

Reformed Doctrine, Chapter III

God's Eternal Decree

I.

Before anything existed other than the Godhead in counsel with himself God ordained everything that will happen in history.¹ Though God created all things God is in no way the author or creator of sin.² God did not violate or take away the will of angels or men or limit what we know as cause and effect. That is God allowed secondary causes not only to remain but by His holy will established the effect of secondary causes.³

II.

God knows everything that will happen in history under all possible circumstances.⁴ However God in no way used His knowledge of the future to make any decree or set any conditions on which a future event would depend.⁵

III.

That His glory might be seen by all of creation God predestined some men and angels⁶ to eternal life while leaving all others in their sin or own condemnation.⁷

IV.

The number of men and angels elected to eternal life or left to their own condemnation is certain and cannot be changed.⁸

V.

Before the creation of anything, those men chosen by God to eternal life were elected within the mystery of God in counsel with none and for His own pleasure alone, to eternal life and God's glory through faith in Jesus Christ.⁹ God did this out of His grace and love without the use of foresight of their future faith, good works, or their ability to maintain that faith, or anything else within man as conditions or causing God to give the gift of faith.¹⁰ God did all of this for His glory alone.¹¹

VI.

God not only elected some to glory but God also provided the means for this to happen.¹² Thereby Christ redeems the elect who were condemned in the fall of Adam.¹³ God in His time calls the elect and only the elect to faith in Christ by His Spirit working in them.

¹ Psa. 33:11; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17

² Psa. 5:4; James 1:13-14; I John 1:5; see Hab. 1:13

³ Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Matt. 17:12; John 19:11; Prov. 16:33

⁴ I Sam. 23:11-12; Matt. 11:21-23

⁵ Rom. 9:11, 13, 16, 18

⁶ I Tim 5:21; Jude 1:6; Matt. 25:31, 41

⁷ Eph. 1:5-6; Rom. 9:22-23; Prov. 16:4

⁸ John 10:14-16, 27-28; 13:18; 17:2, 6, 9-12; II Tim. 2:19

⁹ Eph. 1:4, 9, 11; Rom. 8:28-30; II Tim. 1:9; I Thess. 5:9

¹⁰ Rom. 9:11, 13, 15-16; see Eph. 1:5, 9, 11; 2:8-9

¹¹ Eph. 1:6, 12

¹² I Peter 1:2; Eph. 2:10; II Thess. 2:13

¹³ I Thess. 5:9-10; Titus 2:14

Also in God's time they are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by God's power through faith to salvation.¹⁴ None other than the elect are called, justified, adopted, or saved.¹⁵

VII.

God was pleased according to His own immutable and unsearchable counsel of His own will to withhold all saving graces. God extends or withholds mercy as He pleases, for his glory by the sovereign power over all creatures that is His alone. Thereby all but the elect were passed over being ordained to dishonor and God's wrath for their sin. All of this is to the glorious justice of God.¹⁶

VIII.

Predestination is a hard doctrine to understand or accept and is to be handled with the utmost care so that men attending to the will of God revealed in the Bible and yielding obedience to God may know that this effectiveness of obeying God is also their assurance of their election by God.¹⁷ This will bring to God praise, reverence, and admiration while working humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all who sincerely obey the Bible.¹⁸

Questions

1. How did God decide whom would be elected to eternal salvation?
2. If God created all things and ordained all things that come to pass, why is God not the author of sin?
3. With whom does God share His glory?
4. What is the apparent purpose for God revealing the doctrine of predestination?
5. May some have part of the saving graces yet not all saving graces and still be elect?
6. What ancient heresy debated by the Synod of Dort is addressed by this doctrine?
7. Name at least three denominations that still hold and teach the heresy in question 6.
8. What consolation, comfort, or assurance do those who deny this doctrine have?

¹⁴ Rom. 8:30; see Eph. 1:5; II Thess. 2:13; I Peter 1:5

¹⁵ John 4:47, 6:64-65, 10:14-15 & 26, 17:9; Rom. 8:28-39; I John 2:19

¹⁶ Matt. 11:25-26; Rom. 9:17-18, 21-22; Jude 1:4; I Peter 2:8; II Tim. 2:19-20

¹⁷ . Rom. 9:20; 11:33; Deut. 29:29 ; II Peter 1:10; I Thess. 1:4-5

¹⁸ Eph. 1:6; see Rom. 11:33; Rom. 8:33; 11:5-6, 20; Luke 10:20; see II Peter 1:10