

TEACHING THROUGH THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

## Chapter 3: Of God's Eternal Decree

LESSON 005

STUDENT HANDOUT

### God's Sovereign Decree (WCF 3.1-2)

*Ephesians 1:11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will...*

#### WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH 3.1-2

1. 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.
2. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Many people try to protect human free will by saying, "God just looked into the future, saw what we would choose, and then decreed it based on our choices." Why does the Confession so strongly reject this idea?
- A common objection to God's absolute sovereignty is that it makes humans into mere "robots." But the Confession makes clear that "violence is not offered to the will of the creatures," how would you explain this to someone?
- The Confession teaches that our genuine choices are not taken away. How does this encourage us to still make wise choices, share the gospel, and pray, rather than just being passive?
- Why is it so crucial for our faith and our view of God's character to maintain that while God ordains everything, He is absolutely *not* the author of sin?
- If God has ordained whatsoever comes to pass, why are we still held morally responsible for our sins?

### The Particulars of Predestination (WCF 3.3-5)

*Romans 8:29-30 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

- By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.
- These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it can not be either increased or diminished.
- Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The Confession says that the number of the elect and non-elect is "so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished." Is this comforting or scary?
- God saves us without reference to our works, why is it vital to preserve this unconditional nature of grace?
- What would you say to someone who said that God's eternal decree is unjust?

#### NOTES

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