

God's Desire and God's Purpose – The Two Wills of God

July 29, 2018

Much of today's lesson is attributable to Dr. John Piper's "Are There Two Wills in God".

Key Arminian Texts Regarding the Will of God

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, **who desires** (thelo) all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1Ti 2:1-4)

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing** (boulomai) that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2Pe 3:9)

Have I any pleasure (thelo) in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? (Eze 18:23)

From *Are There Two Wills in God* by John Piper:

R.T. Forster and V.P. Marston try to overcome the tension between God's will of decree and God's will of command by asserting that there is no such thing as God's sovereign will of decree: "Nothing in Scripture suggests that there is some kind of will or plan of God which is inviolable."

Response:

Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the LORD has done it? (Amo 3:6)

I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. (Jer 10:23)

Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come? (Lam 3:37-38)

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, to do whatever your hand and your **plan (boule)** had predestined to take place. (Act 4:27-28)

From Arminian, Dr. Fritz Guy:

The will of God is his general intention and longing, not his effective purpose...Apart from a predestinarian presupposition, it becomes apparent that God's 'will' is always (sic) to be understood in terms of intention and desire [as opposed to efficacious, sovereign purpose]."

Response:

Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he **pleases (thelo)**. (Psa 115:3)

all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his **will (thelema)** among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" (Dan 4:35)

remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish **all my purpose (boule)**,' (Isa 46:9-10)

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the **purpose (boule)** of him who works all things according to the counsel of his **will (thelema)**, (Eph 1:11)

for it is God who works in you, both to **will (thelo)** and to work for his good pleasure (**eudokia**). (Php 2:13)

The Two Wills of God

God's Revealed Will (Will of Command) – God Hates Sin

The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. (Psa 11:5)

The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. (Pro 8:13)

God's Secret Will (Will of Decree) – God uses man's sin to accomplish His purpose

Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. (Luk 22:3)

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. (Act 2:23)

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (Isa 53:10)

Jonathan Edwards: *Christ's suffering "could not come to pass but by sin. For contempt and disgrace was one thing he was to suffer"*.

The War Against the Lamb – God brings it about according to His purpose:

And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire, for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his **purpose (nomay)** by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. (Rev 17:16-17)

Sometimes God restrains sin – and sometimes he allows it to continue for his own purpose

Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, "Lord, will you kill an innocent people? Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. **Therefore I did not let you touch her.** (Gen 20:4-6)

Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. And he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" **But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will (boulomai) of the LORD to put them to death.** (1Sa 2:22-25)

The Hebrew for will here is the same as used in Ezekiel 18:23

Sometimes, God hardens hearts to bring about disobedience (will of command vs will of decree)

Example 1 – Pharaoh

And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. (Exo 4:21) **(Will of decree)**

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let my people go, that they may serve me. (Exo 8:1) **(Will of command)**

Now therefore, **forgive my sin**, please, only this once, and plead with the LORD your God only to remove this death from me." (Exo 10:17) **(Pharaoh violates the will of command but accomplishes the will of decree according to God's purpose)**

Example 2 – Israel's neighbors

There was not a city that made peace with the people of Israel except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. They took them all in battle. For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses. (Jos 11:19-20)

Example 3 – "giving them up"

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. (Rom 1:28)

God does not take delight in the death of the wicked, but he takes delight in the death of the wicked.

Whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God. And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take **delight** (joy, exultation) in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. (Deu 28:62-63)

From *Are There Two Wills in God* by John Piper:

Jonathan Edwards says, "It implies no contradiction to suppose that an act may be an evil act, and yet that it is a good thing that such an act should come to pass. . . . As for instance, it might be an evil thing to crucify Christ, but yet it was a good thing that the crucifying of Christ came to pass." In other words the Scriptures lead us to the insight that God can will that a sinful act come to pass without willing it as an act of sin in himself. Edwards points out that Arminians, it seems, must come to a similar conclusion.

All must own that God sometimes wills not to hinder the breach of his own commands, because he does not in fact hinder it But you will say, God wills to permit sin, as he wills the creature should be left to his freedom; and if he should hinder it, he would offer violence to the nature of his own creature. I answer, this comes nevertheless to the very same thing that I say. You say, God does not will sin absolutely; but rather than alter the law of nature and the nature of free agents, he wills it. He wills what is contrary to excellency in some particulars, for the sake of a more general excellency and order. So that the scheme of the Arminians does not help the matter.

Conclusion – Returning to the Arminian Proof Text:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, **who desires** (thelo) all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1Ti 2:1-4)

Assuming that a correct interpretation of these verses is that God desire every single person to be saved...

1. Not every single person is saved.
2. God then, desires something to happen that does not happen.

Possible reasons why:

1. There is a power in the universe greater than God's which prevents his will from being accomplished.
2. God has a greater desire that trumps his desire that every single person be saved.

Arminian Response according to Piper: "Human self-determination and the possible resulting love relationship from God are more valuable than saving all people by sovereign, efficacious grace."

Biblical Support: (This section intentionally left blank)

Calvinist Response according to Piper: "The answer given by Calvinists is that the greater value is the manifestation of the full range of God's glory in wrath and mercy and the humbling of man so that he enjoys giving all credit to God for his salvation"

Biblical Support:

What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, **in order to** make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory-- even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? (Rom 9:22-24)

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, **so that no human being might boast** in the presence of God. (1Co 1:27-29)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. **And this is not your own doing**; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, **so that no one may boast**. (Eph 2:8-9)