

GOD WOULD HAVE ALL TO BE SAVED

The apostle Paul told Timothy, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:3-4). Within this passage is a clear statement that God would have all men to be saved!. In response to some who claimed that since the Lord had not returned yet, He was not going to return, Peter stated, "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" (II Pet. 3:9). Again, a clear statement that the Lord is not willing that any should perish!

Some have argued, "if God wanted everyone to be saved, then everyone would be saved, because what God wants to happen will happen". This line of thinking has its roots in one of the five basic points of Calvinism; limited atonement. Limited atonement is the belief that Christ died for the elect only. The elect being those that God had picked before they were ever born to be saved. There are a number of ways of showing the fallacy of the doctrine of the limited atonement. First, the Bible teaches that Christ died for all. Paul told the Romans that Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 6:5). Jesus said that God loved the world and gave His Son (John 3:16). And, John said that Christ was the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:1-2). Add to that those passages stating that God desires all to be saved and there can be no doubt that salvation is available for any (see also Rev. 2:17). Ezekiel wrote, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live"? (Ezek. 18:23)

So, if God desires all to be saved, but not all will be saved (Matt. 7:13-14, 21), what is the explanation? The explanation is simply that though God desires all to be saved, He has given man the freedom of choice, that those who will come to Him will do so of their own volition. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die..." (Ezek. 18:20). Sin is the violation of God's word (I John 3:4). Sin is that which will cause one to be eternally lost (James 1:13-15). God has revealed His will to man in words spoken and written by inspired men (I Cor. 2:9-13; II Tim. 3:16-17). God has warned about the result of not obeying those words (II Thess. 1:7-9) and encouraged us all to obey them (John 8:31-32). If we are lost, it will all be our own fault.

SPEAK SOUND DOCTRINE

Titus was instructed by the apostle Paul, to "speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). This same apostle also wrote to Timothy about sound doctrine. After providing a list of unrighteous acts, he said, "...and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine" (I Tim. 1:10). In his second epistle to Timothy, he told him, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 1:13). It is not only preachers such as Timothy and Titus that were instructed to speak and teach sound doctrine. As Paul spoke of the qualifications needed to be an elder or bishop, he said that they should be men that were "...holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9). Once we understand what "sound doctrine" is, it will be evident that every child of God should speak sound doctrine.

What is sound doctrine? The word that is translated "sound" is defined as "hale, sound, in health" (The Analytical Greek Lexicon). One dictionary definition for the word "sound" is, "free from defect, decay, or damage; in good condition" (The American Heritage Dictionary). Often, footnotes in Bible margins will have the word "healthy" as another word for the word sound. In essence, the inspired writers were saying that one should speak words that will bring good spiritual health, both to the one speaking and those to whom they speak. The reason is seen in the verse following the one where Paul told Titus to speak sound doctrine. He continues, "That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience" (Tit. 2:2). Sound doctrine is needed to produce one sound in the faith, or in other words, spiritually healthy.

Further in answering the question of what sound doctrine is, it can be seen that sound doctrine is just what the Lord said, without any additions or subtractions (Gal. 1:6-9). Recall, Paul told Timothy that he had heard those sound words he was to hold fast to from Paul himself (II Tim. 1:13). This is also the reason Paul told Timothy to "Preach the word..." (II Tim. 4:2). He then continued, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine..." (II Tim. 4:3).

Our salvation is dependent upon hearing, believing and then obeying the sound doctrine of God's word.

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