

From Your Pastor

A Study of the Shorter Catechism

Question: 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.

Scripture memory: ^{ESV} **Ephesians 1:4** "...Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him..."; **Romans 9:22-23:** "What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory..."

An explanation: God has an eternal and unchangeable decree or purpose for Himself, for His people, and all creation. This goal or purpose is for the "**praise of His Glory**" in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:6,12,14). The Eternal, Blessed, Bountiful and Boundless God, without the counsel or aid of anyone else, according to His perfect counsel and will, has appointed and determined all of history "*according to the counsel of His will*" or for His mere good pleasure (Eph. 1:9-10).

Whatever we read has happened in history, whatever happens in the outworking of history in our lives, and whatever comes to pass in the future, has been planned and appointed by God (not merely allowed!), who is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, wise, holy, just, good, and true. Let us think on these things, and adjust our thoughts and reflections accordingly (Phil. 4:8; Rom. 11:34, 12:2), especially when we read about the "messiness" of history, see the sinfulness of sin, and watch and read the daily news! We will not necessarily understand everything about God, and He has certainly not revealed everything about Himself and His purposes (Job 42), but what God has revealed is sufficient and clear enough to instruct us, and should be humbly received by faith (Deut. 29:29).

One of the most horrifying, yet graciously satisfying, and God-glorifying events in history was the rejection, betrayal, suffering, and crucifixion of the Blessed and Perfect Lord Jesus Christ, who was the only man who ever lived perfectly before God, and therefore deserved a perfect and blessed life (Psa. 1). Yet all manner of evil, humiliation, and affliction was laid on Him by His God and Heavenly Father, our God and Heavenly Father. It was the will of the LORD, according to His predetermined counsel and will to crush the Lord Jesus **for us**, and to appoint (not merely allow) the Gentiles and the Jews to gather together and humiliate Him **for us**, to spit upon Him **for us**, to mock Him **for us**, to torture Him **for us**, and to crucify Him **for us** (Acts 4:27-28; Isa. 53:10; 2 Cor. 5:21). God predestined this for the "praise of God's glorious grace" so that His right judgment, justice and punishment against sin might be gloriously upheld, and His mercy and grace to sinners might be made available to all who repent and believe (Rom. 3:23-26).

A prayer: I thank you dear God, and acknowledge that you have chosen some to everlasting life and happy bliss in Christ, not because of any good, or faith you foresaw in them, but granting them faith, righteous standing and real holiness according to your good pleasure (Matt. 11:25-26; 2 Thes. 2:13; Eph. 1:4). Although I don't fully understand, I also acknowledge that you have been pleased to pass by, or pass over some who are not your elect, leaving them to perish in their sins to the praise of your glorious wrath and infinite justice (Rom. 9:21-22). I acknowledge you as the Blessed Potter, and I am mere clay, but thank you for giving your Son, so that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life, and call you "Father". Help me to give heed to making my calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10-11).

**In Christ's love,
Pastor Biggs**

"So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills."

- ^{ESV} **Romans 9:16-18**