

The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 – “Of God’s Decree”, Message # 21 – “The Means of Preaching”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class
by Pastor Paul Rendall, on December 26th, 2021.

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.

We have been looking at the means which God has foreordained whereby those who are elected unto glory being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, and effectually called unto faith in Christ. Last Sunday we looked at the means of God’s sending an angel to Mary to tell her what He would do for her in conception so that she would bring forth the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Savior of the world. God used the means of Gabriel’s message to draw out Mary’s faith in what He was going to do. We saw that our response to this should be to believe in all of God’s promises of what He will do for us, by Christ’s grace, in order that we might live in hope of being useful to Him in service, ourselves. Today we want to build upon this and see that –

1. God is well-pleased to use the foolish means of preaching to save those who will believe.

1st Corinthians 1: 18-25 – “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” “For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’ “Where is the wise?” “Where is the scribe?” “Where is the disputant of this age?” “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” “For the Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

There is a contrast being made in these verses between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. The message of the cross seems like a very foolish thing to the unbelieving and skeptical man. He thinks that he is can think any matter under consideration, through to a logical conclusion. And his conclusion is that he doesn’t need to hear about Christ crucified. He leans to his own understanding, and he thinks of himself as a wise man. He believes that he is a man who has a good enough mind to conclude rightly in his own self-interest. He is able to make judgments upon all subjects intellectually, and so he concludes that if God does exist, He will not mind if he (the man) attempts to think about Him (God) in terms of his own conceptions of Him. This is what accounts for the great number of gods and philosophies in the world today.

But what is completely forgotten or ignored is the idea that God, the true and living God, the God of the Bible, has made this man for his own pleasure. He is greater than any man because as the Bible declares, He is infinite in wisdom and understanding, and He is infinite in power to carry out all that He purposes in relation to every creature that He has made. And the intellectual unbelieving man, not understanding the greatness and glory of God, therefore, by nature, rejects the idea that he is a sinner in God’s sight, and needs to hear about what God has done through sending His Son, and having Him die upon the cross for our sins. God considers the intellectual man’s wisdom to be no wisdom at all, because by it, he cannot find Him. (God)

So God, it says in verse 21, is well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. This is God’s good means. This means may be rejected by men, but it is honored by God to save those who are perishing. But they must look away from their own wisdom, and see God’s greater wisdom, which will in every case, define things correctly for them. Seeking after signs and worldly wisdom only proves that those who do so, are really trusting in the supposedly strength of their own wisdom, and their pride of knowledge and understanding which which they think is sufficient to enable them to draw the right conclusion. But they never will draw the right conclusion with a wrong view of God and the means that He uses to convince the sinner to repent and believe; that is, to receive God’s word with all meekness.

2. God power, by the working of the Holy Spirit, accompanies the preaching of His word. This produces tangible results according to God's decreed purpose.

1st Thessalonians 1: 2-5 – “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing, your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.” “For our gospel did not come to you in word only but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.”

You will notice here that the apostle Paul is giving thanks to God always for these Thessalonian believers, and he prays for them, remembering without ceasing the evidence of their truth faith that he sees in them. Their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus. For he had personally seen that when he preached the gospel to them, that his words did not come simply as his own words trying to convince them intellectually of the truth. But his words and arguments putting forward the truth of the gospel concerning the Lord Jesus, and what He did for sinners in dying for them on the cross, they came with power, the Holy Spirit attending them. As a result of this was that there was much assurance on the part of those believing the message, that Christ had really done these things to save them from their sins, and that He was indeed raised from the dead, and had come, by the Person of the Holy Spirit to reside in their hearts, and was producing in them by His grace, the fruits of righteousness. They were also assured by the good and godly example of the apostle Paul and those with him; being convinced that they were sincere and godly men in every way.

3. God uses the means of preaching to bring about repentance and faith in the lives of His elect people.

1st Thessalonians 1: 8-10 – “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.” “Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.” “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath of God.”

You see here that the believers in Thessalonica had very strong faith. They sounded forth the word of God in every place. They were known as people of faith in all the surrounding areas; places where they spread and shared the gospel. Those people that they shared with, even they declared how the Thessalonian believers had received the word in such a way that they turned from their idols to serve the true God. They were waiting from Christ's return or for their own being taken home to glory in their death. They were waiting for Jesus who would deliver them from the wrath of God.

4. God uses the Means of Prayer to accomplish many of His Purposes in regard to each and every person being saved and established in Christ.

1st Timothy 2: 1-6 – “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

It is by means of prayer for those who are in authority over us in political government that a quiet and peaceable life, being lived in all godliness and reverence is established, according to God's decretive will. This does not mean that Christians will always find that quiet and peaceable life all of the time. But God uses prayer to bring them every blessing He knows will be good for them, this one included.

It is prayer which is the means whereby God's elect people can see God's decree concerning who will be saved come to fruition.