

COMPREHENSIVE EXEGESIS OF I TIMOTHY 2:4

Grace Gospel Church Ministry

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"
(King James Version)

This verse of scripture, as interpreted by some forms the basis of them stating that "**it is God's will to save all men**". From this and their versions of other Bible scriptures, they foist the conception that God has a **general or universal will** to save all men but the **specific enactment of salvation depends upon some supplemental catalyst**. Others assert that God in eternity had a desire to and did in fact made provisions to save all men, but in effect only chose to save some.

Unfortunately, these interpretations offer a schizophrenic perception of God as one in eternity desiring to do one thing but choosing to do another. While this arguably may not be a case against His sovereignty, **it absolutely would seem to impose to upon all the attributes of His perfection**. Thus the doctrinal premise that has been accepted by many is that God has two wills consisting of a general ineffectual will that all men might be saved; in concert with His specific redemptive purpose to save either His elect only, or in the corporate scheme of Synergism, those who choose to exercise their faith in His provisions.

In all of these interpretations we view not only limitations and restrictions of the efficacy of God's omnipotence, but also of His omniscience and perfect resolutions. In this view there are those who are either conscientiously or sub-conscientiously poised to challenge the sovereign right of God to elect and discriminate concerning what He does. The premise outlaid here is that it is reasonable to debate whether God has the right to have compassion for only some men in lieu of all (Romans 9:15, 20).

The Grace Gospel Church Ministry unequivocally rejects all of the above doctrinal thinking and we herein rely solely upon the proper and sound principles of scriptural exegesis in following the Holy Spirit's intended thought conveyance of this verse. It is our conviction that all the decrees and workings of God consistently establish the unconditional and individual election of certain men to salvation.

Cursory reading of most translations, without taking into account that this verse is only part of a larger volume of context (verses one through six), seems to provide prima facie evidence to some that God's desires are different from that which He acted upon in eternity. In this school of thinking, God made full provisions for the accomplishment of His will (desire) and then chose to do something short of it. He did this by either reserving some to receive it or He left it entirely in the hands of depraved men to determine whether they even want it. Regardless of how this is phrased, it depicts God as wavering in what He desired or unsure of the way in which He wanted to enact it.

The proper approach to understanding what the Apostle Paul is stating, is to determine who he is addressing and what he is referencing, in light of the knowledge of the

dispensation and covenant ramifications that are applicable to the entire context of the conveyance. The actual Greek text reads, "**os pahn•dahs ahnth•ro•poos theh•ee soth•ee•neh kek ees eh•p•eeg•nee•o•seen ahl•ee•thee•ahs ehl•theen**", literally translated, "who wills all men saved and come to a perfect knowledge of the truth".

Here we start with the contextual analysis as we observe that the beginning word of the verse is a relative pronoun (**os**) rendered, "who". As it is structured, it represents the progressive flow of information from the previous verse (3). This antecedent verse reads, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour", thus providing the identity of "who". In focusing on the contents of verse three, we note that it begins with the demonstrative pronoun "**too-to**" rendered "this", obviously referencing information that is provided in verse two. Hence, its reference is to the word "**vee-on**" rendered "life", denoting a tranquil and quiet state of mind and existence as conveyed by the phrase, "in all godliness and gravity". This seems to be the goal of the exhortation beginning with the wording of verse one i.e., "I exhort therefore first of all to make supplications, intercessions, thanksgivings, for all men, for kings and all those being in a high place". The intent of the entire appeal and exhortation is expressed by the Greek phrase "**een-ah ee-rehm•on keh ee•see•khee•on vee•on**" rendered, "that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life". The general premise expressed is the emphasis on the importance of prayer, which in essence is stating that we are to speak to the Lord in prayer.

