

Grace Bible Church
Tree of Life
A Weekly Review
Week ending 06/20/10
The Doctrine of the Divine decree: Lapsarianism

We are looking at the Doctrine of the Divine Decree.

First was our Definition:

The decree of God is His eternal (always existed), holy (perfect integrity), wise (the application of omniscience to creation), and sovereign purpose, comprehending simultaneously all things that ever were or will be in their causes, conditions (status), successions (interaction with others that leads to certain decisions), relations, and determining certain parts of their future.

The term *decree of God* appears in the singular, since God has but one all-inclusive plan. He sees all things at a glance. For convenience, the separate features of this plan may be called the *decrees of God*; but there should be no implication in this that the infinite understanding of God advances by steps. There is no possibility that the one plan, the decree, will be altered by omissions or additions. Nor is it true that God can have a particular purpose and have something go on in His universe that is unrelated. God sustains a distinct purpose concerning each aspect of His one intention.

“Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows.” (Luk 12:6-7)

The Cross brings everything into focus again and makes faith possible to bridge that gap between the infinite and the finite. With God there is one immutable decree embracing in itself every detail, even the falling of a sparrow. It is the divine cognition from all eternity.

God formed His decree in eternity, though its execution is in time. So God did all of this in a moment in eternity past but it follows a system of steps that you and I are doing now. God’s decree is final but it is successive. We all live what God has already seen and the intrusion of His will in our lives was designed. God has done many things, past, and still yet future, that you will totally miss, but He does so out of love, faithfulness and grace. We have to make decisions all the time. There is never a time that we’re not deciding something. We allow God to take control over our lives when our constant decision making lines up with His will.

It’s not let go and let God. This means allow, under submission to His authority, the doctrine and the Holy Spirit to lead you to make the decisions you have to make from a position of strength. Operate as the Lord would operate, He submitted to the Father and yet He did much.

For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1Pe 1:20-21)

Just like it was for the humanity of Christ, it is a privilege for us, under our own free will, to accomplish what God has designed in eternity past. Don't think that just because God has seen everything in a moment and that he knows the end from the beginning that He's not happy and excited to see it all play out before His eyes.

God is Holy: Holy means perfect integrity, which is righteousness and justice in the same breath. Nothing God does is wrong or unfair. Jer 17:7 says, **Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD**

And whose trust is the LORD. Any true relationship is based on trust. And that has to go both ways. You might not think that God trusts you. Why should He, you're capable of such evil, we all are, but He does trust you. He's seen our depravity and made provisions for it. He trusts us because He knows us and knows the end product. What is going to solidify this relationship is our trust of Him. Whenever we shout out, "this is wrong or unfair," we have lost that faith in a Holy God. We've all done it, and we have all been guilty here. You say He's real, but you just don't trust Him for everything.

The divine decree is eternal in character. It cannot be altered or added to. It must play out as God has designed from start to finish.

The divine decree is wise, being the product of infinite wisdom. There is a worthy reason for all that God has ever done or will do.

Even His permission of evil will, like the wrath of man, be made to praise Him. Psa 76:10, **"For the wrath of man shall praise Thee;**

With a remnant of wrath Thou shalt gird Thyself." In the wisdom of the divine decree the Lord will be the victor over all things (Psa 2).

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? OR WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen. (Rom 11:33-36)

The decree of God is Sovereign. God freely designed the decree alone without any influence from any other being.

Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him? With whom did He consult and *who* gave Him understanding? And *who* taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge, And informed Him of the way of understanding? (Isa 40:13-14)

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding, Who set its measurements, since you know? or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:4-7)

Aside from the fact that He must act according to His wisdom and holiness (righteousness and justice), He was free to do or not to do.

