

Ezekiel 18:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?

Analysis

God reveals His heart: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" This rhetorical question establishes that God takes no delight in judgment but desires repentance. The Hebrew word *chaphets* (צָפַח, "pleasure") indicates delight or desire. While God's holiness requires judging sin, His grace offers salvation. This tension between justice and mercy finds resolution in Christ's substitutionary atonement. The Reformed distinction between God's decretive and preceptive wills appears: God decrees some to judgment while sincerely offering salvation to all who repent.

Historical Context

Among fatalistic exiles (591 BC) who saw judgment as inevitable, this declaration offered hope. God doesn't arbitrarily condemn but calls all to repentance. The phrase "return from his ways" uses the Hebrew *shub* (שׁוּב), meaning turn back or repent—the fundamental prophetic call. While theological debates continue over the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, this verse clearly affirms God's sincere desire for sinners' repentance. The gospel call genuinely offers salvation to all, though only the elect respond through effectual grace.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does God's lack of pleasure in judgment challenge caricatures of Him as vindictive or arbitrary?
2. What is the relationship between God's sincere desire for repentance and the doctrine of election?

Interlinear Text

אֶחְפֹּץ	אֶחְפֹּץ	מֹת	כִּשְׁ ע	נֹא מ
Have I any pleasure	Have I any pleasure	should die	that the wicked	saith
H2654	H2654	H4194	H7563	H5002
אֲדֹנָי יְהוֹה	הֵלֵל וְאֵל	בָּשׁוּב וְ	מִדְרָכָיו	וְחַיָּה:
the Lord	GOD	and not that he should return	from his ways	and live
H136	H3069	H7725	H1870	H2421

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 33:11 (Evil): Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

1 Timothy 2:4 (Parallel theme): Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

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

Ezekiel 18:32 (References God): For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

Luke 15:32 (Parallel theme): It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Psalms 147:11 (References Lord): The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Luke 15:10 (References God): Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

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