one of the most honest exegetes I know of- who sadly holds to the self-determination of Man- is a guy named I. Howard Marshall- who is the Professor Emeritus of Aberdeen College in Scotland. And so while Marshall is wrong about human free will and Sovereign Election- at least he is honest about how he gets there, and he said this about **1Timothy 2:14**,

“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.* The question at issue is not whether all will be saved but whether God has made provision in Christ for the salvation of all, provided that they believe, and without limiting the potential scope of the death of Christ merely to those whom God knows will believe.”

Amen- that is exactly at what is at stake, Brother Marshall. And even though this is rather long- I want you to also hear from the renown Bible scholar, John MacArthur- who unashamedly promotes the concept of the absolute Freedom of God in choosing some for Salvation as to what he said about **1Timothy 2:14**, when somebody asked the question:

If God desires all to be saved- why aren't all saved?

... and the normal way that people in the modern Church answer this question is some form of:

“Well God *does* desire to save everybody, but human beings have “free will” and God will not ever violate their free will, and so they have to choose to accept God’s offer of Salvation, and those who do will be saved and those who don’t will go to hell”.

Of course MacArthur doesn’t believe that. And so he does the hard work of explaining what seemingly contradictory verses actually mean. And even though this is rather long- I wanted to hear from him about this issue. So MacArthur responds:

“This powerful and dramatic passage answers the question “Why pray for the lost?” It is one of the most definitive statements in all of Scripture of the saving purpose of God. It contains several reasons for evangelistic prayer.

#### Evangelistic Prayer is Morally Right

This points back to the commandment to pray for the lost in verses 1–2. *Kalon* (good) refers to what is intrinsically, morally good. God defines prayer for the lost as the noble and spiritually proper thing to do, and our consciences agree. The lost suffer the agony of sin, shame, and meaninglessness in this life, and the eternal hell of unrelenting agony in the life to come. Knowing that, it is the most excellent task to pray for their salvation.

Some might argue that Jesus said in **John 17:9**, “**I do not ask on behalf of the world.**” But there Christ was praying as Great High Priest for God’s elect. Because He is sovereign, omniscient Deity, His prayer was specific in a way ours cannot be. It was a prayer exclusively for the salvation of those whom He loved and chose before the foundation of the world to be partakers of every spiritual blessing (**Eph. 1:3–4**). “The world” was specifically excluded from the saving design of this prayer.

Our prayers, however, are not the prayers of a high priest; we pray as ambassadors of Christ, whose task it is to beseech men and women on His behalf to be reconciled to God (**2 Cor. 5:20**). We are therefore commanded to offer our entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings ... on behalf of all men. Our earnest desire ought to be for the salvation of all sinners (cf. **Rom. 9:3; 10:1**). We are not to try to limit evangelism to the elect only.

There are two reasons for this. First, God’s decree of election is secret. We do not know who the elect are and have no way of knowing *until* they respond to the gospel. Second, the scope of God’s evangelistic purposes is broader than election. “Many are called, but few are chosen” (**Matt. 22:14**). Even Jesus’ high priestly prayer *does* embrace the world in this important regard. Our Lord prayed

for unity among the elect so that the truth of the gospel would be made clear to the world: “that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. ... that the world may know that Thou didst send Me” (**John 17:21, 23**). God’s call to all sinners is a bona fide and sincere invitation to salvation: “‘As I live!’ declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’” (Ezek. 33:11).

### Evangelistic Prayer is Consistent with God’s Desire

Obviously, in some inscrutable sense, God’s *desire* for the world’s salvation is different from His eternal saving *purpose*. We can understand this to some degree from a human perspective after all, our purposes frequently differ from our desires. We may *desire*, for example, to spend a day at leisure, yet a higher *purpose* compels us to go to work instead. Similarly, God’s saving purposes transcend His desires. (There is a crucial difference, of course: We might be compelled by circumstances beyond our control to choose what we do not desire. But God’s choices are determined by nothing other than His own sovereign, eternal purpose).

God genuinely desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Yet in “the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord” (**Eph. 3:11**), He chose only the elect “out of the world” (**John 17:6**), and passed over the rest, leaving them to the damning consequences of their sin (cf., **Rom. 1:18–32**). The culpability for their damnation rests entirely on them because of their sin and rejection of God. God is not to blame for their unbelief.

