

The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 – “Of God’s Decree”,
Message # 17 – “Being Led into Temptation”, Presented in the
Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall,
on November 28th, 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 3 – By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice.

1) Matthew 25: 34 1st Timothy 5: 21

2) John 12: 37-40 Romans 9: 6-24 1st Peter 2: 8-10 Jude 4

Paragraph 5 – Those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him thereunto.

1) Romans 8: 30 Ephesians 1: 4-6 Ephesians 9: 2 2nd Timothy 1: 9

2) Romans 9: 11-16 Romans 11: 5, 6

Review – How then should we define God’s Hardening so that God is not seen as the author of sin?

Definition: It is a progressive just judgment in time and space, based upon His eternal decree concerning that particular person, whereby, because of their persistence in sin, He gives that person over to the sinful thoughts and tendencies of their own heart, to exalt themselves, and to do their own will. He will righteously and deliberately lead them into situations where they will be tempted, and they will be overcome by that temptation, to sin against Him. In His hardening there will be a sometimes gradual, or sometimes sudden, withdrawal of the Holy Spirit’s gracious influences of common grace upon the sinner’s heart so that they will not want to in any way, do the will of God. He makes them hard in relation to Himself, following their hardening their own hearts to His entreaties and warnings.

Going on further in this definition I want to show you that –

1. The Hardening of Judas is an example of God’s leading him into temptation.

John 13: 21-27 – “ When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.’ “Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke.” “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples whom Jesus loved.” “Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke.” “Then leaning back on Jesus’ breast, he said to Him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ “Jesus answered, It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.” “And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.” “Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him.” “Then Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly.’”

You will notice that the Lord Jesus did not plead with Judas to reconsider or repent. He did not tell him that he should pray to God if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him,

like Peter did with Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8: 22. He said to him, “What you do, do quickly.” This was God’s leading him right into the temptation, and it was the indication that He was hardening Judas, after Judas had first hardened his own heart many times against Jesus, God’s holy Son.

Luke 22: 53 – “When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me.” “But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

This verse shows us that God was also hardening the hearts of those who were in league combined against His Son. He gave them over the power of darkness, appointed them an hour to take His Son away to trial and crucifixion. He led them into this temptation. Some of these may have later repented of their sins in this regard, at the preaching of Peter. But this incident shows us how God delivered Jesus into their hands. He led them into the temptation, without any sin on God’s part at all. Just because He had decreed this, did not mean that they were under any necessity coming from Him, to do what they did. But according to their own wicked hearts and thoughts, they were fulfilling God’s greater purpose in relation to delivering His Son up for us all.

John 17: 11 & 12 – “Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You.” “Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.” “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name.” “Those whom You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”

John Calvin says – “By these words Christ means that his ruin, which took place suddenly before the eyes of men, had been known to God long before; for the son of perdition, according to the Hebrew idiom, denotes a man who is ruined, or devoted to destruction.”

But, you will notice the great difference which Jesus made in His prayer concerning those whom He would have the Father keep from temptation, and keep by His grace, in contrast to the one who was lost, the son of perdition; that is, Judas Iscariot. The word “perdition”, according to Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, means, 1. “entire loss and ruin; utter destruction”. 2. The utter loss of the soul or of final happiness in a future state; future misery or eternal death. We should understand by the words, “Son of Perdition” that Judas was the man who God decreed should be Christ’s betrayer.

Observation: Being Kept by God is the very opposite of His leading into temptation.