Within the sphere of His perfections, He could do what He would. It is blasphemous to assert that God *could* not have done otherwise than He has done. He is Sovereign therefore He certainly could have done something other than what we have. But it is comforting to know that He would not have done otherwise, since He will only devise a decree that is worthy of Himself. God selected you to be in that decree and elected you (believer) to His highest and best. To be selected for life is a privilege in itself. To be elected to honor, privilege and blessing as a believer is over the top gracious.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:10)

The divine decree is unconditional. God's decree does not depend upon any condition of the creature or the conditions surrounding any creature – creature relations and interactions. No matter what the creature does, for or against the character of God, God's decree will move on. Satan had an idea to throw a monkey wrench into the system by having angels mate with women. God's plan went on. Gen 6:12 says, **And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.**

And behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. (Gen 6:17-18)

Though this is the desire of God, it hasn't been fulfilled because of the free will given to the creature. We must conclude that God made every circumstance around every creature the best possible environment for salvation and subsequent spiritual maturity. But some portion of the creation still chose to say no to God's grace and invitation, and although they have done so this condition does not hinder or alter the decree of God. The decree of God is unconditional.

Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, (Eph 1:11)

Not the creature's will, but God's will be done.

Point 2. The decree of God is His eternal (always existed), holy (perfect integrity), wise (the application of omniscience to creation), and sovereign purpose, comprehending simultaneously all things that ever were or will be in their causes, conditions (status), successions (interaction with others that leads to certain decisions), relations, and determining their certain futurity.

As already stated the decree of God was simultaneously designed by Him, yet because of our own limitations we logically put His design in a logical order. This is the doctrine of lapsarianism.

Point 3: The order of the divine decrees (lapsarianism).

Of all the decrees, five of them are related to the purpose of God in election – the five elective decrees:

- a. The decree to create.
- b. The decree to permit the fall.
- c. Unlimited atonement.
- d. The decree to motivate through the deposit of escrow blessings.
- e. The simultaneous decrees of election and predestination, and to apply salvation to those who believe in Christ.

Theologians, who have unfortunately had quite an influence on many Christians, have formulated other orders to lapsarianism.

At first one thinks why study what is false? The false doesn't prove the truth. God does not attempt to prove Himself. The Bible says **In the beginning God, period!** But the false brings out more of the beauty of the truth. God's decree is a blinding bright light of brilliant beauty and the false concepts of man only make us appreciate it more.

Supralapsarianism. This is hyper-Calvinism.

- a. The decree to elect some to be saved (a false position) and to reprobate all others. This is double predestination and heresy.
- b. The decree to provide salvation for the elect, which is the basis for limited atonement.
- c. The decree to create man, both elect and non-elect.
- d. The decree to permit the fall.
- e. The decree to save the elect.

This view elects a non-entity (elect who?). This view states that election as well as a “limited” atonement was provided before the fall.

For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. (1Ti 4:10)

and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world.* (1Jo 2:2)

This view makes God unfair by electing some creatures to the Lake of Fire, which attacks the character of God. This view provides man with a “sit on your hands” attitude. Either God elected you or not, there’s nothing you can do about it. Therefore God is not gracious, and you have no free will. While God planned in eternity past (EP) the fulfilment of the plan is in time. And certain things God has planned is dependent on the free will of His creatures in time.

The decree is not conditional, but the fulfilment of certain aspects, like election and receiving escrow blessings depended on what God foreknew in EP – your decisions. The hyper Calvinist would say that he believed in Christ because God elected him to and someone else rejected Christ because God elected him to that sentence. The hyper Calvinist would say that there is no foreknowledge of God, which is ridiculous. He sees the end from the beginning. You might ask, who would believe such a thing? So many people have believed this and naturally they’re the ones who have been elected. John Calvin did not understand the angelic conflict and therefore did not see that the Sovereignty of God and the free will of man co-exist in human history. Calvin's choice was to introduce a double predestination into his teaching after he had taught salvation by grace through faith.

His number one professor by the name of Beza ran with this idea and taught that election and double predestination preceded creation. This idea fits with a fallacy that’s been around since the ancient Greeks, the Hegalian fallacy that every thesis must have an antithesis. Good must have evil, creation must have chaos, light must have darkness, etc. In the Bible there are several of these combinations. If the antithesis is not stated then it doesn’t exist. If this dualism were always true then God would have always had an evil adversary as eternal as Himself, and this is not true. Much of the Greek pagan religion came out of this.

