

Teaching Orthodoxy...using Bible Verses Lesson 11

God wants all men to be saved, plus an explanation of free will and predestination

God wants to save all. He does not limit salvation; we are the ones who do the limiting.

He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right [the power] to become children [sons] of God. John 1:11-12

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance**. 2 Pet. 3:9

Behold, I stand at the door and **knock**. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me. Rev. 3:20

His death, His atonement is for the whole of humanity. Jesus died for everyone, but obviously, only those who chose to believe in Him and follow Him will receive His salvation.

He Himself is the propitiation for **our sins**; and not for ours only, but **also for the whole world**." 1 John 2:2

We have Free Will, since we are made in God's Image, which God respects. God wants everyone to be saved, but will only save those who use their free will and choose to call out to Him for salvation...“Thy Kingdom come”. But we also have to use that free will to obey God and do His Will...“Thy Will be done”.

For this 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. 1 Timothy 2:3-4

Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Rom. 10:13

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only the one who does the will of My Father** Who is in heaven. Matt. 7:21

And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that **does the will of God** abides for ever. 1 John 2:17

Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, "**Make every effort to enter through the narrow door**, because **many**, I tell you, will try to enter and **will not be able** to." Luke 13:23-24

Even though God really wants and **wills all men to be saved**, He simultaneously allows us the freedom to chose that salvation or to reject it. He gives us permission to reject His perfect will. St. John of Damascus in his famous catechism (*An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*) explains that this is because **God has two wills** for us:

(1) **what He really wants** (which is for us to be saved and sanctified and be united with Him forever via theosis), and,

(2) **what He allows** (in giving us the freedom to truly love Him back, God also gave us the freedom to reject His best plans for us, to reject His perfect will). He **does not force His love upon us**, nor does He force (squeeze) love out of us.

So God allows us to go our own way, even if that way is the road to hell. Calvinist Protestants wrongly teach that God’s Will “cannot be thwarted” or rejected...because they do not understand nor want to admit the Patristic teaching of God’s two wills for us. Thus, they miss the point here. Yet Scripture itself teaches that **men can reject God’s will**.

But the Pharisees and lawyers **rejected the will of God** for themselves. Luke 7:30

God has foreknowledge, but He does **not** force us. He can see ahead of time who will choose Him later within time. He can “foresee”...our coming to Him, our freely made choices, and He works to help us. He “chooses” us based on that foreknowledge. We are free. It is **not** “predestination” in a fatalistic Greek pagan sense. We remain free.

To the elect... who have been chosen according to the **foreknowledge** of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with His blood. 1 Peter 1:1-2

For those God **foreknew** He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. Romans 8:29