

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 – “Of God’s Decree”,
Message # 7 – “God Has No Fellowship with Sin”, Presented in the
Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall,
on September 12th, 2021.**

Paragraph 1 – “God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably(1), all things, whatsoever comes to pass(2); yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein(3); nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established(4); in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree.”(5)

1) Proverbs 19: 21; Isaiah 14: 24-27; 46: 10, 11; Psalm 115: 3; 135: 6; Romans 9: 19

2) Daniel 4: 34, 35; Romans 8: 28; 11: 36; Ephesians 1: 11

3) Genesis 18: 25; James 1: 1; 1st John 1: 5

4) Genesis 50: 20; 2nd Samuel 24: 1; Isaiah 10: 5-7; Matthew 17: 12; John 19: 11; Acts 2: 23; Acts 4: 27, 28

5) Numbers 23: 19; Ephesians 1: 3-5

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.

(I Add – And Redemption also, through our Lord Jesus Christ)

Today we want to continue our study of the truth that God is not the Author of Sin, nor does He have any fellowship with any therein.

1st – In God’s Decree to use Wicked Men and Nations for His own righteous Purposes, He has no fellowship with any of their sins.

Isaiah 10: 5-7 – “Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation.” “I will send him against an ungodly (a hypocritical) nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.” “Yet he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations.”

So, you see here that God decreed that Assyria would be the “rod of His anger” and the “staff in whose hand” by whom God’s indignation would be poured out on Judah, the hypocritical nation. This was in the days of King Hezekiah, (2nd Kings 18: 13 – 19: 37). It was in those days that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against Judah, and laid siege to Jerusalem. Sennacherib was committing great sins against Judah, in his thoughts and actions. It was in his heart to destroy and cut off, not a few nations. And God had decreed that He would come up against Judah to bring fear to the heart of the many hypocrites in Judah. God would give him that charge, in this way that is described here; to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. God would use Sennacherib to bring His righteous judgment upon Judah. And yet He did not have any fellowship with Sennacherib in any of his sinful

thoughts and actions. Sennacherib does not even know the sins of his own heart very well, but God knows them perfectly. Indeed, He pronounces a woe against him in verse 5.

Let us understand even though the Lord decrees to use the wicked acts of men to accomplish His own purpose in righteousness, that He never approves of any person's sins in any way, shape, or form, whoever they are, and whatever they are. The Lord will always condemn sin, and will judge it and punish it wherever He finds it.

We find that the Lord's purpose here was to deal both with the righteous and the wicked. He would bring judgment upon the wicked, whether it was in Israel or Assyria, and He would bring discipline to His elect people, like King Hezekiah, so that they would worship Him alone, and learn to serve Him in righteousness. For we see also, as we read on in the account, that king Hezekiah himself was a righteous man. God had decreed to work with him to make him into a more righteous man through these terribly difficult providences which He would bring. And God would so deal with the nation of Judah and with Hezekiah in such a way that all of His purposes would be fulfilled, in regard to judgment, and salvation, and sanctification.

2nd – God has Decreed in relation to His people, that they will share in His Holiness.

Let's see how Hezekiah interacted with the Decree of God concerning him.

2nd Kings 19: 1-4 –

“And so it was, when King Hezekiah heard it, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.” “Then he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz.” “And they said to him, ‘Thus says Hezekiah: “This day is a day of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy; for the children have come to birth, but there is no strength to bring them forth.” “It may be that the LORD your God will hear all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard.” “Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.”

You can see that there is no fatalism here in Hezekiah. He does not say Que, Serah, Serah, whatever will be will be. No, he immediately tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth to show forth to God and man, his mourning over what had come to them, the terrible, blasphemous words of Rabshakeh, telling him not to trust in God. He went immediately into the house of the Lord. He sent Eliakim to Isaiah so that he might receive the word of the Lord to himself. He hoped in the Lord, saying that it may be that the Lord would hear all these blasphemous words with which he reproached the living God, and that the Lord might rebuke Him for the words that he had said against Him. He also encouraged Isaiah to pray for God's favorable answer and blessing.

2nd Kings 19: 5-13 –

“So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.” “And Isaiah said to them, ‘Thus you shall say to your master, Thus says the LORD: ‘Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me.’ “Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.” “Then the Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria warring

against Libnah, for he heard that he had departed from Lachish.” “And the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, ‘Look, he has come out to make war with you.’”