So the general discourse of the context could be labeled, "Foreordination in the practice of the petitioner's prayer". There are litanies of instructions in verse one delineating **how we should pray**. Prayer is privileged communication with God as it may be in the form of:

1. Supplications (**theh•ee•sees**), expressing wants, needs and requests.
2. Prayers (**pro•ehf•khahs**), denoting the act of conversing and communicating.
3. Intercessions (**ehn•dehf•xeees**), which is derived from a combination of two Greek words literally meaning "to fall in with" or "to align with", thus to plead for or intercede for someone on the basis of appealing to be in alignment with the will of God.
4. Thanksgiving (**ehf•khsh•rees•tees**), is derived from two Greek words literally meaning "to communicate to God", "good grace", "gratitude", and "gratefulness", as it denotes giving thanks and expressing gratitude to God.

The last phrase in verse one, "**eep•ehr pahn•don ahnth•ro•pon**" rendered, "for (on behalf of) all men", identifies those **who we should pray for**. Note, there are no limiting qualifications in this phrase, in the view that while we may know in a

general sense, some things concerning the will and workings of God, we are not privy to the specifics. Thus verse two specifically states, "for kings and all those in a high place", denoting men (and women) possessing regal authority and authoritative positions, i.e., kings, emperors, monarchs, and civic leaders (prime ministers, premiers, and presidents) in general. These are unconditional instructions in the sense that regardless of the politics or character of these individuals; the directive is to **pray for them**, but more specifically, our prayers are addressed to and intended to be in alignment with, the sovereign God, who is in control of all men and uses them, as He is pleased to do so.

For one to understand the relevancy of the context, it is necessary to be totally committed to the fact that God is absolutely immutable and nothing about His divine essence is subject to nor ever could change. Accordingly, God's immutability is established in His unchanging and unchangeable will. This knowledge is crucial in maintaining a balance in the practice of petitionary prayer.

The key to comprehending the compatibility of making requests and God hearing and answering prayers must be inoculated in ones total reliance on the efficacy of His perfect knowledge and power to effectuate the best possible workings of all things. It is a flawed perception to the intent of prayer for one to petition Him on the premise that a request that is made and answered accordingly, requires God to bring about something as a result of the individual's prayer. The first thing we must understand is that God brings about only those things that he has unchangingly willed to bring about. If His will is immutable, then there can be no alteration of God's will by anything on the part of the creature.

At this point, it is important to affirm the necessity prayer as God has decreed and caused it to be a function of the proceedings of His will. The fact that every occurrence is predetermined does not deny the usefulness of prayer when it (prayer) in itself is understood to be part the decree. Our prayer (petitions) should not be submitted in the view that they constitute the determinant cause. We should never pray in order to dominate or change the decree of divine providence, but our prayer should be to impetrate (obtain through request) those thing, which God has already determined. Thus the function of prayer is not a determining factor but it is a part of the design of actions previously ordained.

Next as we consider the historical aspects of the context, note that the Apostle Paul is writing to his trustful minister Timothy, as he inferred in several of his epistles. From this we are able to establish that any dialog between them would encompass the terms of the grace doctrine including the truth of the mystery. In fact Paul was adamantly concerned that all under his watch would minister in strict adherence to the gospel of the grace of God (I Timothy 1:3; 4:6,13,16; 6:3; II Timothy 4:2,3; Titus 1:9; 2:1).

In this light, it is inconceivable that the communication of this epistle would be couched in language contradicting the sovereign grace of God in Election to salvation or the foreordination of the eternal choice of God's people in eternity. In fact nowhere in any of Paul's epistles is there any reference of God's desire to save any outside of those who were set apart for His glory in eternity. In observing the directives to the Grace church, it is characteristic that discriminating references are common in distinguishing the elect by the usage of the terminology "we and us", in contrast to "they and them". All of the revelations in the Mystery conclusively support the exclusivity of all not preordained as vessels of mercy. In fact, none of the scriptures of the other dispensations, when rightly interpreted, expressively speak of God's desire being unfulfilled in the choice of His elect or His desire to save all men.

