

Romans 9:14-18 Commentary

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Romans 9:14 **What** shall we **say then**? There is **no injustice** with **God**, is there? May it **never** be!

Greek: [Ti oun eroumen?](#) (1PFAI) [me adikia para to theo me genoito:](#) (3SAMO)

Amplified: What shall we conclude then? Is there injustice upon God's part? Certainly not!

ESV: What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!

ICB: So what should we say about this? Is God unfair? In no way.

NIV: What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!

NKJV: What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

NLT: What can we say? Was God being unfair? Of course not!

Philips: Now do we conclude that God is monstrously unfair? Never!

Wuest: What shall we say then? There is not unrighteousness with God, is there? Away with the thought.

Young's Literal: What, then, shall we say? unrighteousness is with God? let it not be!

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS				
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Summary of Romans 9-11		
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God's Sovereignty Israel's Election by God	Man's responsibility Israel's Rejection of God	God's Ways Higher God Not Rejecting Israel

Related resources...

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- Spurgeon on the Attributes of God
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Are you confused about God's plan for Israel? Then I highly recommend Tony Garland's 12 Hour Course on **Romans 9-11** in which he addresses in depth the question of **What Will Happen to Israel?** ([click](#)) or see the individual lectures below)

- [Romans 9:1-5 Paul's Sorrow Concerning Israel](#)
- [Romans 9:6-13 Children of the Promise](#)
- [Romans 9:14-24 The Potter and the Clay](#)
- [Romans 9:25-33 A Remnant Will be Saved](#)
- [Romans 10:1-13 The Righteousness of God](#)
- [Romans 10:14-21 Has Israel Not Heard?](#)
- [Romans 11:1-6 God Has Not Cast Away The Jews](#)
- [Romans 11:7-15 Life from the Dead](#)
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- [Romans 11:25-36 The Salvation of Israel](#)

Note that when you click the preceding links, each link will in turn give you several choices including an **Mp3 message** and brief transcript notes. The Mp3's are long (avg 70+ min) but are in depth and thoroughly Scriptural with many quotations from the Old Testament, which is often much less well understood than the NT by many in the church today. Tony Garland takes a **literal approach** to Scripture, and his love for the Jews and passion to see them saved comes through very clearly in these 12 hours of teaching! Take your home Bible Study group through this series if you dare! Take notes on the tapes as the transcripts are a very abbreviated version of the audio messages. **This course is highly recommended for all who love Israel!** I think you will agree that Tony Garland, despite coming to faith after age 30 as an engineer, clearly has been given a special anointing by God to proclaim the truth concerning Israel and God's glorious future plan for the Jews. Garland has also produced more than 20 hours of superb audio teaching in his verse by verse commentary on the [Revelation](#) (in depth transcripts also available) which will unravel (in a way you did not think was possible considering the plethora of divergent interpretations) God's final message of the triumph and return of the our Lord Jesus Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords! Maranatha!

WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN THERE IS NO INJUSTICE (unrighteousness) WITH GOD IS THERE?: Ti oun eroumen (1PFAI) me adikia para to theo:

- Ro 2:5; 3:5,6; Genesis 18:25; Deuteronomy 32:4; 2 Chronicles 19:7; Job 8:3; 34:10-12,18,19; Job 35:2; Psalms 92:15; 145:17; Jeremiah 12:1; Revelation 15:3,4; 16:7
- [Romans 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Paul anticipates a human reaction to God's choice of Jacob over Esau. Paul anticipates men judging God and accusing God of unjust. And yet we know from studying God's attributes (see discussion of God's attribute of Justice), that He is always fair. He is never unjust in His essence. So here we see where human logic comes to a "logical" but wrong conclusion.

Injustice (93) (**adikia** [word study] from **a** = negates what follows + **dike** = right) describes the condition of not being right. **Adikia** describes unrighteousness of heart and life resulting in wrongdoing. It can describe a deed violating law and justice.

He is going to say that it is not a matter of injustice but a matter of mercy. God sovereignly (See God's attribute **Sovereignty**) has mercy (see God's attribute **Mercy**) on who He will although all deserve His wrath (see God's attribute **Wrath**).

MAY IT NEVER BE: me genoito (3SAMO):

- All 15 of uses of "May it never be!" with only one non-Pauline use - Luke 20:16; Rom 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; 1 Cor 6:15; Gal 2:17; 3:21; 6:14
- [Romans 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

The idea is "Away with the thought. Perish the thought. By no means! Certainly not!"

Phillips renders it "Do we conclude that God is monstrously unfair? Never!"

Romans 9:15 For He [says](#) to [Moses](#), "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."

Greek: [to Mousei gar legei.](#) (1SPA) [Eleeso](#) (1SRA) [on an eleo.](#) (1SPAS) [kai oiktireso](#) (1SFA) [on an oiktiro.](#) (1SRA)

Amplified: For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion (pity) on whom I will have compassion.(7)

ESV: For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

ICB: God said to Moses, "I will show kindness to anyone I want to show kindness. I will show mercy to anyone I want to show mercy."

NIV: For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

NKJV: For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

NLT: For God said to Moses, "I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose."

Phillips: God said long ago to Moses: 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion'.

Wuest: For to Moses He says; I will have mercy upon whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.

Young's Literal: for to Moses He saith, 'I will do kindness to whom I do kindness, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion;'

FOR HE SAYS TO MOSES "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY": o Mousei gar legei, (1SPAI) Eleeso (1SRAI) on an eleo, (1SPAS):

- Ro 9:16,18,19; Ex 33:19; 34:6,7; Isaiah 27:11; Micah 7:18
- [Romans 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For (gar) - Notice the little preposition "**for**" (there are over 7000 "for's" in Scripture) and if the context indicates, as it does in this passage, that the "**for**" is a term of explanation, pause and ponder, asking yourself what is the Spirit explaining? Notice how pausing to ponder will always force you to examine the context. You can (and should) practice this simple discipline every time you encounter a **for**, and while not every instance is a term of explanation, a "**for**" at the beginning of a verse is almost always used with that grammatical sense. I guarantee that if you begin to "pause and ponder," you will radically rejuvenate your "Read Through the Bible in a Year" program! You might even get a small journal and begin to keep notes on what the Spirit illuminates and how this truth can be applied to your daily life. As you practice **interrogating the text (for, therefore, but, so that, etc) with 5W/H** questions such as "What's the for explaining?", you will begin to learn to (1) **Read the Bible inductively (power point overview)** and to (2) **Meditate** (see also **Primer on Biblical Meditation**) on the Scripture. Meditation or "chewing the cud" of the Scripture (cf Mt 4:4, Job 23:12-note, Jer 15:16) so to speak is a vanishing discipline in our fast paced, hi tech, low touch society, but a spiritual discipline which God promises to greatly bless (See Ps 1:1-note, Ps 1:2-note, Ps 1:3-note, Joshua 1:8-note, cf Ps 4:4, 19:14, 27:4, 49:4, 63:6, Ps 77:6, 77:12, Ps 104:34, Ps 119:15, 119:23, 119:27, Ps 119:48, 119:78, Ps 119:97, 119:99, Ps 119:148, 143:5, Ps 145:5)

The connection and the argument are obvious:

It is not unjust for God to exercise his sovereignty in the distribution of his mercies, for he expressly claims the right.

Paul quotes the Septuagint (LXX) of (Exodus 33:19)

Paul has already shown us that all mankind is under sin (Romans 3:9, 10-note, Ro 3:19-note, Ro 3:23-note Ro 6:23-note) and justly deserves God's righteous wrath (Ro 1:18-note). But God who is rich is **mercy** (see His attribute **Mercy**) looks down and has mercy on some and compassion on some. He has mercy and compassion on whomever He chooses. This should cause us to fall on our face and cry out "Have mercy on me when I justly deserve hell." What awesome truth this is.

I will - God's will - **NIDNTT** comments on thelo in Romans 9:14ff - The exegesis of Ro. 9:14ff. has always caused difficulties. How are the will of man and the will of God related to each other? The attempt has repeatedly been made to understand this passage from the perspective of human free will and responsibility. But Paul does not go into the question of human responsibility here at all (cf. for this Ro 10:16ff.). It is not human volition (thelein) which is decisive for God's action; it is God's saving will which is the pre-condition for all human volition. The freedom of divine compassion is not dependent on human exertion, and just as little dependent on human resistance (cf. Ro 9:17). God accomplishes His will in history precisely in that He harnesses both obedient and obdurate into His saving plan (Ro 9:18). "The Pauline exegesis is not open to rational analysis; it puts deliberate obstacles in the way. The statement 'God hardens' now threatens everyone, including the Jews (Ro. 9:24ff.), just as God's compassion is now perceptible to everyone, including the reprobate (Ro 9:22).

Mercy (1653) (**eleeo [word study]** from **eleos [word study]**) means "to feel sympathy with the misery of another, especially such sympathy which manifests itself in action, less frequently in word." It describes the general sense of one who has compassion or person on someone in need. **Eleeo** indicates that one is moved to pity and compassion by tragedy and includes the fear that this could happen to me (although this latter obviously does not apply to God). The idea of this verb is to see someone in dire need (including one who may not deserve the misfortune), to have compassion on them, and to give help to remove the need. Specifically in context eleeo means God extends help for the consequence of sin. He has compassion on sinners who are in unhappy circumstances (that's stating it somewhat euphemistically!).

Mercy implies that there is absolutely nothing within us that caused God to bestow His mercy upon us. It is simply according to His good pleasure. There was nothing in us to commend us to God. We could do nothing to help ourselves (Ro 5:6-note, Ro 5:8-note, Ro 5:10-note). Mercy also implies that the one bestowing the mercy has the means to meet the need. Here God meets the need of those He chooses.