“So he again sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, ‘Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: ‘Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, ‘Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’” “Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be delivered?” “Have the gods of the nations delivered those whom my fathers have destroyed, Gozan and Haran and Rezep, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar?” “Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?”

So Isaiah the prophet’s word to Hezekiah was that he should not be afraid of the word which he heard with with the servants of the king of Assyria blasphemed God. God would act decisively and sent a spirit upon him and cause him to hear a rumor by which he would return to his own land. And then God would cause him to return to his own land and cause him to fall by the sword in his own land. Rabshakeh persisted in his blasphemous speech, telling Hezekiah to not trust in the Lord to deliver him from his hand. He attempts to prove his case by reminding Hezekiah that none of the gods of the others nations that they had defeated had proved to be strong enough to stop them. When it looks the worst for God’s people, let them not believe false and blasphemous words concerning God’s ability to deliver.

2nd Kings 19: 14-34 –

“And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.” “Then Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: ‘O LORD God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth.’” “You have made heaven and earth.” “Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God.” “Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men’s hands – wood and stone.” “Therefore they destroyed them.”

“Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD God, You alone.” “Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard.’” “This is the word which the LORD has spoken concerning him: ‘The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you, laughed you to scorn; The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head behind your back!’” “Whom have you reproached and blasphemed?” “Against whom have you raised your voice, and lifted up your eyes on high?” “Against the Holy One of Israel”.

“By your messengers you have reproached the Lord, and said: ‘By the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the limits of Lebanon; I will cut down its tall cedars and its choice cypress trees; I will enter the extremity of its borders, to its fruitful forest.’” “I have dug and drunk strange water, and with the soles of my feet I have dried up all the brooks of defense.” “Did you not hear long ago how I made it, from ancient times that I formed it?” “Now I have brought it to pass, that you should be for crushing fortified cities into heaps of ruins.” “Therefore their inhabitants had little power; they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field and the green herb, as the grass on the housetops And grain blighted before it is grown.”

“But I know your dwelling place, your going out and your coming in, and your rage against Me.” “Because your rage against Me and your tumult have come up to My ears, therefore I will put My hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way which

you came.” “This shall be a sign to you: You shall eat this year such as grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from the same; also in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them.” “And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.” “For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and those who escape from Mount Zion.” “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

“Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: ‘He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor build a siege mound against it.’ “By the way that he came, by the same shall he return; and he shall not come into this city,’ says the LORD.” “For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.”

Here we see the value of prayer to the true and living God; the God who has decreed all things that will come to pass. God truly hears our prayers, our prayers to Him are not in vain because He has decreed all things. His decree encompasses, it takes in, our prayers, and from our standpoint, truly considers them to answer them, in terms of His teaching us His ways, and our learning to look to Him for help and deliverance from every evil deed or evil man coming against us. While it is true that He has granted us not only the faith to believe, but also to suffer for His name’s sake, these being a part of His decree, He has also decreed great deliverance from our enemies, whether in life or in death. In this case, it would mean for life, because Assyria’s messenger reproached the Lord and said that He was only the God of the mountains and not of the valleys. You see, how God takes notice of every detail of men’s words, their blasphemies and their sins; has decreed them, but has no fellowship with Him. He righteously considers the honor of His name, in relation to such things, and will act to deliver His people and prove to them His love and power. He had decreed that the remnant would again take root downward in Judah, and bear fruit upward. And He can do the same for any of us as it is according to His purpose. His decree is unchangeable, but in it God incorporates the answers to prayer that He will give.

2nd Kings 19: 34-37 –

“And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses – all dead.” “So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh.” “Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat.” “Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.”

What a great deliverance God gave to Judah and to Hezekiah! God’s decree in this regard was to test Hezekiah to see if he would cry out to Him and pray to Him for deliverance from Sennacherib. After He had spoken with Isaiah the prophet about all that was coming against him, Hezekiah did pray and spread the matter out before the Lord. And because he did this, Judah was delivered from Sennacherib’s hand. Thus we see the importance of our praying in relation to the things which God has decreed. He already knows what He wants to bring out of adverse providences which He brings against us. His purpose is lead us to repentance and to build our faith and to fulfill all of His good purposes towards His elect people to make them holy.