Since God desires all men to be saved, we are not required to ascertain that a person is elect before praying for that person’s salvation. God alone knows who all the elect are (**2 Tim. 2:19**). We may pray on behalf of all men with full assurance that such prayers are good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. After all, “the Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and great in loving-kindness. The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works” (**Ps. 145:8–9**).

*Apodektos* (**acceptable**), is from *apodechomai*, which means “to receive gladly,” “to accept with satisfaction,” or “to heartily welcome.” The Lord eagerly accepts prayer for the lost because it is consistent with His desire for their salvation.

Such prayer is also consistent with His nature as Savior. The phrase God our Savior appears five other times in the Pastoral Epistles (1:1; 4:10; **Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4**), as well as in Jude 25. God is not only creator, sustainer, king, and judge, but

also savior. His saving character is manifested through His Son, Jesus Christ (**2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6**). God is the “Savior of all men” in a temporal sense, but “especially of believers” in an eternal sense (**1 Tim. 4:10b**).

That truth of God’s saving nature is also taught in the Old Testament (cf. **2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 106:21; Isa. 43:3, 11**). The idea that the God of the Old Testament is a vengeful, wrathful ogre mollified by the gentle, loving, New Testament Christ is not at all accurate.

When God desires all men to be saved, He is being consistent with who He is. In **Isaiah 45:22** God said, “Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth.” **Isaiah 55:1** invites “every one who thirsts” to “come to the waters” of salvation. Again, in **Ezekiel 18:23, 32**, God states very clearly that He does not desire that the wicked should perish, but that they would sincerely repent (cf. **Ezek. 33:11**). In the New Testament, Peter writes, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (**2 Peter 3:9**).

No true biblical theology can teach that God takes pleasure in the damnation of the wicked. Yet though it does not please Him, God will receive glory even in the damnation of unbelievers (cf. **Rom. 9:22–23**). How His electing grace and predestined purpose can stand beside His love for the world and desire that the gospel be preached to all people, still holding them responsible for their own rejection and condemnation, is a mystery of the divine mind. The Scriptures teach God’s love for the world, His displeasure in judging sinners, His desire for all to hear the gospel and be saved. They also teach that every sinner is incapable yet responsible to believe and will be damned if he does not. Crowning the Scripture’s teaching on this matter is the great truth that God has elected who will believe and saved them before the world began. What mystery!

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (**Rom. 11:33–36**)

To come to the knowledge of the truth is to be saved. *Epignosis* (**knowledge**) is used three other times in the Pastoral Epistles (**2 Tim. 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:1**). In all four occurrences, it refers to the true knowledge that brings about salvation. Far from desiring their damnation, God desires the lost to come to a saving knowledge of the truth.

Some have argued that this passage teaches universalism. If God desires the salvation of **all men**, they argue, then all will be saved, or God won’t get what He wants. Others argue that what God wills comes to pass, because **all men** means all classes of men, not every individual. Neither of those positions is necessary,

however. We must distinguish between God's will of decree (His eternal purpose), and His will expressed as desire. **Desire** is not from *boulomai*, which would be more likely to express God's will of decree, but from *thelo*, which can refer to God's will of desire. This is precisely the distinction theologians often make between God's secret will and His revealed will.

God desires many things that He does not decree. It was never God's *desire* that sin exist, yet the undeniable existence of sin proves that even sin fulfills His eternal purposes (**Isa. 46:10**)—though in no sense is He the author of sin (**James 1:13**).

Jesus lamented over Jerusalem, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling” (**Luke 13:34**). John Murray and Ned B. Stonehouse wrote, “*We have found that God himself expresses an ardent desire for the fulfillment of certain things which he has not decreed in his inscrutable counsel to come to pass*” (*The Free Offer of the Gospel* [Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presb. & Ref., 1979], 26). God desires all men to be saved. It is their willful rejection of Him that sends them to hell. The biblical truths of election and predestination do not cancel man's moral responsibility.”

Amen. So hold on to your hats- this is going to be quite a ride as we try to explore how God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked while at the same time- doing only what pleases Himself, and why Jesus could understand that it was God's Will to utterly annihilate Jerusalem while at the same time weeping over their rebellious and impenitent heart. May God help us as we seek to remain truly Biblical in what we think and believe.

Amen. Let's pray.