

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 3, Paragraph 7 – “Of God’s Decree”, Message # 26 –  
“Praise & Admiration of God”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class  
by Pastor Paul Rendall, on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022.**

**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.

**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.

We are told here in the last sentence of Paragraph 7, that this doctrine of the high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care. You might ask why. The answer is, because God is liable to being misunderstood and misrepresented by ourselves and others in regard to this doctrine. The things that we might say, might not be thought out as carefully as they should be, concerning this subject. And thus, others might be stumbled by what we say, and they might not want to receive this doctrine, even though the Bible plainly teaches it.

**The “high mystery of predestination” as it is called, needs to be understood by us, as having two doctrinal considerations in it.**

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Doctrinal Consideration – God has predestined a particular number of people, who He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world, to eternal life.**

**Ephesians 1: 3-6** – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself.

I think that the wording here is particularly important to a right understanding of the doctrine of predestination. We should bless God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ who have purposed our salvation from before the foundation of the world. This decree to save any of us was according to His great mercy. His purpose was to do what? To take us from where we were in our sins and save us and to give us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. And further, by this means of bestowing these blessings, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

It says here that He predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself. **Question:** Do you see the glory of the Father’s purpose in relation to Christ, and what He would come and do for you, so that you could become an adopted son or daughter of God? O how you ought to praise God for this! O how this ought to create in you, reverence and admiration of God in relation to the greatness of His plans for you!

If God had not purposed it in just the way that He did, not one of us would have been saved! In Paragraph 3 it says that His purpose in doing everything that He does in salvation for His elect people is for the manifestation of His glory. If this is the case, none of us ought to fight against the conclusion that God’s decree is something that we ought to glory in. It ought to be something that leads us to humility, greater diligence in doing His will. It ought to be a means of abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel, as it says here in Paragraph 7.

**Ephesians 1: 11 and 12** – “In Him also we have obtained 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 trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”

As we think of God's decree, we ought to think of the fact that in Christ we have obtained an inheritance; that is, of going to heaven someday, and then following Christ's return dwelling in the New Heavens and New Earth in which dwells righteousness. We were predestined to this inheritance according to the purpose of God; He who works all things according to the counsel of His will. (That is, His Decretive Will). He has done this so that as we trust in Christ, we should be, living our lives in such a godly way that they would be to the praise of His glory. God's decree, His eternal counsel, in other words is something that we should praise and admire God for drawing up His plans and purposes in a most definite way, and not an arbitrary way. Let me ask you whether you think this way concerning God and His Decree? For if you do, you will be praising Him for the certainty of His decree and you will find great comfort and consolation in living Your life to Him.

### **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Doctrinal Consideration – What is called Preterition or Reprobation.**

**The word preterition means “passed by”.** He has decreed that He would pass by and leave those He has not chosen unto salvation, to themselves, and their love of their sin. He has determined this in His decree, before the foundation of the world; that He would leave them in their natural state. He would leave them to live their lives according to their own will, and He does not interfere with their living this way, any farther than His showing goodness to them at many points in their lives, and striving with them about their unrighteousness in their rejection of His word, and especially their rejection of His offers of salvation in Christ. He would not pass them by in His decree out of any base human passion like the sinful hatred or malice that people manifest toward Him or towards each other. He created them, not to damn them, but to show forth His wisdom and power in relation to their obstinence in their holding to their sins. He has raised them up in order to demonstrate His power over them, and to demonstrate the glory of His Justice in a perfect way. I went over these things with you when we studied God's hardening of certain men's hearts; particularly Pharoah, king of Egypt.

**Romans 11: 1- 11** – “I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "LORD, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS AND TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY SEEK MY LIFE"? But what does the divine response say to him? "I HAVE RESERVED FOR MYSELF SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: "GOD HAS GIVEN THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES THAT THEY SHOULD NOT SEE AND EARS THAT THEY SHOULD NOT HEAR, TO THIS VERY DAY." And David says: "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RECOMPENSE TO THEM. LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED, SO THAT THEY DO NOT SEE, AND BOW DOWN THEIR BACK ALWAYS."

So, has God cast away His people, His ancient people the Jews? No, Paul says, for he himself is an Israelite, and even his tribe is mentioned. God's has decreed that His people the Jews shall endure as a people all through this Church age. Paul says that God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew; those who He purposed that He would save out of the nation of Israel. Then he reminds us of what the Scripture says of Elijah the prophet how he pleaded with God in prayer against Israel saying that they had dishonored Him by tearing down His altars and killing His prophets, and he alone was left, he thought. But what was the Divine response? I have reserved for Myself 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal”. What does this word reserved mean? It means that He Himself had purposed in the Decree that there would be this particular number of people who He would give grace to, to hold fast the worship of Him, the true and living God, and they would most certainly not bow the knee to Baal, but would worship Him, the only true and living God. Then Paul says in verse 11 – Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. This 7,000 was the remnant that would most definitely be saved by God, according to His election of them, giving them saving grace.

What about the rest in Israel? Paul says in verse 7 – What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” New American Standard – hardened. In other words, He passed them by in regard to the election of grace. Because of their hardening their hearts to the entreaties of His prophets, who declared to them His word, He gave to them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not, and ears to hear not, down to the very time when Paul wrote those words. He purposely chose not to show them saving mercy, like He did the others. Elijah did not see the evidences of the 7,000 or he himself would not have said that he alone was left. God had decreed concerning the majority of the Israelites of that day that He would leave them to themselves and to their love of sinning and false worship of Baal. God wanted to show His wrath and wanted to make His power known. He endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. (Romans 9: 22)

### **The word reprobation means “rejection”.**

**Jeremiah 6: 26-30** – “O daughter of my people, Dress in sackcloth and roll about in ashes! Make mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentation; For the plunderer will suddenly come upon us. I have set you as an assayer and a fortress among My people, That you may know and test their way. They are all stubborn rebels, walking as slanderers. They are bronze and iron, They are all corrupters; The bellows blow fiercely, The lead is consumed by the fire; The smelter refines in vain, For the wicked are not drawn off. People will call them rejected silver, Because the LORD has rejected them.”

The reprobate’s rejection by God is purposed by Him in His Divine Decree. But in the history of each person, or nation which is made up of many individual people, they are strictly examined and tested by God as to what is really in them. God used Jeremiah to be His assayer of the people of Israel. God compared the reprobate people of Israel to bronze and iron which the smelter would refine in vain, in regard to their impurities of heart and mind. The wicked would not be drawn off from their purpose to continue in sin, and as a result of their obstinent unrepentant hearts, they would be rejected silver. The Lord had indeed rejected them as to election and did not show them mercy. But they held to their own purpose which was to reject God’s word to them, and bring upon themselves eternal judgment; God condemning them for their wickedness.

**Romans 1: 28-32** – “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”

### **Conclusion: It is important that we have a right view of God in regard to this doctrine of His decrees**

In looking at the *Works of John Bunyan* in his treatise called “Reprobation asserted”, I have found help in regard to these things. He says on P. 341 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Volume of his works – “God’s decrees are established upon His unchangeable will, governed by His knowledge, prudence, power, justice, and mercy, and *they* are brought to conclusion, on His part in perfect holiness, through the abiding of His most blessed truth and faithfulness.”

**Deuteronomy 32: 4** – “ He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.”

We ought to praise, reverence, and admire God for having decreed all things according to His own eternal purpose; that according to the counsel of His own will and for His own glory, He foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

