

DOCTRINE OF DIVINE DECREES
by Jim Brettell

A. Definition and Description.

1. Definition.

- a. 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 futuration.
 - (1) This definition begins by expressing the source of the decrees. "Comprehending" refers to divine omniscience.
 - (2) The definition also expresses the attributes of God in terms of divine will in human history.
 - (3) The definition emphasizes that the omniscience of God knew simultaneously in eternity past everything that would happen in human history (the thought, action, and decision of every person in his life), furthermore, everything in relation to all things pertaining to it.
- b. The several contents of this one eternal purpose are, because of the limitations of our faculties, necessarily perceived by us in partial aspects and logical relations (from Scripture), therefore, the decrees are classified as being plural, but in reality it is all one decree.
- c. The decrees of God are His eternal and immutable will regarding the future existence of all events which will happen in time and the precise manner and order of their occurrence.
- d. By decrees is meant the eternal plan by which God has rendered certain all of the events of the universe (angelic history, human history) past, present, and future.
- e. The decrees of God are the chosen and adopted plan of God for all of His works.
- f. The Presbyterian shorter catechism says: "The decrees of God are His eternal purpose according to the counsels of His own will whereby for His own glory He has foreordained whatever comes to pass."
- g. The decrees are the all-inclusive will and purpose of God concerning all that ever was or will be, which originates wholly within Himself (omniscience), and which He Himself alone must have objectively designed for His own glory and for His satisfaction.
- h. By accommodation to creatures of time and space subject to subdivisions reaching out to the falling of the sparrow, all decrees were simultaneous, not given by stages; however, because of the finite mental limitations of man, we must perceive them by logical and chronological progression. The human mind, when thinking properly, thinks according to logic and chronology.
- i. All decrees are efficacious in that they determine all that ever was, all that is, and all that ever will be, but the decrees are viewed by man from two standpoints.
 - (1) Efficacious means that which is directly wrought by God from His sovereignty.
 - (2) Permissive means that which is appointed by God to be accomplished by secondary causes or by the free will and action of agents (the free will of man)
- j. There are five characteristics of the decrees.
 - (1) The decrees are all-comprehensive. That means that not the slightest uncertainty could exist as to one of the smallest or most insignificant of events without confusion to all, therefore, all events in the life of every person are interwoven and interdependent. God is not the author of confusion. Everything we think, why we think it, and the environment in which we think it, was all known to God in eternity past. This also says everything in life is a chain of cause and effect events.
 - (2) The decrees are eternal. God is not gaining in knowledge. What God has known at any time He has always known. Omniscience means God knew simultaneously everything that ever was or will be in their causes, conditions, successions, and relations.

Divine Decrees: Doctrine of

- (3) The decrees are perfect. God is perfect; therefore, His decrees are perfect. They are not perfect in content, because they include sin, failure, etc., but everything that would ever happen was always known to God. His is a perfect system of comprehension.
- (4) The decrees are unchangeable and certain. Nothing can possibly occur to necessitate a change. God is never "caught" not knowing something. God has never had to make any changes or any adjustments in the divine decrees.
- (5) The decrees are the free choice of God in eternity past. (This is the most important point to understand, one which many theologians do not understand.) God is not bound to follow any necessary path. Having decreed, however, He is bound by His infinite faithfulness and truth to complete what He has begun. The free choice of God is very important, because God, from His own sovereign volition, invented free will in two categories of creatures, angels and mankind, so that both categories can choose for or against God.
- k. Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship [production: we have the provision of computer assets in our very own portfolio; i.e., election and predestination], [having been] created in Christ Jesus [the formation of the royal family of God and a new spiritual species resulting in positional sanctification by which every believer becomes the heir of God and has equal privileges under predestination] for good works [in momentum in the divine dynasphere as a part of equal privilege of election], which God prepared beforehand [in advance; divine provision of our portfolio of invisible assets], that we should walk in [by means of] them [utilization of our computer assets]. (NAS)
- l. The decrees of God are His eternal purpose regarding us according to the counsels of His own wisdom and His sovereign will, whereby for His own glory (we are created for His own glory) He has programmed into the computer of divine decrees all that will come to pass in the function of the human race in history. In the decrees, the sovereignty of God and free will of man coexist in human history.
- m. The principle of pre-creation reality.
 - (1) Inasmuch as the decrees were simultaneously known by God, they were simultaneously decreed by God. To appreciate the decrees, one must understand the nature of omniscience as a part of divine essence.
 - (2) Of all the decrees, five are related to the purpose of God in election, therefore, they are called the five elective decrees. From this comes the concept of lapsarianism.
 - (3) The decrees must be in logical order. This is the subject of the doctrine of lapsarianism. Though the entire decree is one thought in the mind of God, the principle of cause and effect is involved in human thinking and understanding. The term lapsarian refers to the doctrine of divine decrees from the standpoint that man is a fallen being.
 - (4) Lapsarianism provides logical order for the five elective decrees. (See the doctrine of Lapsarianism.) The correct logical order is as follows:
 - (a) The decree to create.
 - (b) The decree to permit the fall.
 - (c) Unlimited atonement.
 - (d) The decree to motivate by means of election and glorify God through the deposit of escrow blessings.
 - (e) The simultaneous decrees of election and predestination, and to apply salvation to those who believe in Christ. The Bible states that man is the object of grace after, not before, the fall. John 15:9, Romans 11:5-7; Ephesians 1:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2.
2. Distinctions.
 - a. The distinction between the decree and the execution of the decree in our thinking means the one logically follows the other; however, the execution itself is not a part of the decree itself. The decree occurred in eternity past, the execution occurs in human history. The false views of lapsarianism fail to consider this.

