

The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 – “Of God’s Decree”,
Message # 11 – “God Made All for Himself” Presented in the
Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall,
on October 17th, 2021.

Paragraph 1 – “God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably(1), all things, whatsoever comes to pass(2); yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein(3); nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established(4); in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree.”(5)

1) Proverbs 19: 21; Isaiah 14: 24-27; 46: 10, 11; Psalm 115: 3; 135: 6; Romans 9: 19

2) Daniel 4: 34, 35; Romans 8: 28; 11: 36; Ephesians 1: 11

3) Genesis 18: 25; James 1: 1; 1st John 1: 5

4) Genesis 50: 20; 2nd Samuel 24: 1; Isaiah 10: 5-7; Matthew 17: 12; John 19: 11; Acts 2: 23; Acts 4: 27, 28

5) Numbers 23: 19; Ephesians 1: 3-5

Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 7 – What are the Decrees of God?

Answer: “The Decrees of God are, His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 8 – How doth God execute His Decrees?

Answer: God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence.

And, I would add – The Redemption of His people, and the judgment of the wicked, through our Lord Jesus Christ)

1. God’s Decretive Will concerning Israel shows forth His Wisdom in the salvation of Israel, an elect nation.

Romans 11: 33-36 – “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” “How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out.” “For who has known the mind of the Lord!” “Or who has become His counselor?” “Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to Him?” “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever.” “Amen.”

So, there are depths to the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. These are found in His Being, in His 3 Persons subsisting in His Being. How deep are these riches of wisdom and knowledge? Well, He takes counsel with no one but Himself. His judgments are unsearchable and His ways are past finding out. We do not always understand His providential ordering of things, especially. What are His judgments? They are the outworking of the things that He has decreed, in time and space, concerning all people and all nations. The context of Romans 11 is God’s amazing decretive will concerning His ancient people the Jews, and how He has dealt with them all through history, and into the future.

At some points in the past, He only saved a remnant of them. At Pentecost, He saved thousands. But many in the nation of Israel rejected their Messiah when He came. They despised and rejected Him and had Him crucified. But all of this was according to God’s decree. God brought judgments upon Israel, but also saved many through the preaching of the apostles. This was decreed. They still continued to reject their Messiah and so God broke the branches off of their

olive tree in 70 A.D., and grafted in the Gentiles to that same Olive Tree, which is His Church. All this was according to His eternal purpose.

Who has known the mind of the Lord or become His counselor in these things? No one. We have the Scriptures, and in them we know certain of the things that have been decreed. But He is the Fountain of Life, and the Giver of every perfect gift. No purpose of His can be thwarted. For of Him, by His creating and giving physical life, we have the life of our soul and spirit. Through Him are all things created. Through Him and by His Word and by His Spirit, we can have wisdom and understanding which will lead us to salvation. And it is to Him that we live our lives once we become a Christian. And thus it is to Him belongs all glory and honor, praise and adoration. God's decree concerns all things, all individual people and all nations; the salvation of the elect, and the judgment of those who reject His Christ.

In the future, it says in verse 23, if they do not continue in unbelief, God will graft the Jews back in to Olive Tree again to be a part of His Spiritual Israel. Blindness, in part, has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, Paul says, in verse 25. In verses 26-28, he says that the Deliverer will come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. This is the covenant which I will make with them, when I take away their sins, God says in verse 27. All of these judgments concerning Israel are unsearchable, but we see here that their gifts and calling, as an elect nation, are irrevocable. Why? Because of God's decree. Concerning the gospel, the Jews have been God's people's enemies at times, Paul says, but concerning the election, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. Do you see the wisdom of God's decree in this? He dealt with their unbelief and sins at every point He found it in them. And yet, at many points, He had mercy upon them, and saved some, for His own name's sake; for Jesus' sake. And greater mercy is yet to come for them in the future.

2. The Decretive will of God concerning the wicked shows forth His wisdom in leaving them under His wrath forever.

Proverbs 16: 4 – “The Lord has made all for Himself, Yes even the wicked for the day of doom.” **KJV** – “The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.” **NASB** – “The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil. **ESV** – “The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.” **ASV** – “Jehovah hath made everything for its own end; Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.”

We can most certainly agree that the Lord has made everything for Himself and His own purpose. This is what His decree is all about. It is the words “made the wicked for the day of evil” that perplex us. It almost seems as though God makes them and then His only purpose is to destroy them. But this is not the right way to view this verse. I think that we must think about this verse in a different way. And we must think about God in a better way; not to caricature Him in a way which thinks badly of Him because He is a God of Justice. God does raise up men to fulfill His purposes, and He does use the acts of wicked men to fulfill those purposes without ever once approving of their sins. His decree concerning them is not His creating them to destroy them, but it is His creating them to fulfill His own holy purpose. His own purpose is to demonstrate His justice (His wrath) upon them and their sins, which they love and will cling to despite all of His commands to repent and all of His offers of mercy.

In thinking about the wisdom of God's decree in the choosing of some persons unto eternal life, and passing by others, and justly leaving them to themselves, and to their sins, which they love,

God does have a holy and wise eternal purpose. It is that He might be glorified in and through both the righteous, those whom He has shown mercy to, and also the wicked, those whom He has passed by.

As Matthew Henry says concerning Proverbs 16: 4 – “God is the last end. All is of Him and from Him, and therefore all is to Him and for Him.” “He made all according to his will and for his praise; He designed to serve his own purposes by all His creatures, and He will not fail of his designs; all are His servants.” “The wicked He is not glorified by, but He will be glorified upon. He makes no man wicked, but He made those who He foresaw would be wicked: Yet he made them, because He knew how to get Himself honour upon them.”

The proof of this is found in the following verses in regard both the elect and the wicked whom God passes by, and does not show mercy to –

Romans chapter 9, verses 10-24 – “And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, ‘The older shall serve the younger.’” “As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.’” “What shall we say then?” “Is there unrighteousness with God?” “Certainly not!” “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.’” “So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs but of God who shows mercy.”

“For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, ‘for this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name be declared in all the earth.’” “Therefore He has mercy to whom He will, and whom He wills He hardens.” “You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault?’” “For who has resisted his will?” “But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God?” “Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’” “Does not the potter have power over the clay from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?”

“What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

This is a very interesting verse indeed, for it says so much about God. He “wants” to show His wrath and to make His power known. We must ask ourselves why He would want to make it known? It is because God is glorified in showing forth His attribute of perfect Justice. He is wise and holy, loving and good, but the truth about His holiness, and the truth about men as sinners, how much it dishonors Him, this must be shown forth in an everlasting sense. He is an eternal God and this is why His love and His wrath are everlasting. He never compromises with sin and evil, but He is great enough to make the wrath of men praise Him.

All men must fear Him and reverence Him if they would live forever. God has created all men to fear Him. And since by nature no one fears God unless they are changed by His grace, it is His purpose to save some by His mercy, and to punish the others, to the praise of His Justice. He strives with them, giving them commands through His servants, to heed His word, and then, instead of showing them mercy, He leaves them to sinful reasonings of their own hearts, and then gives them what they most certainly deserve – His judgments, both in this life, and in the

life to come. Pharoah, king of Egypt, in the days of Moses is the perfect example for our consideration in this regard. God accomplished everything He purposed to accomplish according to His decree, regarding both the mercy He showed to Israel, and the Justice He demonstrated to Pharoah and the Egyptians.