NIDNTT writes of the root word **eleos** that in classical Greek...

It is "the emotion roused by contact with an affliction which comes undeservedly on someone else" (R. Bultmann, TDNT II 477), viz. compassion, pity, mercy. These feelings are the reverse of envy at another's good fortune. There is also an element of fear that one might have to suffer in the same way. Aristotle in his

Poetics stated that tragedy aroused pity and terror and these caused katharsis, purging. From Plutarch onwards we find the expressions *eleon* echo, to find mercy, and *kat' eleon*, out of compassion. *eleos* was used as a technical term for the end of the speech for the defence, in which the accused tried to awaken the compassion of the judges. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

Vincent writes that **eleeo** means

to succor or to show compassion... The (root) word (*eleos*) emphasizes the misery with which grace deals; hence, peculiarly the sense of human wretchedness coupled with the impulse to relieve it, which issues in gracious ministry. Bengel remarks, "Grace takes away the fault, mercy the misery."

Vine writes that **eleeo** means...

signifies, in general, "to feel sympathy with the misery of another," and especially sympathy manifested in act, (a) in the Active Voice, "to have pity or mercy on, to show mercy" to, e.g., Matt. 9:27; Matt. 15:22; Matt. 17:15; Matt. 18:33; Matt. 20:30, 31 (three times in Mark, four in Luke); Rom. 9:15, 16, 18; Ro 11:32; Ro 12:8; Phil. 2:27; Jude 1:22, 23; (b) in the Passive Voice, "to have pity or mercy shown one, to obtain mercy," Matt. 5:7; Rom. 11:30, 31; 1Cor. 7:25; 2Cor 4:1; 1Tim. 1:13, 16; 1Pet. 2:10. ([Vine, W E: Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. 1996. Nelson](#))

Eleeo - 29x in 26v in NAS - found mercy(1), had mercy(4), has mercy(2), have mercy(15), mercy(1), receive mercy(1), received mercy(3), show mercy(1), shown mercy(3), shows mercy(1).

Matt 5:7; 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 18:33; 20:30, 31; Mark 5:19; 10:47, 48; Luke 16:24; 17:13; 18:38, 39; Ro 9:15-note, Ro 9:18-note; Ro 11:30-note, Ro 11:31-note, Ro 11:32-note; Ro 12:8-note; 1Cor 7:25; 2Cor 4:1; Phil 2:27-note; 1Ti 1:13, 16; 1Pe 2:10-note.

AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION: *kai oiktireso* (1SFAI) on an *oiktiro* (1SFAI)

- [Romans 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

I will have compassion - Paul is quoting Moses in Exodus 33:19. What God says here is fair because God is God and we are not. This is His right and it is right because He is also the infinitely good God in all that He does. God is sovereign in dispensing of His mercy. We simply do not have His eternal, transcendent, omniscient, etc perspective, nor could we (now) with our finite minds. In future glory, what perplexes and discomforts us now will fade into oblivion as we behold His face and come to understand His matchless, infinite wisdom.

Compassion ([3627](#)) (*oikteiro* from *oiktos* = compassion, pity = compassion or pity which in turn is said to be derived from the interjection *oi* = "Oh!"; see also study of cognate *-oiktirmos*) means to exercise pity or to have compassion on as one is moved or motivated by sympathy. This verb includes emotion as well as action, a deep empathy for its objects. In Biblical Greek *Oikteiro* does carry (although not as strongly) the implication of the intent to help.

A criminal begs **eleos** from his judge, but hopeless suffering is often the object of *oikteiro/oiktirmos*.

Vincent - The former verb (**eleeo**) emphasizes the sense of human wretchedness in its active manifestation; the latter (*oikteiro*) the inward feeling expressing itself in sighs and tears.

Compassion (from Latin *com* = with + *pati* = to bear, suffer - thus literally to "bear with" or "to suffer with") is a sympathetic consciousness of other's distress together with a desire to alleviate it and in the case of God, with the ability to in fact do so!

The meaning of *oiktirmos* is like *splagchnon/splanchnon* [**word study**], related primarily the viscera, which were thought to be the seat of compassion. The word came to signify manifestations of pity and refers to the pity that is aroused by the sight of another's suffering. **Lightfoot** says "By *splagchnon* is signified the abode of tender feelings, by *oiktirmos* the manifestation of these in compassionate yearnings and actions."

The related word **eleos** which is also often translated **mercy** is similar in meaning but Thayer discussing the corresponding verb forms (*eleeo, oikteiro*) makes the following distinction...

Eleeo—to feel sympathy with the misery of another, especially such sympathy as manifests itself in act, less frequently in word; whereas *oikteiro* denotes the inward feeling of compassion which abides in the heart. A

criminal begs eleos of his judge; but hopeless suffering is often the object of oiktirmos (p. 203).

The Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible has an interesting note on compassion explaining that...

In the OT, compassion describes one aspect of God's covenantal relationship with his people (Ed note: In the examples of the use of oiktirmos in the Septuagint [see below] compassion is frequently found with "lovingkindness" or hesed [cheched] a word integrally associated with the manifestation of God's covenantal love - see related resource Covenant - Why Study It?) One of the Hebrew words translated compassion is derived from a root word meaning "womb," thus comparing God's love with maternal love. God's compassion, however, went beyond simply feeling the emotion; it was always demonstrated by definite acts that testified to his covenant with Israel. In spite of Israel's rebellions God still had compassion on his people (2Ki 13:23; 2 Chr 36:15; Ps 78:38), as well as on all his creation (Ps 145:9). When Israel was chastised, the nation often feared that God had permanently withdrawn his favor (Ps 77:9; Is 27:11; 63:15; Jer 13:14; 21:7; Ho 13:14). Yet God's compassion would revive, and he would restore his people (Dt 30:3; Ps 135:14; Is 14:1; 49:13; 54:7, 8; Jer 12:15; 30:18; Micah 7:19; Zec 12:10), especially when they returned to him and cried out for deliverance (1 Ki 8:50; Ps 79:8). (Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House)

See another resource [Compassion - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)

Oikteiro is used only in Romans 9:15 in the NT but 34 times in the non-apocryphal Septuagint...

Exodus 33:19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show **compassion** (Heb - racham; Lxx - oikteiro) on whom I will show **compassion** (Heb - racham; Lxx - oikteiro)."

Judges 5:30 Are they not finding, are they not dividing the spoil? A maiden, two maidens for every warrior; To Sisera a spoil of dyed work, A spoil of dyed work embroidered, Dyed work of double embroidery on the neck of the spoiler?'

1 Kings 8:50 and forgive Your people who have sinned against You and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You, and make them objects of compassion before those who have taken them captive, that they may have **compassion** (Heb - racham; Lxx - oikteiro) on them

2 Kings 13:23 But the LORD was gracious to them and had **compassion** (Heb - racham; Lxx - oikteiro) on them and turned to them because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them or cast them from His presence until now.

Psalms 4:1 For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David. Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be **gracious** (Heb - chanan; Lxx = oikteiro) to me and hear my prayer.

Psalms 37:21 The wicked borrows and does not pay back, But the righteous is **gracious** (Heb - chanan; Lxx = oikteiro) and gives.

Psalms 59:5 You, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, Awake to punish all the nations; Do not be **gracious** (Heb - chanan; Lxx = oikteiro) to any who are treacherous in iniquity. Selah.

Psalms 60:1 For the choir director; according to Shushan Eduth. A Mikhtam of David, to teach; when he struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and smote twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt. O God, You have rejected us. You have broken us; You have been angry; O, **restore** (Heb = shub; Lxx = oikteiro) us.

Psalms 67:1 For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be **gracious** to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us-- Selah.

Psalms 77:9 Has God forgotten to be gracious, Or has He in anger withdrawn His **compassion**? Selah.

Psalms 102:13 You will arise and have **compassion** on Zion; For it is time to be gracious to her, For the appointed time has come. **14** Surely Your servants find pleasure in her stones And **feel pity** for her dust.

Psalms 103:13 Just as a father has **compassion** (Heb - racham; Lxx - oikteiro) on his children, So the LORD has **compassion** (Heb - racham; Lxx - oikteiro) on those who fear Him.

Psalms 112:5 It is well with the man who is **gracious** (Heb - chanan; Lxx - oikteiro) and lends; He will maintain his cause in judgment.

Psalm 123:2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the LORD our God, Until He is **gracious** (Heb - chanan; Lxx - oikeiro) to us.

Proverbs 12:10 A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal, But even the compassion of the wicked is cruel.

Proverbs 13:9 The light of the righteous rejoices, But the lamp of the wicked goes out.

11 Wealth obtained by fraud dwindles, But the one who gathers by labor increases it.

Proverbs 21:26 All day long he is craving, While the righteous gives and does not hold back.

Isaiah 27:11 When its limbs are dry, they are broken off; Women come and make a fire with them, For they are not a people of discernment, Therefore their Maker will not have compassion on them. And their Creator will not be **gracious** (Heb - racham; Lxx - oikeiro) to them.

Isaiah 30:18 Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have **compassion** (Heb - racham; Lxx - oikeiro) on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.

Jeremiah 13:14 "I will dash them against each other, both the fathers and the sons together," declares the LORD. "I will not show pity nor be sorry nor have **compassion** so as not to destroy them.""

Jeremiah 21:7 "Then afterwards," declares the LORD, "I will give over Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people, even those who survive in this city from the pestilence, the sword and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their foes and into the hand of those who seek their lives; and he will strike them down with the edge of the sword. He will not spare them nor have pity nor compassion."

Lamentations 3:32 For if He causes grief, Then He will have **compassion** (Heb - racham; Lxx - oikeiro) according to His abundant lovingkindness.

Micah 7:19 He will again have **compassion** (Heb - racham; Lxx - oikeiro) on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.

