

Fundamentals, Study 3. God's Decree (Rom 9:6-24)

by BS Poh

o God's decree is His plan from eternity for everything that shall ever happen.

1. A *decree* is an authoritative decision or plan which must be carried out. The decree of God is His plan from eternity for everything that shall ever happen. Since God is infinitely powerful, wise, and holy, His plan was made by His own will *freely*, without influence from anything or anyone.¹ This is different from the decision of man which, although made freely - without external pressure - is nevertheless influenced by people and circumstances around him. (1. Eph 1:11; Rom 9:15, 18)

2. God's decree is *unchangeable* because He is all-powerful (*omnipotent*) and all-knowing (*omniscient*). He knows the end from the beginning, and with Him there can be no unforeseen emergency or lack of ability.² Consider the laws of nature - they remain the same always. Things thrown up will always come down. The earth has been revolving around the sun for as long as we know it. Light will always drive away darkness. The same can be said of the laws that govern the human reason and conscience. Stealing is always wrong, in any age and any culture. A mother will naturally love her baby. A father will always be looked upon as the head of the family. People may act contrary to these laws, but they cannot change them. God has planned these laws, just as He has planned the events that occur.³ (2. Isa 46:10; Heb 6:17; 3. Acts 15:18; Rom 9:11-18)

3. God's decree is inseparable from His *providence*, by which He controls all things and events. Since God is good, He is never the author of evil and He does not tempt man to evil. God permits evil to occur in such a way that His good purpose is accomplished.⁴ Man is held responsible for his actions. When wicked men killed Jesus Christ on the cross, they were held responsible for their terrible sin. At the same time, God was allowing that to happen so that Christ's death would be the means of saving His people.⁵ Since all events occur according to God's decree, there is no such thing as fate. *Fatalism* teaches that all events are predetermined, either by chance or by a god. It excludes the idea of intelligent design and good purpose. It has the effect of minimising human responsibility. (4. Psalm 33:11; James 1:13, 17; 5. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28)

4. By the decree of God, a definite number of men and angels have been *chosen* to have eternal life.⁶ God chose sinners to be saved solely out of His free grace and love, and not because of any good He has foreseen in them.⁷ Other people are left in their sin, and will finally receive the eternal punishment that they deserve.⁸ Those who have been chosen by

God from eternity are saved by Christ's death on the cross. At God's appointed time, they will be called to faith in Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit in them. (6. 2 Tim 2:19; John 13:18; 7. 1 Tim 5:21; Matt 25:34; Eph 1:5-6; 8. Jude 4)

5. The ultimate aim of God's decree is to show forth His own *glory* (i.e. honour, fame, or greatness). All creation declares God's glory. God planned for sinners to be saved in order to show forth the glory of His grace. Other people receive their due punishment in hell to show forth the glory of His justice. It is only right to give all glory to God because He is our Creator.⁹ (9. Isa 48:11; Rom 9:22-23; Rev 4:11)

= Let us humble ourselves, trust in Christ, and live to God's glory.

Review Questions

1. What is a *decree*?
2. What is God's decree?
3. In what way is man's free decision different from God's free decision?
4. Why is God's decree unchangeable?
5. How is God's decree related to His *providence*?
6. How is evil related to God's decree?
7. Give one clear example of how God holds man responsible for his wicked actions.
8. What does *fatalism* teach?
9. Why is *fatalism* unsatisfying and wrong?
10. What is the ultimate aim of God's decree?

Assignment/Discussion

"God's decree is easily confused with fatalism." Discuss.

Memory Passage (Isaiah 46:9-10)

For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like Me,
10 Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things that are not yet done,
Saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
And I will do all My pleasure,'...

~ ~ ~ ~ ~