

The Theology of the Westminster Standards WCF 3.6–8 – God’s Decree of Predestination

“Thus we come to know that it is no blind chance, dark destiny, no unreasonable or malign will, nor any undetectable natural force which governs mankind and the world, but that the governance of all things rests in the hands of almighty God and a merciful Father..” – Herman Bavinck

I. Review: God’s All-Embracing Decree

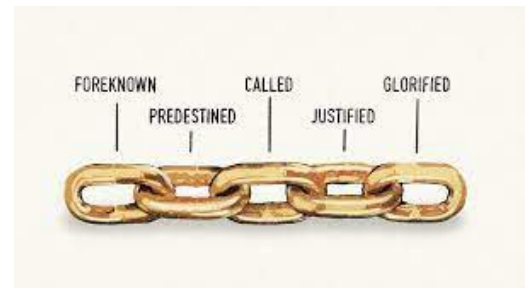
- A. God’s decree covers all of his works of creation and redemption, all human choices and actions (including sinful deeds), all “chance” events, all of nature’s activity, and every atom that exists.
1. **Is 46:9–10** – *“I am God, and there is none like me,¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’”*
 2. **Acts 2:23** – *“... this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”*
- B. God’s all-embracing decree includes the eternal destinies of all people—who are responsible ethical creatures that live, move, and have their being under God’s sovereign Lordship.
1. **Eph 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.”*
 2. **1 Pet 2:8** – *“They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.”*

II. WCF 3.6 – The “How” and the “Who” of God’s Saving Work

As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only. (WCF 3.6)

- A. Q. If the appointed “end” is glory in heaven, what are the appointed “means” by which we get there, according to WCF 3.6?
1. The “Golden Chain” of Salvation in Christ

Rom 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.³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”*
- B. Q. What are some of the other “means” (secondary causes!) God has used in your life to bring you to Christ and to keep you to the end?



- C. Q. What are some of the other “means” (secondary causes!) God has used in your life to bring you to Christ and to keep you to the end?

III. WCF 3.7 – The Decree of Predestination unto Death

The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice. (WCF 3.7)

- A. **John 10:25–26** – “The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” [Jesus tells Pharisees the ultimate reason many will not come to him]
- B. **John 17:9** – “I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.” [X’s high priestly prayer ... he prays for the elect alone!]
- C. Q. Does WCF 3.7 teach that God “passes by” the reprobate because they are sinners?

“[S]in is not the ground upon which some are passed by and are therefore non-elect: but sin is the ground of the dishonor and wrath to which they are ordained.”

– John Murray, “The Theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith,” 4:250

IV. WCF 3.8 – Handling Predestination with Special Care and Wisdom

“The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel. (WCF 3.8)

- A. Q. How ought the doctrine of predestination fuel us to praise God?

Luke 10:20 – “Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

- B. Q. What are some practical ways in which we should handle this doctrine in our lives?