Paul quotes from the reference in Ex 33:19 which deals with Israel's idolatry while Moses was on the mount receiving the Law (Ex 32:4ff). The whole nation deserved to be destroyed, yet God killed only 3,000 people (Ex 32:27-28) not because they were more wicked or less godly, but purely because of His grace and mercy. They were in great need of great compassion from a great, gracious God! And aren't we all, for one sin would rightly take us to hell! But in His great compassion, God provides us a stair way to heaven in the Gospel of Christ Jesus. Hallelujah! Amen!

God's sparing the rebels and continuing to guide and protect them was purely based on His mercy and grace. He had the absolute right to condemn or to save as He divinely saw fit. God's sovereignty and His grace not only are compatible but are inseparable, like parallel train tracks - get the train tracks misaligned and you have a disaster. "Misalign" sovereignty and grace and you have at least a misunderstanding of the character of God.

Spurgeon comments...

It is equally true that he wills to have mercy, and has already had mercy on every soul that repents of sin and puts its trust in Jesus.

If there is one doctrine in the world which reveals the enmity of the human heart more than another, it is the doctrine of God's sovereignty. When men hear the Lord's voice saying, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," they gnash their teeth and call the preacher an Antinomian, a High Calvinist, or some other hard name. They do not love God except they can make him a little God. They cannot bear for him to be supreme. They would gladly take his will away from him and set up their own will as the first cause

Spurgeon writes in his devotional that...

This means that God's mercy and compassion cannot be subject to any cause outside his free grace. God had mercy on the Israelites (not destroying them for their idolatry), not because they deserved it, but simply because he chose to be merciful. In these words the Lord in the plainest manner claims the right to give or to withhold his mercy according to his own sovereign will. As the prerogative of life and death is vested in the monarch, so the Judge of all the earth has a right to spare or condemn the guilty, as may seem best in his

sight. Men by their sins have forfeited all claim upon God; they deserve to perish for their sins—and if they all do so, they have no ground for complaint. If the Lord steps in to save any, he may do so if the ends of justice are not thwarted; but if he judges it best to leave the condemned to suffer the righteous sentence, none may arraign him at their bar. Foolish and impudent are all those discourses about the rights of men to be all placed on the same footing; ignorant, if not worse, are those contentions against discriminating grace, which are but the rebellions of proud human nature against the crown and sceptre of Jehovah. When we are brought to see our own utter ruin and ill desert, and the justice of the divine verdict against sin, we no longer cavil at the truth that the Lord is not bound to save us; we do not murmur if he chooses to save others, as though he were doing us an injury, but feel that if he deigns to look upon us, it will be his own free act of undeserved goodness, for which we shall for ever bless his name. How shall those who are the subjects of divine election sufficiently adore the grace of God? They have no room for boasting, for sovereignty most effectually excludes it. The Lord's will alone is glorified, and the very notion of human merit is cast out to everlasting contempt. There is no more humbling doctrine in Scripture than that of election, none more promotive of gratitude, and, consequently, none more sanctifying. Believers should not be afraid of it, but adoringly rejoice in it. (Morning and evening : Daily readings. November 25 PM)

Romans 9:16 [So then](#) it does not depend on the man who [wills](#) or the man who [runs](#), but on [God](#) who [has mercy](#).

Greek: [ara oun ou tou thelontos](#) (PAPMSG) [oude tou trechontos](#). (PAPMSG) [alla tou eleontos](#) (PAPMSG) [theou](#).

Amplified: So then [God's gift] is not a question of human will and human effort, but of God's mercy. [It depends not on one's own willingness nor on his strenuous exertion as in running a race, but on God's having mercy on him.]

ESV: So then it depends not on human will or exertion,[2] but on God, who has mercy.

ICB: So God will choose the one he decides to show mercy to. And his choice does not depend on what people want or try to do.

NIV: It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

NKJV: So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

NLT: So receiving God's promise is not up to us. We can't get it by choosing it or working hard for it. God will show mercy to anyone he chooses.

Philips: It is obviously not a question of human will or human effort, but of divine mercy.

Wuest: Therefore, then, it [this being the recipient of God's mercy] is not of the one who desires nor even runs, but of the One who is merciful, God.

Young's Literal: so, then -- not of him who is willing, nor of him who is running, but of God who is doing kindness:

SO THEN IT DOES NOT DEPEND ON THE MAN WHO WILLS OR THE MAN WHO RUNS: [ara oun ou tou thelontos](#) (PAPMSG) [oude tou trechontos](#) (PAPMSG):

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So then - Always take a moment to pause and ponder this **term of conclusion**. What is Paul concluding, etc? **NET Note** adds that "There is a double connective (*ara oun*) here that cannot be easily preserved in English: "consequently therefore," emphasizing the conclusion of what he has been arguing."

It - What is "it?" Amplified says "God's gift." Wuest says "this being the recipient of God's mercy." NLT says "receiving God's promise."

This is a picture of human thinking and striving as seen in John's description of those who became children of God by faith and...

who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12,13)

Did you come to God because you wanted to come to God? You would not have even wanted to unless God had placed that desire in your heart to even want Him. So it is not because you actively willed and purposed or resolved to come to God. This truth is a blow to our pride isn't it? Not our will or our effort but God's mercy!

BUT ON GOD WHO HAS MERCY: *alla tou eleontos (PAPMSG) theou:*

- Ro 9:11; Genesis 27:1, 2, 3, 4,9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; Psalms 110:3; Isaiah 65:1; Matthew 11:25,26; Luke 10:21; John 1:12,13; 3:8; 1Co 1:26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31; Ephesians 2:4,5; Philippians 2:13; 2Th 2:13,14; Titus 3:3, 4, 5; James 1:18; 1Peter 2:9,10
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But (alla) is a strong adversative or **term of contrast**, which also should cause us to pause and ponder - what is the change of direction? Why? etc.

Mercy (1653) (eleeo)

God Who has mercy - The **present tense** signifies that God never lacks for mercy. Mercy a continual attribute of His character, a truth that even saved sinners should never forget.

It is not man's choice or pursuit but God who initiates mercy for the sinner. Salvation is never initiated by human choice or merited by zealous human effort. Salvation always begins in God's sovereign, gracious, and eternal will. Those who receive God's mercy receive it solely by His amazing grace.

Ishmael desired ("the man who wills") the blessing but failed to receive it. **Esau** ran ("the man who runs") for the blessing, as it were, but also failed to receive it (Ge 27:30, 31-35). Esau received a blessing from his father but not the blessing he sought with tears, because he was ungodly and sought the blessing without repentance or faith (Heb 12:16, 17-note).

Paul writes of God's mercy on those dead in their trespasses and sins...

But God, **being rich in mercy**, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (Eph 2:4, 5- note)

And again in **Titus** God showed mercy on those who were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending their life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another, Paul recording that...

when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but **according to His mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, (Titus 3:4-note, Titus 3:5-note)

Finally **Peter** says "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who **according to His great mercy** has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1Pe 1:3-note)

G Campbell Morgan writes that Paul "does not mean that we are not to will, that we are not to run. Neither does it mean that we enter into the blessings of salvation apart from willing, apart from running. We must will to do, and we must run well, allowing nothing to hinder. It does most clearly mean that no willing on our part, no running of our own, can procure for us the salvation we need, or enable us to enter into the blessings it provides. It means more than that. Of ourselves we shall have no will for salvation, and shall make no effort toward it. Everything of human salvation begins in God. His will is to have mercy. His work enables Him to do so. It is only as that will is made known to man, that he wills to receive the mercy. It is only as that work operates within man, that he is able to work out his salvation. Our wills must be exercised, our running must be positive; but we enter into salvation, and shall at last reach the crowning at the goal, only because of the everlasting mercy of God. There is neither merit nor cause for glorying in our choice or our effort. If God had not willed our saving, neither should we. If God did not work within us, we should work nothing out. Even if, of our service, we can ever say we laboured abundantly, we shall have to add: Yet not we, but the grace of God which was with us. (Morgan, G. C. Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible)

Romans 9:17 For the **Scripture says** to **Pharaoh**, "**FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.**"

Greek: [legei \(3SPA1\)](#) [gar e graphe to Pharaon hoti eis auto touto](#) exegeira (1SAA1) [se opos](#) endeixomai

(1SAMS) [en soi thn dunamin mou, kai opos diaggele](#) (2SAPS) [to onoma mou en pase te ge](#)

Amplified: For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, I have raised you up for this very purpose of displaying My power in [dealing with] you, so that My name may be proclaimed the whole world over.

ESV: For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

ICB: The Scripture says to the king of Egypt: "I made you king so I might show my power in you. In this way my name will be talked about in all the earth."

NIV: For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

NKJV: For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."

NLT: For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you, and so that my fame might spread throughout the earth."

Philips: The scripture says to Pharaoh: 'Even for this same purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name shall be declared in all the earth' .

Wuest: For the scripture says to Pharaoh, For this same purpose I raised you up, in order that I may demonstrate in you my power, and in order that there may be published everywhere my Name in all the earth.

Young's Literal: for the Writing saith to Pharaoh -- 'For this very thing I did raise thee up, that I might shew in thee My power, and that My name might be declared in all the land;'

FOR THE SCRIPTURE (personified) SAYS TO PHARAOH: legei (3SPA) gar e graphe to Pharao:

- Romans 11:4; Galatians 3:8,22; 4:30
- [Romans 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For (gar) - see [preceding note on this term of explanation](#).

Scripture (1124) (graphe from grapho = to write; English = graphite - the lead in a pencil!) means first a writing or thing written, a document. Graphe is used in such a way that quoting Scripture is understood to be the same as quoting God! And here Scripture "speaking" to Pharaoh is tantamount to God speaking to Pharaoh.