This now bring us to the most hazardous of all exegetical aspects of scrutinizing

I Timothy 2:4 and that is the grammatical approach to this verse. Again, the direct Greek manuscript reading is "**os pahn• dahs ahnth• ro• poos thehl• ee soth• ee• neh keh ees ehp• eeg• nee•• seen ahl• ee• thee• ahs ehl• theen**", which is generally

translated, "who wills (desires) all men to be saved and to come to a perfect knowledge of the truth". A casual glance of this rendering seems to support the idea that God either currently desires or in the beginning desired to save all men. If any of this is true then He obviously did not fulfill His desires because it is obvious that all men are not nor will not be saved. Now we ask some very probing questions i.e., can God relinquish the determination of an event or act to anything externally, outside of Himself or fall short of accomplishing something that he desires to do and yet remain omnipotent (all powerful)? Also wouldn't the act of choosing to act in a manner different from **His** desire render God to be an ambivalent being or as one unable to follow the dictates of His wishes? Of course, this could be construed to be an imposition on both His power and perfection.

Some, who are committed to the teachings of God's selection of individuals to salvation, have focused on the Greek adjective all (**pahn•dahs**) to explain the seeming enigma of the grammatical structure pointing out the various inferences of its usages. There is merit in pointing out that "all", in this verse identifies the classification of groupings, i.e., "every kind of ", utilizing the rule of the absence of the definite article. While this observation is certainly a useful enhancer in explaining a portion of the rendering, it is insufficient to resolve the way that many interpret the central idea. Detailed grammatical scrutiny of I Timothy 2:4 reveals that the central flaw that has led to confusion can be traced to the misusage of the main verbs of this verse. Thus the focus should rest on the one verb and two verb infinitives: "**thehl• ee**" rendered, "will, desire or wish", "**soth• ee• neh**" rendered, "saved" and "**ehl• theen**" rendered, "come" respectively.

The Greek verb "**thehl• ee**" denoting God's will, is in the indicative mood, meaning that it is a fact and the present tense, meaning that it is a current state of action or being. Further investigation reveals that it is in active voice, meaning that the subject is performing the action of willing or desiring finally it is in the 3rd person singular, meaning that only **one outside source accomplished the action of willing**. The subject, which is identified by the nominative case i.e., "who" or "God our savior" as it is taken from the previous verse (3); is **the exclusive one exerting the action the action**. Accordingly, the rendition should read "**God our Saviour who does will or desire or wish or want**". This is markedly different from most translations, most notably the King James Version, which reads, " God our Saviour who will have", as it could infer something that is assignable rather than that which is completely determined.

Next observe that the Greek verb infinitive "**soth• ee• neh**" is translated "saved", denoting one who is rescued. This infinitive (verbal noun) is in the aorist tense, meaning that it is an action that was completed in the past. It is in the passive voice, meaning that its recipient receives the action. In many instances, the choice of the term "to be" is utilized in translation for the purpose of assigning passivity to verbs. Unfortunately, in this instance, it contributes to also inferring a sense of the future and/or the incompleteness of the action. We feel that the dominant theme of the aorist tense is so forceful in this action that it **overrides** the insertion. The next task is to identify the recipient(s) of the action designating who was saved. In this regard the term "all men" must of historical necessity be limited to a select group as structured by the absence of the definite article. Hence, "all men " refers to all who were chosen and elected in eternity. Thus, an informed rendition of this phrase would read, "**all men (who are) saved**".

Lastly, note that the Greek verb infinitive "**ehl• theen**" is a form of the verb "go" or "come", denoting to appear, arrive or progress. This infinity is also in the aorist tense,

meaning that it is an action that was completed in the past. It is in the active voice its recipient performs the action. This describes those who have been determined, and as a result do come **in into** a perfect knowledge of the truth. Here the very essence of what is arrived at, i.e., "ehp• eeg• nee••• seen ahl• ee• thee• ahs", rendered, "perfect knowledge of the truth", denotes that which only God can will to come to pass (I Corinthians 2:6-16). Thus an informed rendition of this final phrase would read **"and (willed to have) come unto a perfect knowledge of the truth"**.

According to our comprehensive analysis of I Timothy 2:4, utilizing the methodology of the three aspects of Scriptural scrutiny (contextual, historical and grammatical), the Grace Gospel Church Ministry's exegesis of this verse is, **"who (does) will all men (who are) saved and (willed to have) come unto a perfect knowledge of the truth"**.