c:\docs\doctrines\brettell\upload\divdec.doc

12/4/22, 1:17 pm

Divine Decrees: Doctrine of

- b. Distinction should be made between God's laws and God's decrees. Laws regulate human conduct, while decrees are God's plan and action in eternity past. Laws can be broken; the decrees of God can never be broken.
 - c. Distinction between God's desires, like election, and the rejection of God's desires must be understood. God knows all our negative acts but doesn't interfere with our free will; for this would prevent the angelic conflict from ever being settled.
 - (1) For example, while sin and death are displeasing to God and incompatible with His divine nature, nevertheless, they belong to the decrees under the category of the fall of man.
 - (2) For example, while loser believers are displeasing to God and incompatible with His sovereign will, nevertheless, they belong to the decrees, having a printout from their PROM chip. We all have a PROM chip with our name on it, expressing our positive or negative volition toward God's sovereign will for our lives.
3. The Analogy to the Computer.
- a. God's eternal and sovereign will for every believer is expressed in the ROM chip, having printouts such as election, glorification, justification, and predestination.
 - b. In further explanation, the decrees of God are pictured as a giant computer, and the omniscience of God feeds the facts into the computer.
 - (1) The ROM chip is the sovereignty of God chip. It is an integrated circuit into which unchanging data can be read, but into which no new data can be written, a perfect illustration of God's knowledge of history in eternity past. ROM stands for "read only memory."
 - (2) The PROM chip is the free will of man chip. PROM stands for "programmable read only memory." It is an integrated circuit with fixed data that can be read but not altered.
 - (3) By analogy, our life can be read but not altered. We have privacy and can make good or bad decisions.
 - (4) The entering of data is performed after the PROM chip is manufactured. The omniscience of God programmed into this PROM chip how we would function in time.
 - (5) All PROM chips contain data regarding the function of the free will of man in history. He fed the facts simultaneously in eternity past. The facts include everything we ever think, decide, or do in the past, present, and future. This doesn't tamper with our free will.
 - c. All logistical grace, and those who would be blessed and their blessings, were fed into the computer of divine decrees. God knew every problem, heartache, and situation we would face before we ever existed. (Therefore, we insult God when we pray "God help," as if He didn't already know we needed help.)
 - d. The computer of divine decrees prints out facts about believers under the categories of election, foreknowledge, predestination, justification and glorification. It also prints out facts on the unbeliever under the categories of reprobation, condemnation and retribution.
4. The Decrees and Omniscience.
- a. The decrees of God are the sum total of God's plan designed in eternity past relating to all events of every classification collected into one single all-comprehensive whole through the omniscience of God. The decrees of God are His plan, that is, His protocol plan.
 - b. The omniscience of God is the key to understanding the decrees. God has three categories of divine knowledge.
 - (1) Self-knowledge. Each person of the Godhead has infinite and eternal knowledge about Himself and the other two members of the Trinity.
 - (2) Omniscience. God knows all the knowable simultaneously about creatures, both the actual and the possible, but only the actual is programmed into the decrees.