Being an absolute monarch, Pharaoh assumed that, certainly within his own realm, everything he said and did was by his own free choice to serve his own human purposes. But the Lord made clear through Moses that Pharaoh was divinely raised up to serve a divine purpose, a purpose of which the king was not even aware.

FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU: hoti eis auto touto exegeira (1SAI) se opos endeixomai (1SAMS) en soi ten dunamin mou:

- **I raised you up** - 1 Sa 2:7,8 Es 4:14 Isa 10:5,6 45:1-3 Jer 27:6,7 Da 4:22 Da 5:18-21
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Paul quotes the Septuagint (LXX) of (Exodus 9:16)

Paul does say "for this very purpose I created you". Out of a mass of unregenerate mankind God raises up a man who had suppressed the truth, who refused to give God thanks and honor, exchanging His truth for the lie and who was therefore without excuse (Ro 1:20, 21-note).

God This is who God called forth (almost as one would do in a play) on to the stage of world history (His story) saying in essence "I will use you to demonstrate my power." It is not as if Pharaoh had said I want to believe in You and be saved. In fact when Pharaoh is faced with the clear demonstration of God's power and refuses to bow down, instead becoming becoming hardened. And Pharaoh is used for God's purposes to deliver many from bondage.

Raised up (1825) (**exegeiro** from **ek** = out + **egeiro** = to raise) carries the idea of bringing forward or lifting up and was used of the rise of historical figures to positions of prominence. To awaken someone from sleep (Lxx of Ps 3:6, Ge 28:16). "To bring to a sitting position... someone by the hand Hv 3, 1, 7" (BDAG). Cause to appear (Lxx of Zech 11:16-see below, Ro 9:17)

Friberg - (1) To cause to appear in history, call into being, raise up. (2) of the dead - to cause to live again, raise up (1Co 6:14). **Ed**: Also used with meaning #2 in one version of the Lxx of Daniel 12:2-note, **Theodoret's** version has anistemi).

The only other NT use is also by Paul in the context of the resurrection...

1 Corinthians 6:14 Now God has not only raised (egeiro) the Lord, but will also **raise (exegeiro)** us up through His power.

Exegeiro - 61 times in the Septuagint (LXX). -

Ge 28:16; 41:21; Num 10:35 ("**Rise** up, O LORD!"); Nu 24:19; Jdg 5:12 ("**Awake, awake.**"); 1Sam 26:12; 2Sam 12:11; 19:18; 23:18; 1Kgs 16:3; 2Chr 36:22; Ezra 1:1, 5; Esther 8:4; Job 5:11; Ps 3:5; 7:6; 35:23; 44:23; 57:8; 59:4; 73:20; 78:65; 80:2; 108:2; 119:62; 139:18; Pr 25:23; Song 2:7; 3:5; 4:16; 8:4f; Isa 38:16; 41:2; 51:9, 17; 52:1; Jer 6:22; 31:26; 50:41; 51:1, 38; Ezek 21:16; 23:22; Dan 11:25; 12:2; Joel 3:7, 9, 12; Jonah 1:4, 11, 13; Hab 1:6; 2:19; 3:13; Hag 1:14; Zech 2:13; 4:1; 11:16; 13:7.

Here are some representative uses in the Septuagint...

Speaking through the prophet **Nathan**, the Lord told David that, because of his murder of Uriah and taking his wife, Bathsheba, for himself,

"I will **raise up** evil against you from your own household" (2Sa 12:11).

One of **Job's** "comforters" rightly said of God that

"He **sets on high** those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety" (Job 5:11)

In much the same way that He raised up Pharaoh, the Lord also raised up "the Chaldeans" to do His will, Habakkuk recording God's declaration...

"behold, I am **raising up** the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people who march throughout the earth To seize dwelling places which are not theirs." (Hab. 1:6-note)

Zechariah records that one day will

raise up a shepherd [most interpret this as the Antichrist, cf. 2Th 2:3; Da 9:27-note] in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat sheep and tear off their hoofs (Zech 11:16).

All of these events (and others too numerous to mention) underline the truth that God is sovereign over history. (**See attribute Sovereign**)

Demonstrate (1731) (**endeiknumi** [word study] from **en** = in, to + **deiknumi** = make known the character or significance of something by visual, auditory, gestural, or linguistic means) means to point out, to demonstrate, to put on display, to prove, to show proof, to show forth, to show oneself, to give visible proof, to show in anything and implies an appeal to facts. The preposition (**in**) in the compound suggests more than the simplest demonstration. It is like laying the index finger, as it were, on the object. It means to show something **in** someone. It can mean to do something to someone, as Alexander the coppersmith **did** (endeiknumi) Paul much harm (see 2Ti 4:14- note). In the papyri it could have a quasi-legal sense of proving a petition or charge or of proving that a charge was wrong. Josephus used **endeiknumi** to describe Herod Agrippa's display of generosity to those of other nations (Josephus, Antiquities, 19:330).

Endeiknumi - 11x in 11v - NAS = demonstrate(4), did(1), show(4), showing(2), shown(1).

Ro 2:15; 9:17, 22; 2 Cor 8:24; Eph 2:7; 1Ti 1:16; 2Ti 4:14; Titus 2:10; 3:2; Heb 6:10, 11.

Power (Miracles) (1411)(**dunamis** from **dunamai** = to be able, to have power) refers especially to miraculous power. Dunamis is intrinsic power or inherent ability, the power or ability to carry out some function, the potential for functioning in some way (power, might, strength, ability, capability), the power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature. Dunamis is translated miracle (2), miracles (17), miraculous powers (3) which is the sense of dunamis in the context of the miracles wrought in the confrontation of Moses with Egypt.

AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH: kai opos diaggele (3SAPS) to onoma mou en pase te ge:

- **That My Name might be proclaimed** - Exodus 10:1,2; 14:17,18; 15:14,15; 18:10,11; Joshua 2:9,10; 9:9; 1 Sa 4:8 John 17:26
- [Romans 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

My Name - God's miracles (cf "signs" in Ex 10:2) were like a flashing neon sign (so to speak), pointing to the invisible God, giving clear evidence that He existed and was intimately involved in the outworking of human history. Today we say that a "video went viral," which is a picture of what happened in the ancient land when God manifested His miracle working power.

Proclaimed (1229) (**diaggele** from **diá** = through + **aggéllō** = to tell, declare) means to herald thoroughly, to declare fully or far and wide and so to declare plainly, fully and exactly.

Thayer - to carry a message through, announce everywhere, through places, through assemblies of men, etc.; to publish abroad, declare

Diaggele - 3x in 3v translated as giving notice (1), proclaim everywhere (1), proclaimed (1).

Luke 9:60 But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and **proclaim everywhere** the kingdom of God."

Acts 21:26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple **giving notice** of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.

Romans 9:17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE **PROCLAIMED** THROUGHOUT (Literally - "in all the land") THE WHOLE EARTH."

Diaggele - 4x in the Septuagint - Ex 9:16; Lev 25:9; Josh 6:10; Ps 2:7; Ps 59:12;

Exodus 9:16 NAS "But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim (Heb - saphar, 05608; Lxx = diaggele) My name through all the earth.

Exodus 9:16 English of Septuagint - And for this purpose hast thou been preserved, that I might display in thee my strength, and that my name might be published in all the earth.

Leviticus 25:9 'You shall then sound (Lxx = diaggele) a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land.

The psalmist Asaph appeals to God not to remain silent or still as His enemies exalt themselves pleading with Him to...

Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever; and let them be humiliated and perish, that they may know that Thou Alone, Whose Name is the LORD, art the Most High over all the earth. (Psalms 83:17,18-[note](#))

In Isaiah King Hezekiah appeals to the Lord (for Israel's deliverance) that His name might be proclaimed...

"And now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou alone, LORD, art God." (Isaiah 37:20)

Solomon writes that...

The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil. (Proverbs 16:4)

Romans 9:18 [So then He has mercy on whom He desires](#), and He [hardens whom He desires](#).

Greek: [ara oun on thelei \(3SPA\)](#) [eleei. \(3SPA\)](#) [on de thelei \(3SPA\)](#) [sklerunei. \(3SPA\)](#)

Amplified: So then He has mercy on whomever He wills (chooses) and He hardens (makes stubborn and unyielding the heart of) whomever He wills.

ESV: So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

ICB: So God shows mercy where he wants to show mercy. And he makes stubborn the people he wants to

make stubborn.

NIV: Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

NKJV: Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

NLT: So you see, God shows mercy to some just because he wants to, and he chooses to make some people refuse to listen.

Philips: It seems plain, then, that God chooses on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will harden in their sin.

Wuest: Therefore, then, upon whom He desires, He shows mercy; and whom He desires to harden, He hardens.

Young's Literal: so, then, to whom He willeth, He doth kindness, and to whom He willeth, He doth harden.

SO THEN HE HAS MERCY ON WHOM HE DESIRES (on whomever He chooses, on whom He wants to have mercy): *ara ou* on thelei (3SPA1) eleei (3SPA1) on:

- **So then He has mercy** - Ro 9:15,16; 5:20,21; Ephesians 1:6
- **He hardens whom He desires** - Ro 1:24, 25, 26, 27, 28; 11:7,8; Ex 4:21; 7:13; Dt 2:30; Joshua 11:20; Isa 63:17; Mt 13:14,15; Acts 28:26, 27, 28; 2Th 2:10, 11, 12
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So then - As noted earlier, this conjunction should always cause one to pause and ponder this **term of conclusion**. What is Paul concluding, etc? **NET Note** adds that "There is a double connective (*ara ou*) here that cannot be easily preserved in English: "consequently therefore," emphasizing the conclusion of what he has been arguing."

