

GOD DESIRES ALL TO BE SAVED (II)

We claim to believe in the final authority of Scripture. The first chapter of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith is on the doctrine of Scripture. Let us therefore seek to be *reformed* in our thinking and beliefs and attitude by Scripture, above everything and anything else. God desires all to be saved. Is this Biblical? Let's continue with our study of some relevant passages on this subject:

- [5] **Acts 26:28-29** ~ *Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."*

What does Paul mean by "*might become both almost and altogether such as I am*"? *My answer is that all of them too will become a Christian. Is that your answer?*

What is Paul conveying when he said, "*I would to God that . . .*"? *My answer is that it is Paul's desire that they turn from their sins and believe in Jesus. He longs for their conversion. Is that your answer as well?*

Is Paul speaking here as a private individual or as God's representative? *My answer is that he is speaking as Christ's apostle, as God's ambassador. In other words, he is not expressing his own personal feelings but he is conveying God's desire! Therefore, God's desire is that Agrippa and all who were present that day should turn and live! What is your answer?*

- [6] **Romans 9:1-3, 10:1** ~ *I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.*

Why is Paul having great sorrow and continual grief in his heart? *It is because his fellow Jews refused to believe in Jesus Christ. Is that your answer?*

In view of their unrepentant heart, what's the desire of Paul? *That they may be saved! If you disagree, give me an answer that fits Romans 10:1?*

Is Paul's desire reflective of God's? *I have to say 'yes', because Paul is speaking and writing as Christ's apostle. He indeed has true and sincere desires for the salvation of the Jews, and that is because first and foremost, God has true and sincere desires for the salvation of those Jews. Paul learnt from God, Paul imitated God. This is my answer. Can I know what is yours?*

- [6] **2 Peter 3:9** ~ *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

The word 'willing' is 'boulomai' in Greek. It can be translated as 'decree' or 'desire'. So the later part of the verse can either read as '*not decreed any should perish but all should come to repentance*' or '*not desired any should perish but all should come to repentance*'.

The word 'any' means 'any'. Some have argued that because Peter says '*God is longsuffering towards us*', referring to believers, to the elect, hence the 'any' is restricted only to the elect. In this case, the verse would read '*God has not decreed/desired that any of the elect should perish but all the elect should come to repentance.*' I have no objections to this, except I need to remind myself that I have *inserted* the word 'elect' into the text.

If we stick to the word 'any', without inserting the word 'elect' into the text, then it is equally reasonable to read this verse as: *God has not desired any should perish but all should come to repentance!* And such a reading would be in line with the other 5 passages quoted earlier. [In this case, 'boulomai' cannot be translated as 'decreed' because other parts of Scripture clearly teaches God has decreed that some will perish.]

I call you to be like the Bereans (**Acts 17:11**) to search the Scriptures for yourself to see if what I've laid out above is true or otherwise. And as you do so, I remind you that **1 Corinthians 13** is Scripture and hence binding on you. Don't engage in name-calling. Love even those who differ from you.

This I have tried to do, as I seek to explain why I believe the Bible teaches that God desires all sinners to be saved. This I do, no more, no less. So God help me!