

THE WILL OF GOD.

"Who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." – 1 Tim. 2:4.

The term "saved," in general signifies to deliver. What the nature of the deliverance is must be determined by the circumstances. It may be from dangers of any kind; it may be from enemies temporal or spiritual; from sin; from temptations; from death, temporal, spiritual, or eternal; it may be from ignorance, or a helpless state that prevents our attainment of good that our Creator has prepared for His creatures. In this case it is the removal of these disabilities, etc. These uses of the terms save, saved, and salvation, it is presumed will not be questioned by any one.

Two facts are stated in the text above: 1. God "will have all men to be saved," 2. God will have all men come to the knowledge of the truth." On these two facts rest the sum of the gospel. Without controverting the truth that the terms save, saved, etc., are used often in a restricted sense, or are applied to a deliverance which is conditional, I proceed to notice the first fact stated in the text:

1. "God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved." Here is a salvation which is clearly unconditional, and depends alone on the will of God. It is equally clear that an ultimate or final salvation is conditional, based on the "belief of the truth" as well as through "sanctification of the Spirit," (2 Thes. 2:13). Texts need not be multiplied on this point. The salvation in the text under consideration admits of no conditions, as we shall see; it depends entirely on the "will" of "God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved;" not desires them to be saved: but has willed or determined they shall be saved.

The question then is, What is the nature of this salvation which is unconditional and certain? Paul answers: "As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation" [to death]; "even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto the justification of life: for as by one man's disobedience the many [all men] were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:18,19). That is, as all men die by one man's sin – Adam's – so by one man's righteousness – Christ's – shall all men be made alive from the dead. This revival from the dead is to all men unconditional: but a revival to immortality and eternal life is conditional. The universal revival restores all men from the death that came upon them as the result of Adam's sin. In this respect, Christ has "abolished death" – annulled it; made it void, or powerless to hold one of Adam's race. This is the salvation "God will have all men" receive, irrespective of any will of their own. This will further appear as the examination of the second fact in the text proceeds.

2. "God our Saviour, who will have all men...come to the knowledge of the truth." This second fact shows why God will have all men revived from the dead. How else can innumerable millions ever come to the knowledge of the truth? They have died without such knowledge; but Paul, who received his commission and his message directly from the Saviour's personal manifestation, declares, "God our Saviour, will have all men come to the knowledge of the truth;" and in order to this, He "will have all men to be saved." Observe, the salvation is placed before coming to the knowledge of the truth, and in order that they shall have that knowledge; for, no man's final state is fixed till he has first had it. When I say "the salvation is placed before coming to the knowledge of the truth," I do not mean that in the order of the work all men must actually be saved or made alive from the dead before they

receive that knowledge; but, that God's will to revive all men is based on the fact that in no other way can the mass of the race ever come to the knowledge of the truth, the reception or rejection of which is to determine their final state: and God's impartial "love of the world" is a pledge that "every man" shall come to the knowledge of that love in the gift of "His only begotten Son" to bestow life eternal on all who will receive him when made known to them.

It is a fact the gospel is to be preached "to every creature"; the gospel of God's love to the world, and of Christ as the LIFE-GIVER for all men: and until it is proclaimed to "every man," or, to each individual, that individual has not the proper probation and his final state cannot be fixed according to the gospel preached to Abraham and confirmed in Christ. Then, saith Paul, "If we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin" (Heb. 10:26). Thus the Apostle keeps the two facts of the text in view, and shows that death must be abolished and all men saved from it or God's will would be defeated, and all men could not have the knowledge of the truth. But God's will shall be accomplished, and death cannot prevent it; he has taken care to see that that "last enemy shall be destroyed" (1 Cor. 15:26), so that no man who has died in ignorance of God's love and his provisions for their ultimate redemption from sin and all its final consequences, shall fail of eternal life except by a wilful rejection of the truth, when, or after, he has come to the knowledge of it.

Such is "God our Saviour's will"; and who or what can defeat his counsel so as to make his word void? Has he not said, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do my pleasure" (Isa. 46:10)?

That I have taken the correct view of the text the context shows. The Apostle says: "I exhort that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men ...for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour,

who will have all men to be saved," etc.; "for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Tim. 2:1-6). Hence the absolute necessity that all men be saved from death, else God's will, that they shall "come to the knowledge of the truth," is defeated, and his "due time" will never be reached. The death by Adam is annulled, so that no man can be held by it. If held in death at all, it is because he has sinned "willfully after that" he has received the knowledge of the truth. Such exceptions no more affect the general truth of the salvation of all men from death, than the general truth that "death passed upon all men" is affected by the translation of Enoch and Elijah, or that of saints alive at Christ's return from heaven. The word all embraces the mass of the race; the exceptions are the few. Some may never be released from death, because, personally they have involved themselves in its dominion by a wilful rejection of the DELIVERER after he was made known to them.

– Geo. Storrs.