Denney - From the two instances just quoted Paul draws the comprehensive conclusion: **So then** on whom He will He has mercy, and whom He will He hardens. The whole emphasis is on *thelei* (see *thelo* below). The two modes in which God acts upon man are showing mercy and hardening, and it depends upon God's will in which of these two modes He actually does act. ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

Has mercy (1653) (*eleeo* from *eleos* [word study]) means "to feel sympathy with the misery of another, especially such sympathy which manifests itself in action, less frequently in word." It describes the general sense of one who has compassion or person on someone in need. It indicates being moved to pity and compassion by tragedy. To see someone in dire need, to have compassion on them, and to give them help to remove the need. In the **active voice** (as in Ro 9:18) *eleeo* means to show mercy and so to be greatly concerned for someone in need and/or to help someone because of pity. God has mercy on sinners otherwise destined for an eternal separation in hell.

Robert Haldane - Here the general conclusion is drawn from all the Apostle had said in the three preceding verses, in denying that God was unrighteous in loving Jacob and hating Esau. It exhibits the ground of God's dealings both with the elect and the reprobate. It concludes that His own sovereign pleasure is the rule both with respect to those whom He receives, and those whom He rejects. He pardons one and hardens another, without reference to anything but His own sovereign will, in accordance with His infinite wisdom, holiness, and justice. 'Even so, Father,' said our blessed Lord, 'for so it seemed good in Thy sight.' God is not chargeable with any injustice in electing some and not others; for this is an act of mere mercy and compassion, and that can be no violation of justice.

That mighty act of God in delivering Israel from bondage in Egypt demonstrated two great truths. He delivered Israel to exhibit His sovereign mercy on [those] whom He desires, and He raised up and destroyed Pharaoh to exhibit the corollary truth that He hardens those whom He desires. Only His divine desire determines which it will be.

Moses was a Jew, whereas Pharaoh was a Gentile; but both of them were sinners. Both were murderers, and both witnessed God's miracles. Yet Moses was redeemed and Pharaoh was not. God raised up Pharaoh in order to reveal His own glory and power, and God had mercy on Moses in order to use him to deliver His people Israel. Pharaoh was a ruler, whereas Moses' people were slaves under Pharaoh. But Moses received God's mercy and compassion, because that was God's will. The Lord's work is sovereign, and He acts entirely according to His own will to accomplish His own purposes. The issue was not the presumed rights of either men but rather the sovereign will of God.

AND HE HARDENS WHOM HE DESIRES: de thelei (3SPAI) sklerunei

- **He hardens whom He desires** - Ro 1:24, 25, 26, 27, 28; 11:7,8; Ex 4:21; 7:13; Dt 2:30; Joshua 11:20; Isa 63:17; Mt 13:14,15; Acts 28:26, 27, 28; 2Th 2:10, 11, 12
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Hardens whom He desires - "makes stubborn and unyielding the heart of" (Amplified). Compare with His divine judicial activity in Romans 1 where 3 times God gives sinners over to their depraved natures (Ro 1:24-note, Ro 1:26-note, Ro 1:28-note)

We see a similar "spiritual" judgment in the time of the antichrist's rule where Paul writes that...

And then that lawless one (the Antichrist) will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth (**What does this clearly imply?** That the truth was offered/available) so as to be saved. 11 And for this reason (**What reason?**) **God will send upon them a deluding influence** so that (**What purpose?**) they might believe what is false, 12 in order that (**What purpose?**) they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but (**Don't miss this striking term of contrast**) took pleasure in wickedness (Which is why they did not love the truth, for the truth called them to righteousness and light and they loved unrighteousness and darkness, cf John 3:18-20). (2Thessalonians 2:8-10)

Denney - The word **sklerunei** (**skleruno**) is borrowed from the history of Pharaoh, Ex 7:3; Ex 7:22; Ex 8:19; Ex 9:12; Ex 14:17. What precisely the hardening means, and in what relation God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart stood to Pharaoh's own hardening of it against God, are not unimportant questions, but they are questions which Paul does not here raise. He has one aim always in view here—to show that man has no claim as of right against God; and he finds a decisive proof of this (at least for a Jew) in the opposite examples of Moses and Pharaoh, interpreted as these are by unmistakable words of God Himself. It was through God, in the last resort, that Moses and Pharaoh were what they were, signal instances of the Divine mercy and the Divine wrath. ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

Hardens (4645) (**skleruno** [word study from **skleros** = hard, dry, hard, rough <> from **skéllo** = dry up) means to make hard or stiff and is used only figuratively to refer to the heart or mind. In the active **skleruno** means to harden and in the passive sense, to grow hard.

The NT uses of **skleruno** are only figurative (metaphorical) and mean to cause one to become unyielding, obstinate or stubborn (carried on in an unyielding or persistent manner). As a physician, I find it interesting that **skleruno** was a medical technical term (first attested by Hippocrates) in Greek writings describing something becoming hardened or thickened. Our English word "hardening of the arteries" is known as "**arteriosclerosis**". This is a serious, potentially fatal physical condition, but here and in the book of Hebrews (Heb 3:8-note, Heb 3:13-note = the efficacious effect of sin, it's deceptive, attractive, seductive character!, Heb 3:15-note, Heb 4:7-note) the danger is even more ominous, for **spiritual hardening** can lead to **eternal death** and damnation of one's soul, not just loss of their physical life!

From the uses of **skleruno** in **Exodus**, one observes two important aspects of hardening: (1) Man can repeatedly harden his heart, until finally God does the hardening, with the implication that the latter is irrevocable. (2) One effect when one's heart is hardened is not listening to God.

Is Paul saying that God hardened Pharaoh's heart? Is Paul saying that God purposely choose Pharaoh to be an evil man? Pharaoh knew God and suppressed the truth. He did not want God. He saw God's power and hardened his heart. Yet God used him for His purposes to deliver many from bondage

The Exodus account of Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh speaks of God hardening Pharaoh's heart (Ex 4:21 7:3), but Moses also records that Pharaoh hardened his own heart as in the following verse...

But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, **he hardened his heart** and did not listen to them, as the LORD had said. (Exodus 8:15) (cf Ex 7:13; 7:22;8:32 9:7 9:34).

A study of these passages in Exodus emphasizes the tension between God's sovereignty and man's free will. As already discussed, Esau although rejected by God before birth, chose to reject his inheritance as the firstborn. Similarly, before he was born, Judas was appointed to betray Christ, Luke recording Peter's words...

"Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning

Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus." ([Acts1:16](#))

The apostle John also records God's sovereignty in Judas' betrayal recording that...

Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, **was going to betray Him**. (John 6:70,71).

And although clearly appointed by God for their place and purpose in history, both Esau and Judas, personally and willfully chose to follow sin and unbelief.

In some mysterious way, our human decisions for which we bear full responsibility have also been God's decisions, and vice versa. This is beyond our finite comprehension and we should not try to rationalize it by some human device of reasoning. What God does is right, by definition, Moses recording

"Far be it from Thee to do such a thing (not spare Sodom and Gomorrah if there were 50 righteous in it), to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Ge18:25)

The **psalmist** echoes this truth recording that...

For the word of the LORD is upright; and all His work is done in faithfulness. ([Ps 33:4](#))

Indeed, Jehovah's ways are "**unsearchable**" (Ro11:33, cf David's declaration regarding God's knowledge and care for him -- "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it." Ps139:6).

We must simply bow our knee and trust Him in whatever He does, knowing that He always right and is always accomplishing His own eternal purposes thereby.

Desires ([2309](#))(**thelo**; see study of derivative **thelema**; see synonyms **boule** and **boulomai**) is a very common NT verb (208x) which primarily refers to exercising of one's will with the underlying sense of to be willing, to desire, to want or to wish (in Jn 15:7 in context of prayer). To apply oneself to something (or to will). Thelo "expresses not simply a desire, but a determined and constant exercise of the will." (W E Vine)

The reader should realize that **thelo** is one of those Greek words that is somewhat difficult to define with absolute consistency. For example, some sources state that **thelo** refers to a thoughtful, purposeful choice, not a mere whim or emotional desire, while Kenneth Wuest says **thelo** expresses "a desire that comes from one's emotions" and "boulomai a desire that comes from one's reason." (see more detailed discussion below). W E Vine says thelo "chiefly indicates the impulse of the will rather than the tendency (boulomai). The different shades of meaning must be determined by the teaching of the Scriptures generally or by the context."

In secular Greek use thelo as used by Homer spoke of "readiness," "inclination," and "desire," so that when one was ready for an event or inclined to undertake a course of action, **thelo** was the Greek word used. Plato used thelo of intention or desire. The Septuagint uses often refer to God's will as revealed to His people (Dt 10:10, 23:5), who too often were not willing (thelo) to obey Him (Dt 1:26). One of the most beautiful uses in Isaiah where God declared

Isaiah 55:11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I **desire** (Lxx = thelo), and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

Thelo expresses not only desire, but executive will, active volition and purpose (1Cor 10:20). In 1Cor 7:7 Paul uses**thelo** to express personal desire without expressing the necessity of its imposition. In 1Cor 16:7 uses an absolute negative and thelo to express his desire, his determination in planning (determination presupposes desire).

In the Septuagint of Ps 115:3, 135:6 (= "pleases"), we see God's sovereignty reflected in the exercise of His will.

