

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 – “Of God’s Decree”, Message # 20 –
“God’s Decree & Mary’s Faith”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class
by Pastor Paul Rendall, on December 19th, 2021.**

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)

Paragraph 6 – As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so he hath, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto; wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

- 1) Ephesians 1: 4-8 and 2: 10; 2nd Thessalonians 2: 13 1st Peter 1: 2
- 2) 1st Thessalonians 5: 9 & 10 Titus 2: 14
- 3) Romans 8: 30 Ephesians 1: 5 2nd Thessalonians 2: 13
- 4) 1st Peter 1: 5
- 5) John 6: 64, 65 John 8: 47 John 10: 26 John 17: 9 Romans 8: 28 1st John 2: 19

Paragraph 7 – The doctrine of the high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election; so shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.

- 1) Deuteronomy 29: 29
- 2) 1st Thessalonians 1: 4 & 5 2nd Peter 1: 10
- 3) Ephesians 1: 6 Romans 11: 33
- 4) Romans 11: 5, 6, & 20 Colossians 3: 12
- 5) 2nd Peter 1: 10
- 6) Luke 10: 20

1. God, to fulfill His Decree, sent the angel Gabriel to talk to Mary about the Incarnation.
(Have this read by volunteers in the congregation. Vs. 26-34, Vs. 35-45, and Vs. 46-56)

Luke 1: 26-56 – “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she

who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever." And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house."

2. God uses the means of the Angel Gabriel's declarations to draw out Mary's Faith in what He was going to do.

The angel Gabriel was sent to a specific couple of His choosing, Joseph and Mary. Joseph was of the house of David, Mary a virgin betrothed to him. The angel comes to her and gives her this greeting: Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women! She was troubled at this saying, and was trying to take in what he was saying to her. Gabriel tells her not to be afraid, for she had found favor with God. Something very wonderful was going to take place, and God would bring it about. She would conceive in her womb and bring forth a Son, and she is told that His name would be Jesus.

I want you to take notice of the Divine Purpose that was being declared to her here. She shall conceive, she shall bring forth a Son, she shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest. The Lord will give Him the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there will be no end.

3. The Response of Mary's Faith established the means which God would use to fulfill His Decree.

You will notice that Mary does not dispute God's purpose; what He has decreed will come to pass. She does not fight with what God has decreed. She simply cannot understand how she, a virgin, could conceive a child without knowing a man. This was not unbelief on her part, as it was on Zacharias' part when he was told by Gabriel that he and Elizabeth were going to have a child. He did not believe Gabriel's words to him (vs. 18) and he was struck mute by Gabriel on account of it, until the day that John the Baptist was born.

In Mary's case, there was not that unwillingness to believe as there was in Zacharias. Quite the contrary. She was receiving his word to her. And so Gabriel gives her the explanation; that the Holy Spirit will come upon her, and the power of the highest would overshadow her, and therefore, that Holy One who would be born would be called the Son of God. Then he also tells her, to encourage her faith, that her relative Elizabeth had conceived a child in her old age; she who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.

4. God then gave great encouragements to Mary's and Elizabeth's faith that these good things would come to pass exactly as He had purposed that they would.

Her response? It was one of complete faith and submission to the Lord's decreed will. Behold, the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word. In other words, she was willing to become the Lord's appointed means, humanly speaking, in carrying the Child Jesus in womb, and bringing Him forth in due time. She was in every way showing her eager compliance with what God had decreed, and was responding to it in faith. The truth that you and I should learn from this, is that the Lord is indeed completely sovereign over everything that He brings into our lives that will fulfill His own purpose concerning us, and what He would have us to do to fulfill that purpose. But He is looking for a willing response from us, to all that He has decreed, and all that He providentially orders to bring about that purpose. He is looking for faith in His word, and willingness to work together with Him to accomplish and bring about that purpose. We should ask ourselves – Is this the case with me?

Once Mary showed her faith and her submission, then a few days later she went to pay Elizabeth a visit. Here God the Holy Spirit would greatly encourage her and Elizabeth too, in relation to the work that He was doing in both of their wombs, and in their hearts as well. Mary entered the house and greeted Elizabeth, and when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe within her leaped in her womb, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke with a loud voice and prophesied. And she said – “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” “But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

Now, even though this prophesying was revelatory, we ourselves should take this encouragement from it. We too, having believed in God, in Christ, and in God’s word, have the Holy Spirit within us, dwelling in our hearts and working in our hearts to bring us to the place where we too will fulfill the purpose for which the Lord has called us to faith in Himself. We should believe that He will help us to both understand the will of God in accordance with the truth of the Scriptures, and He will also, most definitely lead us into that truth and teach us and encourage our every step of obedience to God’s commandments, and grant us joy and peace in believing

5. What should our response be to God’s purpose for our lives? To hold to the Scripture promises of what God has purposed that He will do, that we might have hope.

Romans 15: 4-13 – “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "FOR THIS REASON I WILL CONFESS TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND SING TO YOUR NAME." And again he says: "REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE!" And again: "PRAISE THE LORD, ALL YOU GENTILES! LAUD HIM, ALL YOU PEOPLES!" And again, Isaiah says: "THERE SHALL BE A ROOT OF JESSE; AND HE WHO SHALL RISE TO REIGN OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM THE GENTILES SHALL HOPE." Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

You can see that even though we do not have revelatory gifts that the things which were written down by the prophets and apostles of our Lord were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. The hope is that God, having given us great promises of what He will do for us, to bring us greater understanding of His purpose which is written down there for us, this engenders the hope in our hearts that it will all eventually be completely fulfilled. There are certain practical implications of this truth which are mentioned here. We need to see that God is patient in fulfilling His greatest promises to us in their completed form. He is this way for our sakes that we might learn to do His will at every point. Therefore, Paul says that we ought to pray that God would grant that we all with one mind and one mouth glorify God that this is so, and receive one another, just as Christ has received us. That is, we look at each other and we realize that God is working in all of us, transforming us more and more into the image of Christ, and we learn to appreciate His work in sanctification in others, just as we appreciate it in ourselves. This gives us reason to praise God and sing praises to His name. For Christ is reigning in righteousness over us, and we therefore pray that the God of hope will fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we might abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. How wonderfully good and great and glorious, is God’s purpose for us.