Listen to Matthew Henry on Christ’s prayer – “**Keep them in Thy name.**” – “Keep them through thine own name. That is, [1.] Keep them for thy name's sake; so some. “Thy name and honour are concerned in their preservation as well as mine, for both will suffer by it if they either revolt or sink.” The Old Testament saints often pleaded, for thy name's sake; and those may with comfort plead it that are indeed more concerned for the honour of God's name than for any interest of their own. [2.] Keep them in thy name; so others; the original is so, en tō onomati. Keep them in the knowledge and fear of thy name; keep them in the profession and service of thy name, whatever it cost them. Keep them in the interest of thy name, and let them ever be faithful to this; keep them in thy truths, in thine ordinances, in the way of thy commandments.” [3.] Keep them by or through thy name; so others. Keep them by thine own power, in thine own hand; keep them thyself, undertake for them, let them be thine own

immediate care. Keep them by those means of preservation which thou hast thyself appointed, and by which thou hast made thyself known. Keep them by thy word and ordinances; let thy name be their strong tower, thy tabernacle their pavilion.”

Psalm 125, verses 1-3 – “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mt. Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.” “As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people from this time forth and forever.” “For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity.” “Do good, O Lord to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts.” “As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them away with the workers of iniquity.”

Matthew 6: 13 – “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, for Yours is the kingdom.....”

So what we find here, in the case of those who are believers and elect, the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray in just this way; that the Lord will not lead us into temptation, that He will not harden our hearts, but that He would deliver us from all evil, and the evil one. This shows us that God’s leading anyone into temptation is a just part of His hardening them.

2. A progressive withdrawal of the Holy Spirit’s gracious influences of common grace upon the unrepentant sinner’s heart so that they will not want to in any way, do the will of God.

Exodus 10: 27-29 – “But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go.” “then Pharaoh said to him, ‘Get away from me!’” “Take heed to yourself and see my face no more!” “For in the day you see my face you shall die!” “So Moses said, ‘Your have spoken well.’” “I will never see your face again.”

We have seen that Pharaoh retracted his own repentance in Exodus 9. This was not a gracious repentance but circumstances going against him, he repented and confessed his sins. He was not sincere in this. And therefore, God, instead of showing him mercy and giving him grace to repent and to savingly believe, He deliberately withheld these things from him and declared that He would be glorified and get honor to Himself by hardening Pharaoh’s heart. This was why he later became so angry and told Moses to get away from him; that he would kill him if Moses can back again. This was the withdrawal of any gracious restraining influence of the Holy Spirit in common grace from Pharaoh so that he could not speak civilly to Moses any longer.

Exodus 14: 1-4 – “Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea.’” “For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.” “Then I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.” “And they did so.”

This is what happened to Pharaoh and his whole army when they were destroyed in the Red Sea. The purpose of this was so that God would gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, and that the Egyptians would know that He was the Lord. These Egyptians and Pharaoh were now vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction.

We learn a lesson from this:

Proverbs 29: 1 – “He who is often rebuked and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that beyond remedy.”

3. The same kind of Hardening took place in the hearts of those who did not want to believe that Jesus was their promised Messiah.

John 12: 35-40 – “Then Jesus said to them, ‘A little while longer the light is with you.’ “Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.” “While you have the light believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” “These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.” “But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’ “And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” “Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.’”

Here you see how gently and lovingly the Lord Jesus dealt with the Jews in presenting to them the claims of His being their Messiah. He said that He, the Light of the World would only be with them a little while longer. They should walk in His light of truth, which He had given them, or if they didn't spiritual darkness, blindness, and hardness would come to them. He spoke those things, John says, and then departed and was hidden from them. He hid Himself so that they might think about what He was saying, but He also knew that they were irritated by what He was saying, and hardening their hearts to His overtures of telling them the truth. Many of them wanted to see Him put to death, and He knew that His time to die was not yet.

But John says that although He had done so many signs, they did not believe in Him. And this was in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled saying – Lord, who has believed our report? So few did believe because they had not wanted to believe that He was the Christ. And therefore, they could not believe because God was delivering them unto further blinding and hardening, so that they would not see and turn and He heal them. This was His decreed purpose. Many of the Jews would die in their sins because they did not believe in the Lord Jesus.

But still we know from Christ's weeping over Jerusalem that He did not have any pleasure in the death of these wicked men, which was why on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter preached to them and showed them their sin, that 3,000 of them repented and believed in Christ.