Thelo in John 7:17 expresses a vitally important truth for Jesus declares that "If anyone is**willing** (thelo - here the idea is a purposeful decision not a passive acquiescence) to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." The principle is that to know the will of God, we must be willing to do the will of God. We don't really know the Bible unless we obey the Bible! We won't really know God's will unless we are willing to obey God's will. The first prerequisite to ascertaining God's leading in some matter, or the truth about some doctrinal question, is a genuine willingness to believe the truth and to follow God's will before they are made known, even if the answer goes against one's preference. As a corollary our HUNGER for the Word of God will be in direct proportion to our OBEDIENCE to the Word of God. In summary, the "first prerequisite to ascertaining God's leading in some matter, or the truth about some doctrinal question, is a genuine willingness to believe the truth and to follow God's will before they are made known, even if the answer goes against one's preference." (Henry Morris)

Thelo will still be expressed by men and women who have in this life said they were "not willing" to believe in Christ and thus they

were thrown in the place of eternal torment (see Luke 16:26), where they will still possess wishes, desires and wants, which can no longer be satisfied or fulfilled! This to me is simply a horrible thought, but it is what Scripture teaches. May such a dire end prompt us, yea, even impel us to boldly, lovingly proclaim the Gospel to any and all who will listen!

NIDNTT - *thelō* frequently appears in the NT in a quite secular sense for general willing, desiring (e.g. Matt. 20:21; Matt. 26:17 par. Mk. 14:12), resolute willing (e.g. Matt. 25:15; Jn. 7:44), finding pleasure in, liking (e.g. Mk. 12:38 par. Lk. 20:46), claiming (2 Pet. 3:5) ... 1 (a) In the Pauline writings *thelō* and *thelēma* are frequently used to describe the will of God, and especially to describe the real source of the whole event of salvation in Christ.

Thelo is translated "to want or wish", this positive sense indicating a desire to see something done. Jesus said to the man "Do you **wish** to get well?" (Jn 5:6) Good question for all of us to ponder!

Thélo expresses a desire that comes from one's emotions. It is an active decision of the will, thus implying volition and purpose. It is a conscious willing and denotes a more active resolution urging on to action and expresses a purpose or determination or decree, the execution of which is, or is believed to be, in the power of him who wills.

Desire (Webster) - to long or hope for, to express a wish for, to have a longing for. Desire stresses the strength of feeling and often implies strong intention or aim.

Want (Webster) - to have a strong desire for, to have an inclination to, to wish for.

Jerry Bridges says **thelo** is "the will that ultimately makes each individual choice of whether we will sin or obey **Ed**: E.g., see Gal 5:17 which contrasts desires of flesh and Spirit, also Php 2:13 where God the Spirit gives us God honoring desire, cp 2Ti 3:12 - which also clearly is a desire supernaturally stimulated by the Holy Spirit, for our natural flesh reaction would be to gravitate toward that which is ungodly!). It is the will that chooses to yield to temptation or to say no. Our wills, then, ultimately determine our moral destiny, whether we will be holy or unholy in our character and conduct."

Praise God for these 2 uses of **thelo**...

1 Timothy 2:4 who **desires** all (all in Greek means all without exception) men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Rev 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who **wishes** take the water of life without cost.

Thelo versus Boulomai (this is an attempt to separate the meaning of these two words, but be aware the distinctions are not always clear cut as discussed below) - **Thelo** meaning to wish or to desire embodies the element, emphasizing desire that leads to action. The related word **boulomai** conveys the idea of deliberate determination, which might be in accordance with the original wish or impulse, but might be contrary to it. **Thelo** is a stronger word than **boulomai** because the natural impulse (*thelo*) is frequently stronger than reasoned resolve (*boulomai*). **Boulomai** carries the tone of a preordained, divine decision, somewhat more deliberate than *thelo* (Lk 22:42). **Zodhiates** says that "**Boulomai** expresses a merely passive desire, propensity, willingness, while **thelo** expresses an active volition and purpose. **Boulomai** expresses also the inward predisposition and bent from which active volition proceeds; hence it is never used of evil people. **Boulomai** refers to the constitutional will, such as a congressman has, but the **thelo** to executive will also, such as a president possesses. (In 1Cor 12:18 which uses **thelo**) God planned each member of our body and then executed His plan by places them there... *Thelo* implies purpose or design, whereas *boulomai* denotes mere willingness or desire." **Vine** writes that **boulomai** means "to wish, to will deliberately, and expresses more strongly than *thelo*, the deliberate exercise of the will... (In another note *Vine* says *thelo*) signifies more especially the natural impulse or volition, and indicates a less formal or deliberate purpose than (*boulomai*)." **Thayer** says **boulomai** speaks of deliberation while **thelo** speaks of inclination. As an aside, it must be note that while most seem to see a different emphasis between *thelo* and *boulomai*, not all Greek authorities agree that there are distinct differences. **Marvin Vincent** for example says "As between **thelo** and **boulomai** the general distinction is that **thelo** expresses a determination or definite resolution of the will; while **boule** expresses an inclination, disposition, or wish. The two words are, however, often interchanged in NT when no distinction is emphasized. (Compare Mk. 15:15 and Lk. 23:20 Acts 27:43 and Mt. 27:17; Jn. 18:39 and Mt. 14:5; Mk 6:48 and Acts 19:30.) Php 2:13 *thelo* used of a definite purpose or determination." **NIDNTT** says "Human will or volition can be represented, on the one hand, as a mental act, directed towards a free choice. But, on the other hand, it can be motivated by desire pressing in from the unconscious. Both kinds of volition are rendered by the word-groups associated with *boulomai* and **thelō**. A clear terminological distinction between **boulomai** (originally volition as a mental act) and **thelō** (originally instinctive desire) is no longer possible after the very early overlap of the areas covered by the words and is excluded at the time of the NT by their largely synonymous usage." *Boulomai* is more likely to express God's will of decree, while *thelo* is more likely to refer to His will of desire. "This is precisely the distinction theologians often make between God's secret will and His revealed will. God desires many things that He does not decree. It was never God's desire that sin exist, yet the undeniable existence of sin proves that even sin fulfills His eternal purposes (Isa 46:10)--though in no sense is He the author of sin

(James 1:13)." (John MacArthur).

So now if you are really confused over the distinction between **thelo** and **boulomai**, read A F Holmes discussion

The SEPTUAGINT employs the verbs **boulomai** and **thelō** somewhat interchangeably to cover wants, desires, decisions, purposes, and inclinations. In the NT **thelō** is used far more often than **boulomai** (the reverse of classic Greek usage). It has been argued that **thelō** denotes emotive action or unconscious DESIRE while **boulomai** stresses rational and conscious decisions. According to other scholars, such a use presupposes a dichotomy of emotion and reason that is alien to the Hebrew view of human nature (although it is precarious to draw a direct correspondence between lexical choices and theological and psychological concepts). It may be more descriptive of biblical usage to suggest that **thelō** is the broader and encompassing term, while **boulomai** indicates more specifically deliberate acts. Certainly this is the case with the noun **boulē** G1087 (e.g., Acts 27:12, 42; 1 Cor. 4:5), and **thelō** plainly denotes near-commands and natural inclinations whether or not conscious. The classic passage is in Ro. 7:15–21, where KJV translates **thelō** with the now archaic use of "would." It becomes evident (1) that the two verbs have no clearly distinct meanings; (2) that they depict the human being as an agent with responsibility for his acts, rather than denoting a discrete faculty, "the will"; and (3) that it is accordingly the person who chooses or desires or refuses, rather than "the will." (The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible)

NIDNTT on **thelo** in classical Greek usage - Originally and especially in Homer... means: (a) to be ready; to prefer, to be inclined; (b) to wish, to desire (e.g. "he desired to see", Homer, Od. 11, 566; also in the sexual sense, Homer, Od. 3, 272); (c) to have in mind; (d) to will, both as determining and coming to a decision; and in particular (e) to will, in the sense of compelling, and overbearing the will.

Some theologians refer to the **boulomai** as God's secret will and the **thelo** as His revealed will. In other words, God desires many things that He does not decree.

Thelo is used figuratively in John 3:8, in Jesus' description of the movement of the Holy Spirit in salvation comparing His regenerative work to "wind (that) blows where it wishes (thelo)."

When used with the negative **thelo** means to be unwilling or to refuse (Mt 1:19, 21:29, Lk 15:28, 18:13, 1Cor 12:1, Gal 1:7, 1Th 2:18). In Jn 5:40 Jesus says "you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life."

Friberg on Thelo - As exercising the will; (1) from a motive of desire wish, want, desire (Jn 15:7); (2) from a readiness or inclination, followed by an infinitive consent to, be ready to, be pleased to, wish to (Mt 1:19); (3) from resolve, decision, or design will, intend, purpose, aim, with a following infinitive either expressed or implied from the context (Rev 11:5); often used of God (1Ti 2:4), of Christ (Mk 3:13), and of the authoritative dealings of the apostles (1Th 4:13)

BDAG on Thelo (summarized) - (1) to have a desire for something, wish to have, desire, want(2) to have something in mind for oneself, of purpose, resolve, will, wish, want, be ready (3) to take pleasure in, like (Mk 12:38, Lk 20:46, Mt 27:43)(4) to have an opinion, maintain contrary to the true state of affairs (2Pe 3:5) (5) Thelo is used in the phrase "What does this mean?" (Acts 2:12, 17:20, Lk 15:26).

Thelo - 208x in 199v - **Thelo is translated in NAS various ways** (especially **desire, want, will** and **wish**)- delighting(1), delights(1), desire(14), desired(4), desires(4), desiring(2), intended(1), intending(1), like(3), maintain(1), mean(1), mean*(2), please(1), purposed(1), refused*(1), unwilling*(11), want(52), wanted(15), wanting(3), wants(8), will(5), willed(1), willing(15), wills(4), wish(24), wished(7), wishes(16), wishing(4), would(1).

Matthew 1:19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not **wanting** to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.

Matthew 2:18 "A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN; AND SHE **REFUSED (not willing)** TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE."

Matthew 5:40 "If anyone **wants** to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

42 "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who **wants** to borrow from you.

Matthew 7:12 "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you **want** them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 8:2 And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, "Lord, if You are **willing**, You can make me clean." 3 Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am **willing**; be cleansed."

