

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 – “Of God’s Decree”, Message # 22 –
“The Means of Christ’s Prayers”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class
by Pastor Paul Rendall, on January 9th, 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. The Means of Christ’s Prayers

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.

John 17: 6-10 – “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world.” “They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.” “Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You.” “For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.” “I pray for them.” “I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.” “And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.”

Christ says in His High Priestly prayer to the Father that He manifested the Father’s name to His apostles; the men whom the Father had given to Him out of the world. This means that He had faithfully represented all the Father’s Person, His purpose, His love and His truth to them. He had preached to them and explained to them, all of the truth necessary for their salvation and for their being His faithful disciples, and faithful representatives of God’s truth as found in the scriptures. They were the Father’s in His choice; in His election of them, before the foundation of the world. They were given to Christ in the Covenant of Redemption. Christ called them to Himself early on in His ministry, and they had followed Him by keeping the Father’s word. That is, that they believed and acted upon everything that Christ had taught them concerning the Father’s word in the Scriptures; that word which had reference to Christ’s coming to be the salvation of sinners, and the Savior of the World.

Christ’s apostles, because they were elect, and because they had received grace, they knew that all things which the Father had given to Christ in His human Person and His Mission in regard to the truth that He taught, they were from the Father. For Christ had given to His apostles the words which the Father had given to Him, and they received these words, and believed them. And therefore they knew that surely He had come forth from God. They believed that the Father had sent Him. Christ was not praying for the world here, He says. He was praying for His apostles specifically, as those who would write down His word, the New Testament scriptures. They would constitute the foundation of the Church which Christ would build. He is also praying here for the salvation of all of God’s elect people. All that belonged to Christ were of the Father’s choice, and belonged to the Father in His electing them and predestinating them unto salvation. And all who were Christ’s apostles were elect except for Judas the Son of Perdition. And so we ought to be able to receive the truth that Christ’s prayer here is being used by the Father as the means whereby the Father accomplishes His decree concerning who specifically will be saved.

John 17: 18-23 – “As you sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” “And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.” “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”

Here our Lord is praying to His Father for His apostles, that even as the Father had sent Him into the world, He was going to be sending them into the world, to be His witnesses to the truth of the gospel and His word. He sanctifies Himself; that is, He sets Himself apart to His ministry of being the Father’s faithful witness to the truth, so that when He stood before His accusers among the leaders of the Jews, and when He stood before Pontius Pilate, He would be the faithful witness. He knew that He was going to the cross to die for their sakes. He would be the Captain of our salvation in this respect; the first and foremost faithful witness to the truth. And He would seal His testimony to the truth by His blood, so that they, His apostles might themselves, by His grace, and the Father hearing this, His prayer, they would be able to be faithful to Himself and to the Father in their respective ministries.

He does not pray for them alone, but also for all those who would believe in Him through their word; that is, the New Testament Scriptures. He is praying for all Christians in all generations, all of God’s elect people, that they would all be one, with the kind of spiritual unity that the the Father and the Lord Jesus have, and that we would be one in the Father and the Son, and so that the world would believe that the Father sent the Son. You can see that this was an fervent and effectual prayer, and that it was heard by the Father and is being answered all down through this Church age. We need to note that the unity that is being talked about in these verses is first of all, the unity of essence and purpose that the Father and the Son have – the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Father. Christ’s prayer is that they also, His disciples, may have this same kind of spiritual unity because His Spirit would dwell in them, and they would hold to the same doctrinal truths of the gospel and Christ’s word given to them by the apostles.

Christ gave His apostles and disciples the glory which the Father had given to Him. This was not His Essential Glory, or His Mediatorial glory, but the glory of the truth of His word and the gospel of Himself. These He gave to His apostles that they might write of it, so that all of Christ’s saints might one in the truth and one in spirit in setting it forth, and spreading it to the ends of the earth. Christ prayed this way so that the world might know that the Father had sent Him, and that the Father loved His elect people even as the Father had loved Him. This is a very important truth for every Christian to learn. Christ prayed for our unity, not only that it would be established as a reality by His life, testimony, death, and resurrection, but that it would be established in His Church in a very real and spiritual sense, in the lives and interactions which the saints would have with one another. This would be a very powerful witness to the watching world; that they would see the difference that the gospel makes in the life of every Christian, not to strive and fight with other Christians over the truth, but to live out that truth in love for one another.