That which has been is that which will be, And that which has been done is that which will be done. So, there is nothing new under the sun. (Ecc 1:9)

2. Infralapsarianism, A form of moderate Calvinism.

- a. The decree to create all mankind.

- b. The decree to permit the fall.
- c. The decree to provide salvation for all mankind (unlimited atonement).
- d. The decree to elect some from among fallen mankind, and to leave others in their sin (those who will not believe in Christ).
- e. The decree to save the elect through faith in Christ or to apply salvation to those who believe.

This is the Biblical view of the order of the decrees, but it does not take cognizance of Eph 1:3, the work of God the Father in EP depositing in escrow greater blessing for us. Therefore, it is necessary to show the five elective decrees in relationship to the escrow blessings. Escrow blessings are received when election (God's highest and best) is fulfilled by the believer in time by growing up to maturity. Although election of every believer was performed in the mind of God in eternity past it depended upon the free will decision of each creature in time. God in foreknowledge saw that you would believe in Christ and therefore elected you. Unbelievers are selected for existence but not elected because they have rejected Christ and His cross. Therefore, with escrow blessings provided before election in the divine decree (Eph 1:3-4), we are persuaded to believe that election was done by God in EP, but its experiential fulfilment is realized by the believer in time and not in EP.

As already stated, the first thing God ever did for you was the means of glorifying Him. God blessed you before He elected you.

God provided all your escrow blessings in EP, but whether they remain on deposit forever, or you personally receive them, depends upon your decisions in time.

So then, correct lapsarianism reveals to us that we are not to sit on our hands because God has already done everything in eternity past, as a Calvinist might teach, but we have been pre-destined to fulfil our election to God's highest and best in time. Election was done by God in eternity past (EP), but the potential to realize the fulfilment of your election occurs in time. There is much for us to accomplish. The fact that God has planned all the circumstances around us in EP and could have altered anything in EP but didn't is to give us the comfort we need to press on in the fulfilment of our election while leaving the details to God.

No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. (2 Tim 2:4)

**But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but *only* a few things are necessary, really *only* one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."
(Luk 10:41-42)**

It's very important to understand that the Bible states that mankind is the object of grace after the fall, not before the fall. After the fall the coats of skins were provided, not before. Condemnation is not an act of God before creation! Condemnation came after both the creation and the fall. Both infralapsarianism and sublapsarianism, the two views of moderate Calvinism, recognize the doctrine of Election as an expression of the sovereignty of God in eternity past, the expression of God's grace apart from every form of works, foreseen or actual.

6. Sublapsarianism, also a form of moderate Calvinism.

a. The decree to create all mankind.

b. The decree to permit the fall.

c. The decree to elect those who believe in Christ, and to leave in just condemnation those who do not believe in Christ. (Note the difference with infralapsarianism.) This is sometimes stated: the decree to elect some out of fallen mankind and leave the others to their misery. But this last statement is questionable as to its accuracy.

d. The decree to provide salvation for the elect (limited atonement).

e. The decree to save the elect through faith in Christ, sometimes stated as the decree to apply salvation to those who believe in Christ. (This was the former view of Dallas Theological Seminary. Of course it goes astray with limited atonement, the part with which Dallas Seminary now disagrees).

7. Armenian Lapsarianism, represented by Richard Watson, their greatest theologian.

a. The decree to create all mankind.

b. The decree to permit the fall.

c. The decree to provide unlimited atonement (but they don't understand it correctly.)

d. Salvation by foreseen human virtue + faith + obedience; hence the blasphemy of salvation by works.

e. Election as an act of God in time, which makes election synonymous with experiential sanctification, which is not correct because it ignores the portfolio of invisible assets. ("Be separate and touch not the unclean thing.") In mixing truth with error, this view is a distortion and therefore a heresy.

Though God designed the plan in eternity past, the Bible states that man is the object of grace after, not before, the fall in Jn 15:9, Rom 11:5-7; Eph 1:4-6; 1 Pe 1:2. This goes back to that part of our definition: God formed His decree in eternity, though its execution is in time.

