

The Sovereignty of God
(Ephesians 1:11, 12)

Introduction: Why do things happen the way that they do? Why does the earth rotate the way it does? Why is there gravity which holds us to the earth? Why is the universe ordered as it is? Why do the planets revolve around the sun in such fixed patterns that they never collide? Why is the earth the distance that it is away from the sun so that it gets neither too hot nor too cold to sustain life? Why is it that when water freezes it floats and doesn't sink, so that the world is not engulfed in water? Why doesn't it thicken when it gets colder, rather than just turn solid all at once, so that travel by boat remains possible in most parts of the world? Why does water turn into vapor when heated and so create clouds when it cools which water the earth?

Why is there any good on the earth at all, or why any evil? Why are some men apparently more evil than others and others more good? Why did Hitler want to destroy the Jews and take over the world? Why was he foolish enough to fight on so many fronts as to make victory impossible? Why does history turn out as it does?

And you, why do you have the abilities that you have? Why can some of you play musical instruments and others not? Why do some of you have the desire to do so and others of you not? Why do some of you have light hair and some dark? Why do some of you have a light complexion and others dark? Why do you have the diverse interests that you have? Why are some of you smarter than others? And most importantly, why have some of you embraced Christ, seeing in Him such supreme loveliness and beauty, while others have blasphemed Him and rejected Him?

When we ask questions such as these, we may only answer them in one of three ways: either it is according to blind chance, in which case we say there is no reason and no cause; or we could say that it is according to fate, in which all is determined by the nature of things and cannot be changed; or we can say that it is according to design, according to a plan: God has so ordered it.

Theme: What I want you to see from this evening's text is that nothing happens by chance in God's economy, nor is it the result of some blind impersonal fate. Rather all things are being worked out according to God's eternal all-embracing plan.

I. God Decrees in Eternity What Will Happen in Time. (*Having been predestined according to His purpose*).

"Q7: What are the decrees of God?

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."

A. God Dwells in Eternity.

1. There is no succession of events in God.
2. Everything is equally and simultaneously present in the mind of God.

B. Before He Created Time, He Planned All That Would Come to

Pass.

1. God has an all encompassing, unified purpose.
2. It is not conditioned by anything which He creates for His purpose is eternal, prior and sovereign (cf. 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9).

C. The End for Which He Executes His Purpose is For His Own Glory.

1. All things exist for God. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:36).
 - a. Eph. 1:6 "to the praise of the glory of His grace."
 - b. v. 12 "that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory."
 - c. v. 14 "to the praise of His glory."
2. All things were created to magnify His glory. "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until thy find their rest in Thee" [Augustine *Confessions*].

11. God's Decree Is All-Inclusive. (*Who works all things according to the counsel of His will*).

"§8: How doth God execute His decrees?

"God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence."

A. God's Work of Creation.

"§9: What is the work of creation?

"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."

1. God created all things from no preexistent material
2. After He had made all things, He ordered and structured it over the next six days.
3. All that He made was good.

B. God's Works of Providence.

"§11: What are God's works of providence?

"God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions."

1. After God created all things, He continues to preserve and sustain them.
 - a. What He creates is not independent of Himself.

- b. It needs His positive maintenance for its existence.
 - (i) Col. **1:17** "And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."
 - (ii) Acts **17:28** "For in Him we live and move and exist, . . ."
 - (iii) Heb. **1:3** "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power."
2. Providence also includes God's sovereign governing over the destinies of men.
- a. Election and reprobation is only one aspect of providence.
 - b. It is God's sovereignty applied to the destinies of men.
 - c. As we saw in Ephesians **1:5**, it is God's gracious bestowal of mercy on some undeserving sinners, and the passing over of others leaving them to the consequences of their sins.
3. Providence is God's governing all which happens. It is the execution of His decree in time.
- a. It includes His control of the physical world: Job **37:1-13**.
 - b. It includes His care of all His creation: Psalm **104:10-30**.
 - c. Over so-called fortuitous events: Prov. **16:33** The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.
 - d. It includes His control over the affairs of men: Job **12:13-25**.
 - e. It includes His control over the actions of men:
 - (i) Prov. **16:9** The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.
 - (ii) Prov. **19:21** Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of the LORD, it will stand.
 - (iii) James **4:13-15** Come now you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit. Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that."
 - f. It includes His control over all the good actions of men.

- (i) Phil. 2:13 For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.
 - (ii) Eph. 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
- g. Even over the sinful actions of men.
- (i) 2 Sam. 16:10 But the king said, "What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruah? If he curses, and if the LORD has told him, 'Curse David,' then who shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"
 - (ii) Acts 4:27f For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.
4. Providence, correctly understood, does not abrogate man's responsibility.
- a. We are not speaking of determinism. Man is not a robot.
 - b. Rather, God preserves the free actions of men.
 - (i) God is the primary cause of all things.
 - (ii) But He causes all things to fall out by means of secondary causality.
 - (a) <Gen. 45:5-8; 50:18-20>
 - (b) <Acts 4:27, 28>
 - (iii) God determined the causal nexus, the chain of events and circumstances. All works according to how it was made. All choose according to their abilities and inclinations and circumstances at the time. Because of this, man is responsible for his own actions and his own evil. But God has established its certainty before the foundation of the world.

Conclusion: So you see that nothing which the Creator has endowed you with is by accident, but rather is according to plan. Nothing which has occurred in your life is by random chance, but rather God decreed it. This by no means exonerates you from your sin: you are responsible for that, and either Christ has paid for it or you will. But this does give you great assurance knowing that God in His grace and mercy has promised that for you that are in Christ, all things will work out together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. Amen. Let us pray.