

“Does Election Contradict God’s Desire That All Humans Be Saved?”

(Table 1)
Biblical Examples That Distinguish
Two Ways That God Wills

What God Would Like to See Happen

“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go’ ” (Ex. 5:1; cf. 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3).

“Honor your father and your mother” (Ex. 20:12; Matt. 15:4; Eph. 6:2).

“I have no pleasure [Heb. *happeh*] in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezek. 33:11; cf. Ezek. 18:23, 32; Lam. 3:32–33).

“You shall not murder” (Ex. 20:13; Matt. 5:21; Rom. 13:9). Thus, those who contributed to the murder of Jesus are responsible for their sin:
“You crucified and killed [Jesus] by the hands of lawless men” (Acts 2:23b).

What God Actually Wills to Happen

“I will harden his heart” (Ex. 4:21; cf. 7:3).
“The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh” (9:12; cf. 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8).

“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 these 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 [Heb. *happeh*] of the Lord to put them to death*” (1 Sam. 2:22–25).

“As the Lord took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the Lord will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you” (Deut. 28:63).

“We esteemed him stricken, / smitten by God, and afflicted.... It was the will of the Lord to crush him” (Isa. 53:4, 10).

“Jesus [was] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23a).

“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” (Acts 4:27).

“... to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place” (Acts 4:28).

God genuinely desires all people to be saved. “It is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” (Matt. 18:14; see also Matt. 11:28; 23:37; John 3:16; 7:37; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

God sovereignly chose to save only some people. “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will” (Matt. 11:25–26; Luke 10:21; see the rest of this book).

(Table 2)

Terms That Distinguish Two Ways That God Wills

What God Would Like to See Happen

Commanded will: This is what God commands. It does not always happen.

Moral will: We should obey this. God tells us what is right and wrong, but we often do not obey God.

What God Actually Wills to Happen

Decreed will: This is what God decrees. It always happens.

Sovereign will: This is what God ordains, and it always happens. God’s moral will includes that we submit to his sovereign will—for example, by not complaining

about it, worrying about it, or questioning God's power, goodness, and wisdom.

Revealed will: God tells us what we must do.

Secret or hidden will: God normally does not reveal his detailed plan to us ahead of time. (An exception is predictive prophecy such as Daniel 10.)

Looking at a painful or wicked event through a narrow lens: God "sees the tragedy or the sin for what it is in itself, and he is angered and grieved."

Looking at a painful or wicked event through a wide-angle lens: God "sees the tragedy or the sin in relation to everything leading up to it and everything flowing out from it. He sees it in all the connections and effects that form a pattern or mosaic stretching into eternity. This mosaic, with all its (good and evil) parts, he does delight in."

(Table 3)
What Does God Value More
Highly Than Saving All Humans without Exception?

According to Arminianism

God more highly values a genuinely loving relationship, which requires us to have a free will in the sense that we can make equally alternative choices.

Our choice is decisive or ultimate.

According to Calvinism

God more highly values displaying his glory in mercy and wrath (Rom. 9:22–23) and receiving all the glory for sovereignly saving individuals.

God's choice is decisive or ultimate.