"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love." (Joh 15:9)

Rom 11:5-7

In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; (Rom 11:5-7)

Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

(Eph 1:4-6)

Who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. Many times in the history of war men have fought incredibly brave but have died because of terrible leadership that gives orders that violate the basic tactical principles of war. (1Pe 1:1-2)

Tactical principles: objective, mass, manoeuvre, unity of command, security, simplicity, and economy of force. We call this the basic doctrine of tactical warfare. There are many military analogies used in the N.T., the reason for this is that we are in the intensified stage of the AC. The truth is we are at war. God the Father in

eternity past created these tactical principles and executed them fully. Thank God, thank Him for superior leadership. The most valuable thing to God is you. The One who owns everything says that you are His most valuable possession.

Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Luk 12:7)

The difference was leadership and strict abeyance to basic tactical principles. In eternity past God the Father took a leadership position and as the greatest leader ever decreed the only plan that was worthy of His Holiness.

Point 2 Definition:

1. The term *decree of God* appears first in the singular, since God has but one all-inclusive plan. He sees all things at a glance.
2. God formed His decree in eternity, though its execution is in time.
3. God is Holy: Holy means perfect integrity, which is righteousness and justice in the same breath. Nothing God does is wrong or unfair.
4. The divine decree is eternal in character. It cannot be altered or added to. It must play out as God has designed from start to finish.
5. The divine decree is wise, being the product of infinite wisdom. There is a worthy reason for all that God has ever done or will do.
6. The decree of God is Sovereign. God freely designed the decree alone without any influence from any other being.
7. Lastly the divine decree is unconditional. God's decree does not depend upon any condition of the creature or the conditions surrounding any creature – creature relations and interactions.

No matter what the creature does, for or against the character of God, God's decree will move on. Satan had an idea to throw a monkey wrench into the system by having angels mate with women. God's plan went on (Gen 6:12; Gen 6:17-18).

who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1Ti 3:4)

Though this is the desire of God, it hasn't been fulfilled because of the free will given to the creature. We must conclude that God made every circumstance around every creature the best possible environment for salvation and subsequent spiritual maturity. But some portion of the creation still chose to say no to God's grace and invitation and although they have done so, this condition does not hinder or alter the decree of God. The decree of God is unconditional.

also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, (Eph 1:11)

Not the creature's will, but God's will be done. So now, we might better understand this definition: The decree of God is His eternal (always existed), holy (perfect integrity), wise (the application of omniscience to creation), and sovereign purpose, comprehending simultaneously all things that ever were or will be in their causes, conditions (status), successions (interaction with others that leads to certain decisions), relations, and determining their certain futurition.

As already stated the decree of God was simultaneously designed by Him, yet because of our own limitations we logically put His design in a logical order. This is the doctrine of lapsarianism and it will be briefly mentioned here.

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It is important to note the false because the false brings out the beauty of the truth. Light doesn't need darkness to exist, but in darkness its brilliance can be appreciated. God's decree is a blinding bright light of brilliant beauty and the false concepts of man only make us appreciate it more.

“For the wrath of man shall praise Thee;” (Psa 76:10)

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and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world.* (1Jo 2:2)

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Who would believe such a thing? So many people have believed this and naturally they're the ones who have been elected. John Calvin did not understand the angelic conflict and therefore did not see that the Sovereignty of God and the free will of man co-exist in human history. His choice was to introduce a double pre-destination into his teaching after he had taught salvation by grace through faith.

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Supralapsarianism is nothing new. It's just the Hegelian fallacy of dualism with a new paint job.

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(Luk 10:41-42)

It's very important to understand that the Bible states that mankind is the object of grace after the fall, not before the fall. After the fall the coats of skins were provided, not before. This is taught in many passages and so I've devoted an entire point to this coming up. Condemnation is not an act of God before creation! Condemnation came after both the creation and the fall. Both infralapsarianism and sublapsarianism, the two views of moderate Calvinism, recognize the doctrine of Election as an expression of the sovereignty of God in eternity past, the expression of God's grace apart from every form of works, foreseen or actual.

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- f. In mixing truth with error, this view is a distortion and therefore a heresy.

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