Divine Decrees: Doctrine of

- (3) Foreknowledge. Foreknowledge merely acknowledges what is in the decrees but does not make anything certain; the believer still has free will that is uncoerced. (See the doctrine of Predestination.)
5. The Decrees and Election.
 - a. Election is the sovereign right of God over His creation. It is the expression of the sovereign will of God for believers only in eternity past, i.e., that we have the most fantastic blessings for time and eternity. Ephesians 1:4 just as [since] He chose [has chosen] us in Him before the foundation of the world, . . ." (NAS)
 - b. Election and predestination provide equal privilege and equal opportunity for all believers.
 - (1) The equal privilege of election is God's decision to make every Church Age believer a royal priest forever.
 - (2) The equal opportunity of election is God's provision of logistical grace support for every Church Age believer.
 - (3) The equal privilege of predestination is God's decision to enter every Church Age believer into union with Christ forever through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and resultant positional sanctification. This creates a new spiritual species.
 - (4) The equal opportunity of predestination is God's provision of the divine dynasphere for the Church Age believer in time.
6. The Problem of Misinterpretation of the Decrees.
 - a. Example: If the decrees make all things certain, then some say there is no occasion for man to use the means, being unable to avoid the results decreed. In other words, why use any means if we are going to end up under predestination in the same situation?
 - b. This ignores the fact that God has decreed the means as well as the ends, and that all God expresses in election is His desire that we all be rich from blessing.
 - c. Man's destiny is the outworking of his own thinking, motivation, and decisions, which God knew and entered into a PROM chip. God knows all, yet that does not interfere with our PROM chip. God's knowledge of the facts does not interfere with their outworking in time.
 - d. The decree of God removes no man from what, within the sphere of his own experience, is the outworking of his own choice, acting from his own judgment, based on his own desires, thoughts and circumstances. Whatever free will choice anyone makes is the execution of the decrees. No decree opposes human freedom. God's knowledge in eternity past in no way effects or interferes with our thoughts, motives, decisions, or actions. Knowing our failures, God went ahead with the plan anyway. That's grace.
 - e. All decrees are efficacious in that they certainly determine all that ever was or will be; however, there are both efficacious decrees, things which God does directly, and permissive decrees, things which God permits as the function of free will.
 - f. Some things God has decreed to do Himself. This is called immediacy. Others things come to pass through the action of secondary causes acting under the law of necessity. Other things He decreed free will agents to do in the exercise of their volition. Yet one category is rendered by the decree of God as certainly as free as the other. Mankind never acts outside of the decrees.
- B. The Mechanical Function of the Computer of Divine Decrees.
 1. The Knowledge of God.
 - a. The Omniscience of God. The omniscience of God is God's objective knowledge of the universe and all creatures.
 - (1) God is eternal; therefore, His knowledge is eternal. God is sovereign; His knowledge is superior and unrelated to human or angelic limitations.
 - (2) God is infinite, therefore, His knowledge is without boundary or limitation hence, absolute and eternal knowledge. His knowledge is infinitely superior to creature knowledge.
 - (3) God is sovereign; therefore, His knowledge is in control at all times.
 - (4) Time has nothing to do with God's knowledge. The future is as perspicuous as the past.

