

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 – “Of God’s Decree”, Message # 25 –  
“The Means of Diligence”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class  
by Pastor Paul Rendall, on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022.**

**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; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2: 13 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1: 2
- 2) 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5: 9 & 10 Titus 2: 14
- 3) Romans 8: 30 Ephesians 1: 5 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2: 13
- 4) 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1: 5
- 5) John 6: 64, 65 John 8: 47 John 10: 26 John 17: 9 Romans 8: 28 1<sup>st</sup> 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) 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1: 4 & 5 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1: 10
- 3) Ephesians 1: 6 Romans 11: 33
- 4) Romans 11: 5, 6, & 20 Colossians 3: 12
- 5) 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1: 10
- 6) Luke 10: 20

**Thus far we have looked at the following Points concerning the Means that God uses to accomplish what He has decreed, concerning the salvation of His people.**

**1. God used the Means of Christ’s Prayers to accomplish His Purpose in regard to each and every person who is going to be saved, their being saved, and their being established in Him; to accomplish all that God has purposed for them.**

**2. The Means of the preaching of His word. This produces tangible results in the salvation and sanctification of God’s people according to His decreed purpose.**

**3. God uses the Means of Our Prayers in relation to fulfilling His own Purposes.**

**4. In our Progressive Sanctification God uses the Means of Believers cleansing themselves from all dishonorable thoughts and actions.**

**5. In our Progressive Sanctification God uses the means of cleansing ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit.**

**6. God uses the means of our cleansing ourselves from the defilements of flesh and spirit to perfect holiness, and this brings to us assurance of hope in relation to our salvation.**

**It is mentioned here in paragraph 7 as – “being assured of our eternal election”.** We come to better realize the greatness of God’s working in our salvation, and come to understand our own

responsibility in relation to our obtain full assurance of our salvation through and by means of our diligence in relation to our faith and our obedience to do what God commands us.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1: 3-11** – “As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.” “For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.” “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

What does Peter tell us has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness? It is His Divine Power. What is the means that God uses in our sanctification? The knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue. How does He call us to Himself? By glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises.

What does the apostle Peter mean when he speaks of “giving all diligence” that we should add to our faith these qualities of virtue, or moral excellence? He means that we will work at being consistent in our trying to obtain these things that he has mentioned here in verses 5-8. Virtue (moral excellence), knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and Christian love.

When you yield obedience to God, to do His will, and you live out the principles of obedience in being diligent to exercise faith, when you pursue virtue (that is, moral excellence and good works), and you add to that knowledge and self-control and perseverance, when you develop godliness in your life; when this then leads you to brotherly kindness, and you have a love for all men in terms of their being saved, Peter says if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ. And in this way, being ever more diligent, you will make you calling and election sure. And if you do these things you will never stumble. This is how you can be sure of your eternal election, and be confident of an abundant entrance being provide to you into God’s eternal kingdom.

Assurance of faith comes when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for your salvation; the forgiveness of your sins, and a righteousness better than your own. You have believed in this and there is nothing to add to what He has done, which gives you assurance of having everlasting life. “He who hears My word, and believes in Him who sent Me, has everlasting life, and will not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” (John 5: 23)

Assurance of hope is based upon adding to your faith, moral excellence and good works and all of the things which Peter mentions here verses 5-8. If you lack these things how can you have assurance? Verse 9 says that you are shortsighted, even to blindness, and you have forgotten your cleansing from your former sins. (your old sins) Therefore, be diligent to make your call and election sure in this way that we have spoken of.

### **Questions to reflect upon –**

**1. What does Peter tell us has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness?**

**Ans.** His Divine Power has given to us all things pertaining to life and godliness

**2. What is the means that God uses in our sanctification?**

**Ans.** The knowledge of Him, that He called us by glory and virtue.

(The King James and the ESV read – “called us to His glory and virtue. The NAS reads “by His own glory and excellence”.

**3. How should these words glory and virtue be understood in the context?**

**Ans.** They should be understood as the glory of His power of bringing us light, understanding, wisdom and grace leading to salvation. And the glory of His virtue means His calling us to share in His holiness by His working to show us how holy He is, and how we can become more like Him over time.

**4. What does Peter mean when he says that we should add to our faith? What should be added?**

**Ans.** We should add knowledge; the knowledge of the will of God.

**5. Why do we need to add self-control to knowledge?**

We need to add self-control in order to be prudent in the way that we use the knowledge that God gives to us in His word. For Example: We should ask ourselves – Is it wise to speak of the knowledge of God’s Decree to a younger believer, and if so, how should I speak?

**6. Why do we need to add godliness to perseverance?**

**Ans.** Because godliness is the practice of prayer, the practice of holding communion with the Triune God. In doing so, when we persevere, we will come to understand that our perseverance is not simply our trying to keep the commandments of God in our own strength and determination, but we need to pray and seek God’s grace to truly persevere in a way which honors God.

**7. Why do we need to add brotherly kindness to godliness?**

**Ans.** Because in our zeal to be godly, we may not be thinking of how we can be kind to our brothers around us. We have great zeal to be alone with God, or do things for Him, but very little desire to spend time with the brethren or to show them kindness.

**8. Why add love to brotherly kindness?**

**Ans.** Because we may only pay attention to the brethren and neglect having a love for those outside the church.

**9. If you lack these qualities how are you described, as a professed Christian?**

**Ans.** You are described as shortsighted, even to blindness and you have forgotten that you were cleansed from your old sins.

**10. What are the benefits listed here in verses 10 and 11, when you are diligent to make your calling and election sure?**

**Ans.** You will never stumble. Not that you will never, ever, stumble. For we all stumble in many ways it says in James 3: 2. He means that you will never stumble so as to fall away from the faith.

You will be supplied with an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom.