And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Matthew 9:13 "But go and learn what this means: 'I **DESIRE** COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Matthew 11:14 "And if you are **willing** to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.

Matthew 12:7 "But if you had known what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the innocent.

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we **want** to see a sign from You."

Matthew 13:28 "And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you **want** us, then, to go and gather them up?'

Matthew 14:5 Although Herod **wanted** to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet.

Matthew 15:28 Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you **wish**." And her daughter was healed at once.

32 And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not **want** to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way."

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone **wishes** to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 25 "For whoever **wishes** to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Matthew 17:4 Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You **wish**, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

12 but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they **wished**. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."

Matthew 18:23 "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who **wished** to settle accounts with his slaves.

30 "But he was **unwilling** and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.

Matthew 19:17 And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you **wish** to enter into life, keep the commandments."

21 Jesus said to him, "If you **wish** to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Matthew 20:14 'Take what is yours and go, but I **wish** to give to this last man the same as to you.

15 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I **wish** with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?'

21 And He said to her, "What do you **wish**?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."

26 "It is not this way among you, but whoever **wishes** to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever **wishes** to be first among you shall be your slave;

32 And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you **want** Me to do for you?"

Matthew 21:29 "And he answered, 'I **will** not'; but afterward he regretted it and went.

Matthew 22:3 "And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were **unwilling** to come.

Matthew 23:4 "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are **unwilling** to move them with so much as a finger.

37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I **wanted** to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were **unwilling** (absolutely not willing).

Matthew 26:15 and said, "What are you **willing** to give me to betray Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him.

17 Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do You **want** us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

Matthew 26:39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I **will**, but as You *will*."

Matthew 27:15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people any one prisoner whom they **wanted**.

17 So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you **want** me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

21 But the governor said to them, "Which of the two do you **want** me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas."

34 they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He was **unwilling** to drink.

43 "HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE **DELIGHTS** IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

Mark 1:40 And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, "If You are **willing**, You can make me clean." 41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am **willing**; be cleansed."

Mark 3:13 And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself **wanted**, and they came to Him.

Mark 6:19 Herodias had a grudge against him and **wanted** to put him to death and could not do so;

22 and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you **want** and I will give it to you."

25 Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, "**I want** you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

26 And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was **unwilling** to refuse her.

48 Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He **intended** to pass by them.

Mark 7:24 Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He **wanted** no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice.

Mark 8:34 And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone **wishes** to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 35 "For whoever **wishes** to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

Mark 9:13 "But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they **wished**, just as it is written of him."

30 From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He did not **want** anyone to know about it.

35 Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone **wants** to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

Mark 10:35 James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we **want** You to do for us whatever we ask of You." 36 And He said to them, "What do you **want** Me to do for you?"

43 "But it is not this way among you, but whoever **wishes** to become great among you shall be your servant; 44 and whoever **wishes** to be first among you shall be slave of all.

51 And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you **want** Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!"

Mark 12:38 In His teaching He was saying: "Beware of the scribes who **like** to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places,

Mark 14:7 "For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you **wish** you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me.

12 On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You **want** us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

36 And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I **will**, but what You *will*."

Mark 15:9 Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you **want** me to release for you the King of the Jews?"

12 Answering again, Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?"

Luke 1:62 And they made signs to his father, as to what he **wanted** him called.

Luke 4:6 And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I **wish**.

Luke 5:12 While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You **are willing**, You can make me clean." 13 And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "**I am willing**; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him.

39 "And no one, after drinking old wine **wishes** for new; for he says, 'The old is good enough.'"

Luke 6:31 "Treat others the same way you **want** them to treat you.

Luke 8:20 And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, **wishing** to see You."

Luke 9:23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone **wishes** to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. 24 "For whoever **wishes** to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

54 When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You **want** us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

Luke 10:24 for I say to you, that many prophets and kings **wished** to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them."

29 But **wishing** to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Luke 12:49 "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how **wish** it were already kindled!

Luke 13:31 Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, "Go away, leave here, for Herod **wants** to kill You."

34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often **I wanted** to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you **would not have** it!

Luke 14:28 "For which one of you, when he **wants** to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?

Luke 15:28 "But he became angry and was not **willing** to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him.

Luke 16:26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who **wish** to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'

Luke 18:4 "For a while he was **unwilling**; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man,

13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even **unwilling** to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

41 "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I **want** to regain my sight!"

Luke 19:14 "But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not **want** this man to reign over us.'

27 "But these enemies of mine, who did not **want** me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence."

Luke 20:46 "Beware of the scribes, who **like** to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets,

Luke 22:9 They said to Him, "Where do You **want** us to prepare it?"

Luke 23:8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had **wanted** to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.

20 Pilate, **wanting** to release Jesus, addressed them again,

John 1:43 The next day He **purposed** to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me."

John 3:8 "The wind blows where it **wishes** and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

John 5:6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "Do you **wish** to get well?"

21 "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He **wishes**.

35 "He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were **willing** to rejoice for a while in his light.

40 and you are **unwilling** to come to Me so that you may have life.

John 6:11 Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they **wanted**.

21 So they were **willing** to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not **want** to go away also, do you?"

John 7:1 After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was **unwilling** to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.

17 "If anyone is **willing** to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.

44 Some of them **wanted** to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and you **want** to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

John 9:27 He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you **want** to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?"

John 12:21 these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we **wish** to see Jesus."

John 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you **wish**, and it will be done for you.

Comment: What does it mean to abide in Jesus? Well, in this passage, clearly one way is to imbibe if you will, the Word of God (cp Jn 8:31-32), to let them be at home in your heart, to hear and obey the Word. Then you will ask wishes that are in accordance with His Word which abides in you. See an OT parallel in Ps 37:4.

Spurgeon commenting on Ps 37:4 says "Men who **delight** in God **desire** or ask for nothing but what will please God; hence it is safe to give them *carte blanche*. Their **will** is subdued to God's **will**, and now they may have what they **will**. Our innermost **desires** are here meant, not our casual **wishes**; there are many things which nature might **desire** which grace would never permit us to ask for; these deep, prayerful, asking **desires** are those to which the promise is made."

John 16:19 Jesus knew that they **wished** to question Him, and He said to them, "Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"

John 17:24 "Father, I **desire** that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Comment: Ponder this passage - it is no surprise we would want to be with Jesus, but that His desire is to be with us boggles (or at least should boggle) our mind!

John 21:18 "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you **wished**; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go."

22 Jesus said to him, "If I **want** him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!"

23 Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I **want** him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

Acts 2:12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

Acts 7:28 'YOU DO NOT **MEAN** TO KILL ME AS YOU KILLED THE EGYPTIAN YESTERDAY, DO YOU?'

39 "Our fathers were **unwilling** to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt,

Acts 10:10 But he became hungry and was **desiring** to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance;

Acts 14:13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and **wanted** to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

Acts 16:3 Paul **wanted** this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Acts 17:18 And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler **wish** to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"-- because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we **want** to know what these things mean."

Acts 18:21 but taking leave of them and saying, "I will return to you again if **Godwills**," he set sail from Ephesus.

Acts 19:33 Some of the crowd concluded it was Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was **intending** to make a defense to the assembly.

Acts 24:27 But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and **wishing** to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.

Acts 25:9 But Festus, **wishing** to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you **willing** to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?"

Acts 26:5 since they have known about me for a long time, if they are **willing** to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.

Romans 1:13 I do not **want** you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

Romans 7:15 For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I **would like** to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

16 But if I do the very thing I do not **want** to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.

18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the **willing** is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

19 For the good that I **want**, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not **want**.

20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not **want**, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who **wants** to do good.

Romans 9:16 So then it does not depend on the man who **wills** or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

18 So then He has mercy on whom He **desires**, and He hardens whom He **desires**.

22 What if God, although **willing** to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

Romans 11:25 For I do not **want** you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery-- so that you will not be wise in your own estimation-- that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

Romans 13:3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you **want** to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

Romans 16:19 For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I **want** you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.

1 Corinthians 4:19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord **wills**, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power.

21 What do you **desire**? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

1 Corinthians 7:7 Yet I **wish** that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.

32 But I **want** you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;

36 But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he **wishes**, he does not sin; let her marry.

39 A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she **wishes**, only in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 10:1 For I do not **want** you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea;

20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not **want** you to become sharers in demons.

27 If one of the unbelievers invites you and you **want** to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake.

1 Corinthians 11:3 But I **want** you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not **want** you to be unaware.

18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He **desired**.

1 Corinthians 14:5 Now I **wish** that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

19 however, in the church I **desire** to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

35 If they **desire** to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

1 Corinthians 15:38 But God gives it a body just as He **wished**, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.

1 Corinthians 16:7 For I do not **wish** to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits.

2 Corinthians 1:8 For we do not **want** you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

2 Corinthians 5:4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not **want** to

be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.

2 Corinthians 8:10 I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to **desire** to do it.

11 But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to **desire** it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.

2 Corinthians 11:12 But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who **desire** an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting.

2 Corinthians 12:6 For if I do **wish** to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me.

20 For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I **wish** and may be found by you to be not what you **wish**; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances;

Galatians 1:7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and **want** to distort the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 3:2 This is the only thing I **want** to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Galatians 4:9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you **desire** to be enslaved all over again?

17 They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they **wish** to shut you out so that you will seek them.

20 but I could **wish** to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

21 Tell me, you who **want** to be under law, do you not listen to the law?

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh sets its **desire** against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Galatians 6:12 Those who **desire** to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

13 For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they **desire** to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.

Philippians 2:13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to **will** and to work for His good pleasure.

Colossians 1:27 to whom God **willed** to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 2:1 For I **want** you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face,

18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by **delighting** in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

1 Thessalonians 2:18 For we **wanted** to come to you-- I, Paul, more than once-- and yet Satan hindered us.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 But we do not **want** you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is **nowilling** to work, then he is not to eat, either.

