

Does God will the death of the wicked?

This question is connected with the texts in Ezekiel that are very difficult to interpret: "Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord GOD, " *and* not that he should turn from his ways and live? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!" (Ezek 18:23, 32). "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'" (Ezek 33:11). Do these mean that God does not reprobate anyone? These cannot mean this since scripture, in many places, teaches that God chooses in eternity those who will be eternally condemned [Job 21:30; Prov 16:4; Rm 9:22; 1 Pt 2:8; 2 Pt 2:3,9]. This is inevitable if God chooses the elect for salvation, since it means that those not selected will be condemned. Consider also the commanded genocide of the Canaanites, condemned as the fulness of their sin was complete; and many other divine commands to destroy.

So, if God does decree the death of the wicked, what do these texts mean? Well, they do not mean what Arminians want them to mean; they do not mean that God wants everyone to be saved and is upset that many refuse him. This would deny God's sovereignty and ignores the texts previously mentioned above. It puts salvation in the hands of man, and scripture everywhere denies this. Man is unable to believe in Christ without being given heavenly faith and being drawn by God (Jn 6:44, 65). So how do we interpret them?

We should simply let them say what they say and not amplify them. What do they say? They teach that: A) God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God is not malicious and does not enjoy human suffering, even if just. The death of the wicked is not forced on them by God, he just refuses them the grace that he gives the elect. Without this all would die. The wicked are condemned because they choose to sin and delight in it. This causes their death. B) God's is delighted when people turn, repent, and obey him. C) They teach the command that God demands repentance of all, 'therefore turn and live'. God gives all men the same promise, but the reprobate refuse to obey. The fact that they can't obey is irrelevant, since they have no desire to obey. Repeatedly in scripture God gives offers of life and demands repentance, even to those who are lost. Their refusal to turn is their own choice. We should praise God that we too would be lost if God had not given us the free gift of faith and repentance by his Spirit. The death of men, though decreed by God in principle, is ultimately due to their own choice to sin and their condemnation is the result of breaking God's law. Having refused to repent, God then desires their death as the natural result of breaking his law and offending his holiness (e.g. 1 Sam 2:25).

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Understanding Ministries

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