

The truth is that fear cannot coexist peacefully alongside faith, hope or love. There is a constant battle between them until one or other takes control. —Jonathan Stephen

The Baptist Catechism (Keach's Catechism)

1677

(Presented here as originally published – this does not constitute a full endorsement of the Riverside Baptist Church)

Q. 11. What are the decrees of God?

A. The decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby for His own glory, He has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass

(Eph. 1:11; Rom. 11:36; Dan. 4:35)

Q. 12. How does God execute His decrees?

A. God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence.

(Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; Matt. 6:26; Acts 14:17)

Q. 13. What is the work of creation?

A. The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing, by the Word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good.

(Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:3; Ex. 20:11; Gen. 1:31)

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Sunday Morning Worship -- 11:00 AM

Prayer and Bible Study Wednesday Evening 6:30 PM

WCWV 92.9 FM – 8:00 AM Sunday Morning

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST REPORT

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

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THE WHAT AND HOW OF PURPOSE

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (Ephesians 1:10-12)

We often speak of the purpose of God as if it were completely unknown when, in fact, He openly declares it. Witness the fact that many are heard pondering as to what the will of God is for their lives. This, of course, betrays the fact that they are focused on themselves rather than embracing that which is clearly revealed. It behooves us to look to that which is revealed to us in His word rather than to think of how He has ordained for us to enjoy this present world. How often do we read such things as “This is the will of God, even your sanctification...”? The purpose of God for us is often expressed in His commandments. So, we would simply hear our Lord revealing the greatest commandments: To love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves.

We should be able to rejoice in these comprehensive declarations of His will and purpose (see v. 9 of this chapter). Here we read of an absolute declaration of the “mystery of His will” with no alternative plan offered. I once heard a man present his call to the mission field with firm assurance that God had called him to a certain place. Before his presentation was over, he spoke of an alternative if the first one didn’t work out. There is no deviation from purpose with God. Not only do we worship a God of purpose, but we also worship Him who is able to accomplish all that He has determined. C. I.

Scotfield wrote in his notes, “Predestination is that effective exercise of the will of God by which things before determined by Him are brought to pass.” We believe that Mr. Scotfield got that right. We would observe that God’s purpose would be in jeopardy without predestination.

God’s purpose is eternal in its scope. That is, it is declared as being from eternity to eternity. Nothing is outside the realm of divine purpose. The purpose of God is intricate in its workings. It is accounted for to the most minute detail and to grandest of manifestations. And the purpose of God is vast in its accomplishments. We witness what has happened in the past, seeing the multitude of things which are recorded in the Word. At no time has there been any deviation from purpose.

It is the ultimate aim of God that arrests our attention here. It is the reuniting of all things in Christ. The thought of dispensation here is of the way of governing or administering things in a particular time or under a particular person. So, He that is working all things according to His will is attending to all aspects of His plan. We are here told that it was “in the fulness of times” that all was done. Nothing has ever been delayed, nor has it been ahead of time. This fulness speaks of being ripe and ready to harvest. We are quickly reminded of the word of

Paul to the Galatians: *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Galatians 4:4-5).* Thus, we understand something of the “what” of His purpose.

But we would further ask, what is to be gathered? A perfect scene is depicted in the beginning. *And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:28).* Now we know that the “whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain.” Now we look for “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Here we might see that “all” means that which pertains to Christ and the glory of God in Christ. This He had gloriously made known to us that we might rejoice in the assurance of it all.

Then Paul adds something here that is of great assurance to we who love the Lord and love His appearing. It is that we have “obtained an inheritance” or a lot in this. That is, we have a functioning role in all that is to come. We might think of the predestined purpose of God in all things. Here it is made personal. To many the idea is of a predestined end or goal. Of course, that is understood. But we must see that it is in that working of the will of God in us that we are brought to that end. In verse 5 of this chapter, we are predestined unto the adoption

of children by Jesus Christ. In verse 11 it is unto an office and a function in Him. The will of God is that which directs His predestination. It is He “who works all things after the counsel of His own will.” Who else might He ask? *For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? (Romans 11:34).* See also: *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16).* Job was brought to understand some of the mysteries of purpose by the trying questions of the Lord. We are then made to reflect on such thoughts as “when it pleased God” and “His good pleasure.”

The “we” Paul refers to is himself and other Jewish believers. To them had been committed the oracles of God. And it was they who first received and believed the Gospel. We Gentiles are included in the “all things” and that is made evident in verse 13. We heard and believed the Gospel of your salvation and were sealed with the Holy Spirit. The Ephesians were reminded not to walk as other Gentiles (4:17) and were then encouraged to “Be ye followers of God, as dear children.” And to do so as partakers of the inheritance that is ours in the will and purpose of God in Christ. We take careful note that it is all to be “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (v. 6); “That we should be to praise of His glory” (v. 12); “the praise of His glory” in the consummation of all things (v. 14).

Does our sense of the purpose of God include our participation therein? Is it indeed the Gospel of our salvation and that to His glory? *bhs*

It is not enough to hear a sermon, but you must eat it down, take in what it commands, and then it will purge your heart. Take the Word and digest it, squeeze its juice into your heart, and it will purge you from all contrary corruption.

Is Christ God's Beloved, with and in whom He is well pleased? And is He not your Beloved?

--Both from Thomas Goodwin

Beware of the dog!

(John Angell James, "Christian Fellowship" 1822)

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."
Ephesians 4:2

There are some people whose feelings are like dry straw--kindled into a blaze in a moment, by the least spark which has been purposely or accidentally thrown upon it. A word, or a look--is in some cases quite enough to be considered a very serious injury! It is a common thing for such people to excuse themselves on the ground that "their feelings are so delicate"--that they are offended by the least touch! This is a humiliating confession, for it is acknowledging that instead of being like the oak of the forest, which laughs at the tempest, and is unmoved by the tread of the wild boar--they resemble the sensitive plant, a little squeamish shrub, which trembles before the breeze, and shrivels and contracts beneath the pressure of a tiny insect!

Delicate feelings? In plain English, this means that they are petulant, irritable and peevish! I would like to have a sign hung around the neck of such people--and it would be this, "Beware of the dog!"

We should never allow ourselves to be offended, until, at least, we are sure that offense was intended; and this is really not so often as we are apt to conclude. Had we but patience to wait, or humility to inquire, we would find that many hurtful things were done by mistake, which we are prone to attribute to design. How often do we violate that love which thinks no evil and which imperatively demands of us to attribute a good motive to another's conduct--until a bad motive is proved!

Let us then deliberately determine, that, by God's grace, we will not be easily offended. If such a resolution were generally made and kept, offenses would cease. Let us first ascertain whether offense was intended, before we allow the least emotion of anger to be indulged. And even then, when we have proved that the offense was committed on purpose, let us next ask ourselves whether it is necessary to notice it. What wise man will think it worth while when an insect has stung him, to pursue it all day in order to punish the aggressor?

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Colossians 3:12-14

If rich men only knew when they died, how . . . their relatives would scramble for their money, the worms would scramble for their bodies, and the devil would scramble for their souls, they would not be so anxious to save money!" - William Tiptaft, 1803-1864