1 Timothy 1:7 **wanting** to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

1 Timothy 2:4 who **desires** all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 5:11 But refuse to put younger widows on the list, for when they feel sensual **desires** in disregard of Christ, they want to get married,

2 Timothy 3:12 Indeed, all who **desire** to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Philemon 1:14 but without your consent I did **not want** to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will.

Hebrews 10:5 Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT **DESIRED**, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME;

8 After saying above, "SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE NOT **DESIRED**, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE in them" (which are offered according to the Law),

Hebrews 12:17 For you know that even afterwards, when he **desired** to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

Hebrews 13:18 Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, **desiring** to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.

James 2:20 But are you **willing** to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

James 4:15 Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord **will**, we will live and also do this or that."

1 Peter 3:10 For, "THE ONE WHO **DESIRES** LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT.

17 For it is better, if God should **will** it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

2 Peter 3:5 For when they **maintain** this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water,

3 John 1:13 I had many things to write to you, but I am **not willing** to write them to you with pen and ink;

Revelation 2:21 'I gave her time to repent, and she does **not want** to repent of her immorality.

Revelation 11:5 And if anyone **wants** to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way.

6 These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they **desire**.

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who **wishes** take the water of life without cost.

Thelo - 159 verses in non-apocryphal Septuagint -

Ge 24:8; 37:35; 39:8; 48:19; Ex 2:7, 14; 8:32; 10:4; 11:10; Num 20:21; 22:14; Deut 1:26; 2:30; 10:10; 21:14; 23:5, 22; 25:7; 29:20; Josh 24:10; Jdg 13:23; 20:5; 1Sa 14:15; 18:22; 26:23; 2Sa 2:21; 12:17; 13:9, 14, 16, 25; 14:29; 15:26; 23:16f; 1Kgs 9:1; 10:9, 13; 20:8, 35; 2Kgs 8:19; 13:23; 24:4; 1Chr 11:18; 19:19; 28:4, 9; 2 Chr 7:11; 9:8; 36:5; Neh 1:11; Esther 1:1, 8; 4:17; 5:3; 6:6f, 11; Job 23:13; 33:32; Ps 5:4; 18:19; 22:8; 34:12; 35:27; 37:23; 40:6, 14; 41:11; 51:16; 68:30; 73:25; 78:10; 109:17; 112:1; 115:3; 119:35; 135:6; 147:10; Pr 1:30; 21:1; Eccl 8:3; Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4; Isa 1:19f; 5:24; 9:5; 28:4, 12; 55:11; 56:4; 66:3; Jer 5:3; 8:5; 9:6; 11:10; 31:15; 38:21; 50:33; Ezek 3:7; 18:23, 32; 20:8; Dan 1:13; 2:3; 4:17; 7:19; 8:4; Hos 6:6; 11:5; Mal 3:1;

Ps 5:4 For Thou art not a God who **takes pleasure** in wickedness; No evil dwells with Thee.

Ps 18:19 He brought me forth also into a broad place; He rescued me, because He **delighted** in me.

Ps 22:8 "Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He **delights** in him."

Ps 34:12 Who is the man who **desires** life, And loves length of days that he may see good?

Ps 35:27 Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication; And let them say continually, "The LORD be magnified, Who **delights** in the prosperity of His servant."

Ps 37:23 The steps of a man are established by the LORD; And He **delights** in his way.

Ps 40:6 Sacrifice and meal offering Thou hast **not desired**; My ears Thou hast opened; Burnt offering and sin offering Thou hast not required.

Ps 40:14 Let those be ashamed and humiliated together Who seek my life to destroy it; Let those be turned

back and dishonored Who **delight** in my hurt.

Ps 51:16 For Thou dost not **delight** in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; Thou art not pleased with burnt offering. (See what God desires - Ps 51:17)

Ps 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I **desire** nothing on earth.

Ps 78:10 They did not keep the covenant of God, And **refused** (were unwilling or not willing) to walk in His law;

Ps 112:1 Praise the LORD! How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who greatly **delights** in His commandments.

Comment: Note that the Scriptures repeated link good, godly fear with godly living (obedience to God's Word). Do I fear the LORD? is a question we all do well to frequently ask ourselves, given our tendency for "spiritual leakage" so to speak. If we are actively growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ then we are often regressing at best and overtly backsliding at worst! The Christian life is like riding a bicycle (I ride all the time), where you are in greatest danger of falling when you cease pedaling! (I can testify to this as I had a severe fall for the first time in 2 years just as I attempted to slow down and stop relatively suddenly!).

Ps 115:3 But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He **pleases**.

Ps 119:35 Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, For I **delight** in it.

Ps 135:6 Whatever the LORD **pleases**, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.

Ps 147:10 He does not **delight** in the strength of the horse; He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man.

Pr 21:1 - The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He **wishes** (Lxx = thelo).

Related Resource

- [Will in Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)

Wayne Detzler (New Testament Words in Today's Language) on **thelo/thelema**... (**Note that some of the Scriptures below will relate to thelo and others to the cognate thelema**)

MEANING - The Greek word for "will" is **thelema**, and the verb form, "**I will**" is **thelo**. One sees this root word in the feminine name "**Thelma**." In its most basic form, this word refers to "a wish," "a strong desire," and "the willing of some event." But in ancient secular Greek the word had another meaning. Homer used it to speak of "readiness," "inclination," and "desire." When one was ready for an event, or inclined to undertake a course of action, **thelo** was used. Later the word also gained a sexual meaning, as when a man has his "will" with a woman, or vice versa. In the writings of Plato the word came to speak of intention or desire. The Septuagint Greek Old Testament contains 100 references to these words. In most cases they refer to God's will, as He revealed it to His people.

BIBLE USAGE - In the Greek New Testament these words appear 270 times.

Perhaps the most prominent reference is found in the Lord's Prayer. There Christ taught His disciples to pray for the fulfillment of the will of God on earth as it is in heaven, without any resistance (Mt 6:10 thelema). The primary test of one's Christianity is a willingness to do God's will (Mt 7:21 thelema).

Often the will of God stands out in bold contrast with the will of man. When these conflicts occur, one can be absolutely sure that the will of God is just and holy (Rom. 9:14-17). The whole of God's salvation plan was willed for our good. This involved the sacrifice of Christ (Gal. 1:4). It also included God's sovereign call to us, by which we are saved and sanctified (Eph. 1:5, 11). In accordance with His will, God reveals His glory to us (Col. 1:27). He also motivates us to do His will (Phil. 2:13).

It was the will of God that propelled Paul into the ministry of apostleship. He identified himself in this way, when he wrote to many churches and individuals (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 1:1).

No one ever was more conscious of the will of God than was the Lord Jesus Christ. Doing the Father's will was more important than food and drink to Jesus (John 4:34). He measured all judgment by the standard of God's will (5:30). Salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ is determined by the will of God (6:40).

There are also references to the will of people in the New Testament. A servant is bound to do his master's will (Luke 12:47).

The Apostle Paul often expressed his own will with the verb, "I desire" or "I wish." He willed to visit the Roman church (Rom. 1:13), but this did not become a reality till the end of his life. He wished that all people were single (1 Cor. 7:7), but he did not make this a rule. Another wish was that all believers had two specific spiritual gifts (1 Cor 14:5).

On a more general level, "the will of man" often referred to physical desires. For instance, Christians are not born by human desire, but by divine decree (John 1:13). Christians often experience conflict between their righteous wishes and their unrighteous performances (Ro 7:15–16).

The will of God is always good. No matter how it is expressed in our lives or our world, God's will is holy and thus always helpful. On the other hand, the will of people often conflicts with the will of God. And the will of Satan is always at enmity with the will of God (2 Tim. 2:26).

ILLUSTRATIONS - Human understanding of the will of God is sometimes rather weak. Even the saintly Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354–430) confessed: "When I vacillated about my decision to serve the Lord my God, it was I who willed and I who willed not, and nobody else. I was fighting against myself... All [God] asked was that I cease to want what I willed, and begin to want what [He] willed."

Godly poet George Herbert (1593–1633) emphasized the importance of aligning our will with God's: "When the will is ready [to obey God] the feet are light."

God seems to work through man's will. Though we feel that we have free will, actually our will is only free when exercised in accordance with God's will. Irenaeus (who wrote about 175–195) expressed this truth clearly: "Not only in works, but also in faith, God has given man freedom of the will."

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–92) stated the same principle in poetry:

Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.

James Jauncey was more direct: "God never burglarizes the human will. He may long to come in and help, but He will never cross the picket line of our unwillingness."

The emphasis shifts to God's will, when we read the writings of devotional author George MacDonald (1824–1905). He penned these words about the will of God: "I find doing the will of God leaves me no time for disputing about His plans."

Focusing on the all-encompassing nature of God's will, Frances J. Roberts wrote: "God's will is not a place, but a condition; not a when or where, but a how."

Corrie ten Boom's life was portrayed in the book and film, *The Hiding Place*. Less well known are the words of her sister, Betsie ten Boom, who said concerning God's will: "The center of God's will is our only safety."

Every Christian who loves the Lord and does His will can identify with this anonymous statement: "To know God's will is man's greatest treasure; to do His will is life's greatest privilege."

When we lived in England, we often sang a chorus which concluded with this thought:

There's no peace, no joy, no thrill
Like walking in His will.
For me to live is Christ
To die is gain.

George Matheson (1842–1906), a blind hymn-writer, summarized the will of God:

My will is not my own
Till Thou hast made it Thine;
If it would reach the monarch's throne
It must its crown resign;
It only stands unbent, amid the clashing strife,
When on Thy bosom it has leant
And found in Thee its life.