

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 – “Of God’s Decree”,  
Message # 10 – “The Wisdom of God’s Decree”, Presented in the  
Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall,  
on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 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)*

**Ephesians 1: 11 and 12** – “In Him (that is, in Christ) we also have an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trust in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”

**1. God was infinitely wise in Counsel with Himself in Eternity Past.**

We have seen that God’s decree is the counsel which took place in Himself, between the 3 Persons of the Divine Trinity, before time began. This counsel is called “most wise and holy” in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phrase of Paragraph 1. God’s decree is His own will and eternal purpose whereby, He freely and unchangeably decreed all things that would come to pass, in relation to all that He would create. And yet, we have seen that this does not make Him the author of sin. God is Pure and Perfect and Holy. He has decreed all the actions of men, but in those actions, He leaves them to their own will, if He wishes. And all of God’s wishes are not desires that He cannot fulfill. They are governed by His decree, what He has purposed in Himself concerning them.

**And so, last week I taught you this truth - That the liberty of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> causes run side by side.**

The liberty of God’s will and the liberty of man’s will run concurrent to each other, I said to you. And yet God is perfectly able, according to His own decretive will, to interact with men, to bring about His own holy purposes in order to save people from their sins and to bring judgment upon the unrepentant. God’s liberty is absolute because He is God. He is infinitely wise and holy. He is able to do all things according to the counsel of His own will, because He is infinitely wise. He

has the wisdom and power to bring about all that he purposes. God has decreed that the liberty of man is to make his own decisions with the creaturely freedom that He has been given by God. It does not mean that God has any fellowship with any person in their sin. And He does not offer violence to the will of any of His creatures, neither is their liberty, their ability to freely choose what they will think, or say, or do, taken away from them. But rather it is established.

I have shown you this by many verses of Scripture, opening up this truth, to show you the greatness and glory of God in His Persons; that before He created anything, the Triune God together purposed to create the world and all things in it, and then to Providentially order and govern all the things that He created, in all of its details. The end proposed, was His decreeing all things For His own Glory, and I might add, for the praise of His glorious grace in the salvation of His elect people. So at this time, I want to commend to you the Wisdom of God, both in the Decree itself, and in the outworking of His Decree in the History of the World. For our understanding as finite creatures, we speak of His Decrees (Plural). Even though His decree is One, because He is One, to us it can only be understood by us in terms of His Divine acts of creation and providence.

## **2. God's Decretive Will concerning the Apostle Paul shows forth His Wisdom in the salvation of all of His elect people.**

**1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1: 12-17** – “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor; and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” “And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” “However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.” “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever.” “Amen.”

So we find Paul thanking Christ Jesus his Lord who has enabled him, because he counted him faithful putting him into the ministry. How did Christ enable him? He enabled him by revealing Himself to him on the road of Damascus, by saving him by his powerful grace, and commissioning him as a “chosen instrument of His to bear His name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. God had decreed this concerning him. How could Christ consider Paul faithful, although he was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man? Because he had decreed what Paul would become as an apostle, and He saw what He would make him into, a mighty man in being bold to preach the gospel.

We can see that Paul was not disqualified by his previous sinfulness from having this ministry after his conversion to Christ, because Christ saw, beforehand, that he was persecuting Christians out of ignorance related to his unbelief. Paul says that the grace of the Lord Jesus was exceedingly abundant to him, and the graces of faith and love which would be exercised towards both God and man in order to fulfill his ministry were given to him. This dramatic conversion of Paul's shows forth the fact that Christ Jesus came in to the world to save sinners, and he considered himself the chief of sinners. He says that he obtained mercy in his being converted to Christ in such a definite and dramatic way, so that he would serve as a pattern to those who were going to believe on Christ for everlasting life.

