

SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON

Bible study/Prayer Meeting

Date 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Preacher Rev Philip Knowles, Ps/Hymns Read Ephesians 1:1-14.

Series – The Doctrine of God series Title The Decree Of God (2)

As we continue in our study of the Decree of God, I would again restate the definition of God's eternal decree as found in Scripture, "**Ephesians 1:11** ***"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."***

(And now in the WCF and SC. WCF chapter 3 – Of God's Eternal Decree *God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.*)

Shorter Catechism Q. 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.*

Shorter Catechism Q. 8, How doeth God execute His decrees. Answer, God execueth His decrees in the works of creation and providence.

In our first message we considered the Establishment of God's decree.

This truth of *God's Decree* is based on the very being of God.

Since God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being then it necessarily follows that He has decreed whatsoever comes to pass.

All that God has decreed is according to His nature.

While we often speak of or read about the decrees of God, the plans and purposes of God, yet we must always remember, God's eternal decree is one decree, yet it relates to all events, all people in heaven and earth.

## **II SECOND, THE EXPRESSION OF GOD'S DECREE.**

**Upon this basis, God's decree is expressed by His wisdom.**

God's eternal decree is founded upon His own divine wisdom.

Notice the words in **Ephesians 1:11** "*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*"

God's purpose is according to the counsel of His own will. **Job 12:13** "*With Him is wisdom and strength, He hath counsel and understanding.*"

The counsel of God's Divine will does not need any of knowledge outside of Himself.

In other words, God does not consult His decree with others. He is all wise, **Prov 19:21** "*...the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.*"

The counsel of the three persons of the Godhead concerning creation, is recorded in, **Gen 1:31** "*And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.*"

(**Mark 7:37** "*He hath done all things well.*")

**God decree is expressed by His Immutability.**

God eternal decree is immutable or unchanging. That which is eternal is unchangeable. **Job 23:13** “***But he is in one mind, and who can turn him?***”

You see when we make plans, we often find that that we have to completely change or alter our plans for various reasons.

It may be in making plans we have not fully thought the whole process out, or something has arisen to hinder those plans from being carried out.

But with God nothing of this kind is possible because His divine decree is founded upon His perfect and eternal wisdom and is therefore immutable.

Any possibility of change in the divine decree is to claim there is a defect in God’s nature and in this case particular His wisdom; power and truth.

**Isa 46:10** states “***Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:***”

*The immutability of the divine decree is in Scripture tied into God’s redemptive purpose in Christ.*

Since God’s decree is centered on Christ and His redemptive work then God’s decree is unchangeable.

God’s eternal purpose in Christ makes the decree of God absolutely certain.

Whatsoever God has decreed, foreordained, will come to pass without opposition.

### **III THIRD, THE EMPHASIS OF GOD'S DECREE.**

**The emphasis of God's decree reveals that God's decree is perfectly consistent with His nature.**

There are no contradictions in God. And while there are many questions or subjects that our limited mind cannot fully grasp, yet there is no error with God.

Paul in writing to believers at Rome, about the decree of God, wrote in **Romans 9:15** ***“For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”***

But Paul also prepared an answer for any who would not understand by saying in **Rom 9:19** ***“thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?”***

Like Paul, we must always come back to the scriptural foundation **what we know to be true**, God in His nature is eternal, infinite, immutable, perfectly holy, just good, wise, gracious and loving.

Notice what Habakkuk wrote in **Habakkuk 1:13** ***“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: James 1:13-14*** ***“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: <sup>14</sup> But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”***

**The emphasis of God's decree reveals that God's decree is perfectly consistent with the actions of His creatures.**

When God created man he had the power of choice, therefore Adam made a choice, he took the fruit of the tree which brought sin into the world.

Since the fall, man still has the power of choice but because of his sin, he is in bondage and he will always chose sin, and freely pursue that which is against God.

Man's corrupt choices, decisions, and practises flow from his fallen nature.

But God's decree overrules in order to bring to pass His own purposes.

Therefore, what He had decreed is perfectly consistent with His nature and with the actions of His creatures. There is no contradiction between nature of God and what He has decreed.

the emphasis of God's decree will help, as we consider:

#### **IV FOURTH, THE EXECUTION OF GOD'S DECREE**

(As there are no contradictions in who God is, and there are no contradictions in all that God does or has decreed. To put it in another way, since God is perfect then all He does, and decrees are perfect. )

God's divine decree is formed in eternity, but it is executed in time.

God's decree has both determined the justification or condemnation of sinners.

Both are according to His own good pleasure, and both also glorify God. **Romans 9:21-23** "*Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*

*<sup>22</sup> What if God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: <sup>23</sup> And that He might make*

***known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory,***

Before we go any further, we must keep God's decree, God focused and not man focused.

In other words when we view God's decree as God's decree then we will see, ***for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.***

**God does not owe any man anything, God was not obligated to save fallen sinners.**

**When sinners go to a lost eternity they do so because they are guilty of breaking God's law, they are condemned because of their own sin against God.**

Remember, while God permitted the fall of man, it was man who sinned against God, it was man who wilfully disobeyed God's command by failing to give a perfect obedience to God in love, doubting His word, putting God second.

**Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: Romans 3:23 " For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

We must therefore write the words total depravity across mankind. **WCF ch.6, section 4:"We are utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all good and wholly inclined to all evil."**

Due to man's wilful sin, **had** God chosen to by pass all mankind leaving them in their sin, He would have been just and right to do so,

but the amazing truth is that God has decreed to save a multitude of hell deserving sinners which no man can number, and bring them to glory to worship Him.

**Ephesians 1:5 teaches *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.***

**(Verse 11 “*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*” )**

This decree to save sinners is also recorded in **Ephesians 1:4** “***According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Notice before the foundation of the world.***

**2 Thess 2:13 “*God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation...*”**

Another term for chosen, is election. *Therefore, God works according to His eternal plan with regard to the salvation of electing of sinners.*

All of its details and results, lay in the mind of God.

This means that all things pertaining to the salvation of God’s people is certain, actual, there is no possibility of failure or any change of purpose.

God’s decree to save sinners in Christ was not an afterthought.

In otherwords, after Adam sinned, God didn’t then just make up a decree save sinners, rather, before God created mankind, and before man had sinned, God in eternity past, already decreed the Salvation of sinners.

When God saved you He didn’t quezz you in, sneak you in, Rather He chose to save you.



The multitude of sinners chosen by God in Christ is definite, none will be lost or missing.

But from the time God redeemed Adam and Eve until the Saviour returns for His people, Jesus Christ in **John 6:37** *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*"

**Romans 8:29-30** *For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.<sup>30</sup> Moreover whom he did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom he justified, them He also glorified.*

This truth generates the ground of confidence and comfort for the believer.

Yet sadly, somehow along the line, these spiritual blessings, comforts for God's people have become a battle ground.

**The reason being, some believers have failed to recognise God's decree is God's decree.**

They place the emphasis on man not God.

They teach that Salvation is man choosing God not God choosing man.

In other words, their election depends upon man.

You see while sinners are responsible and commanded to repent, yet they can only come at the call of God by His spirit.

I would say probably the most well known verse that is used to attack God's nature, His holiness, and justice, is **Romans 9:13**

***As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.***"

Usually believers, approach this verse with a manward view.



But when you approach God's decree, will and word manward, then you come to wrong conclusions.

Men focus upon God hating Esau. However, as one man pointed out, directing his hearer's attention Godward, I am more concerned about God loving Jacob, than hating Esau, as both men deserved to be hated, and rejected.

Jacob was not any better than Esau. All are undeserving, unclean and unholy.

There is no reason, in any sinner that would cause or want God to chose them, except for His own name's sake and pleasure.

if any sinner is saved it is because of God's pleasure.

Therefore, I can understand why God would hate Esau, but I cannot understand why God would love Jacob.

The name **Jacob** means **twister, deceiver, supplanter**, and he lived up to his name.

Yet God in His decree according to His eternal purpose, set His electing love upon Jacob and redeemed him.

He loved Jacob, because He loved Jacob.

When anyone makes such manward remarks about God's decree, we must answer as Paul, in **Romans 9:14-15** "**What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.**

To doubt or question God's eternal Decree in any area and as it is mostly attacked in the area of the Justification or judgment of sinners is to attack God's nature, and to suggest God is unrighteous in Himself and His dealings.

What Saith scripture.

**Verse 15** *For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*

Therefore, when God condemns sinners passing them by, He leaves them to their own rewards, wages, and their own sinful determination.

All men by nature are on the road to a lost eternity.

Whom the Lord does not save He leaves on the path they have already chosen to follow.

Sinners lost in their sin, are sovereignly condemned for their own sin by the Judge of all the earth.

Men go to hell by the condemnation of a sovereign God, but as a righteous Judge, rebellious sinners, are only condemned because of their sin.

The very fact God has chosen to save a multitude of sinners that no man can number, and bestow upon them every spiritual blessing, all the rights and privileges of the children of God, this should humble us, ***Im only a sinner saved by grace.***

But also, it should motivate us to go into all the world as Christ said and preach the gospel to every person.

Let me say, God's eternal decree never hindered Christ in evangelism, and it should not us.

Who God has decreed to save, We do not know, and it's not our place to know or try and mark people out, because all are following the course of this present evil world, walking the road to eternal destruction.

Our responsibility is to take the gospel to all sinners we can, pleading, warning and caring for their soul as Paul did, Christ's name, that they will be reconciled to God.

John the Baptist did when he said in **John 1:29** "***Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.***" or as Peter in **Acts 2:21** "***And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Acts 2:47*** "***And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.***

A man came to Dr Paisley one day and asked him about these matters of election and evangelism, God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Dr Palsy responded, God's business is to save sinners, and your business is tell the gospel to every creature. Therefore, go and mind your own business, and God will take care of His.

There is plenty of spiritual business to get on with in this city. Therefore, we must get preach the gospel.