Divine Decrees: Doctrine of

- (5) All of God's knowledge is simultaneous. God knows perfectly, eternally, and simultaneously all that is knowable both actual and possible. There never was a time in eternity past or human history when God did not know all the knowable about everything. Such perception and sagacity is totally compatible with His divine essence. Every minute detail of both angelic and human creation is completely and perfectly in His mind at all times.
 - (6) God's knowledge is never irrational, speculative, theoretical, unknown, or forgotten.
- b. General Characteristics of the Knowledge of God.
- (1) God is eternally Himself in three coequal, co-infinite, and coeternal persons, therefore, each person in the Godhead knows Himself to be beyond comparison in His eternal and absolute knowledge of all things.
 - (2) God's knowledge is never complicated by ignorance, absurdities, or emotional reaction.
 - (3) God cannot change or be inaccurate in His knowledge. Divine knowledge is absolute.
 - (4) God's knowledge cannot be more or less than it is.
 - (5) While divine self-knowledge is related to the persons of the Godhead, omniscience is really divine knowledge related to creatures--angelic, human, and the animal kingdom.
- c. There are three categories of divine knowledge.
- (1) Self-knowledge, which includes knowledge of the divine essence, the other members of the Trinity, and all things related to God.
 - (2) Omniscience, which deals with creation, angelic and human, both actual and possible.
 - (3) Foreknowledge, which is knowledge of what is in the decrees related to believers only. The foreknowledge of God makes nothing certain, but merely acknowledges what is certain, what is in the decrees regarding believers.
 - (a) As far as believers are concerned, there are numerous categories of printouts from the computer of divine decrees: foreknowledge, election, predestination or foreordination, justification, and glorification.
 - (b) God foreknows all events as certainly future because He has decreed them as certainly future.
 - (c) God's decrees relate equally to all future events of every kind--to the free actions of moral agents as well as to the actions of necessary agents; to sin and human good, as well as moral, divine good, and honorable thoughts, decisions, and actions.
 - (d) Foreordination or predestination alone establishes certainty. Foreordination is a synonym for the decrees. Predestination is technically the printout for believers.
 - (e) Foreordination is an act of the infinitely intelligent and wise God in determining the certain futurity of all events. Omniscience decreed everything simultaneously and not by stages, because it was all in the omniscience of God in eternity past.
- d. Omniscience.
- (1) Under the omniscience of God, all decrees were simultaneously known to God and simultaneously decreed by God in eternity past. There never was a time when God did not know all the knowable.
 - (2) God knows perfectly, eternally, and simultaneously all that is knowable both actual and possible. The omniscience of God also knows the alternatives to history; i.e., "iffy" history. God knows exactly what would have happened had another course of action occurred, but this is not entered into the computer of divine decrees, therefore, the omniscience of God knows every thought, act, decision of history and how they relate, plus what the alternatives would have been. God knows all that would have been involved in every case where man's decision might have been different from what it was. Divine knowledge about creatures is programmed into the computer of divine decrees. While the possible and alternatives to reality are known to God, only the reality is programmed into the computer of divine decrees. There are two categories of memory chips in the computer of divine decrees--the

Divine Decrees: Doctrine of

ROM chips are programmed by the sovereignty of God, the PROM, or free will of man chips, are programmed by the omniscience of God.

- (3) The principles of history are related to God's knowledge.
 - (a) In human history, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man coexist, and this coexistence is by divine decree.
 - (b) God's knowledge of human volition has nothing to do with the function of that human volition in time. This is why God does not stop us from making bad decisions. God invented creature freedom.
 - (c) The omniscience of God simply knows and has always known every decision of every human being in history and every thought that preceded it and every motive that was involved as well as every action that followed.
 - (d) God knew billions and billions of years ago that Jacob would believe in Jesus Christ and Esau would not, therefore, the printout for Jacob's PROM chip is regeneration and true Israel, and the printout for Esau's PROM chip is condemnation and exclusion from the new racial species of Israel. Every human being, in the same way, has his very own PROM chip.
 - (4) The concept of historical sins.
 - (a) In addition to every person in history having his own PROM chip, there is another PROM chip which includes all human beings in history. The omniscience of God programmed into this PROM chip with all personal sins in history. On the Cross, God the Father called for the printout of this chip and imputed all personal sins to Christ and judged every one of them. Since both sins of cognizance and sins of ignorance are the function of human volition, every sin in human history was imputed to Christ and judged by God the Father on the Cross.
 - (b) The sovereignty of God and free will of man coexist by divine decree in human history. Even though God gives a perfect volition, He imputes Adam's original sin to the genetically formed old sin nature for condemnation at the point of physical birth, so that we are qualified for salvation automatically.
 - e. Therefore, omniscience perceives the free as free (God will never tamper with our volition), the necessary as necessary (divine justice as our point of reference), together with all their causes, conditions, and relations, as one indivisible system of things (every cause and effect is related to another cause and effect, and so on, so that the course of human history is just as man thinks it, wills it, and does it), every link of which is essential to the integrity of the whole.
2. The Decree Itself.
 - a. The omniscience of God fed only facts into the computer of divine decrees.
 - b. This was accomplished simultaneously in eternity past.
 - c. The decrees have become the complete and consummated right of the sovereignty of God determining the certain futurition of all things in human history.
 - d. No event is directly effected or caused by the decrees.
 - e. But the decree itself provides in every case that the events shall be effected by causes acting in a manner consistent with the nature of the event in question. (We are never deprived of our free will.) God never changes the decree of what will happen and never tampers with our actions.
 - f. Therefore, in the case of every free will act of a moral agent, the decree itself provides at the same time the following.
 - (1) That the agent shall be a free agent (self-determination). When we were given life, we were given self-determination, therefore, we are accountable for our own bad decisions.
 - (2) That the antecedents and all antecedents of every act in question shall be what they shall be. Whenever we make a decision it shall be the result of decisions before that. The circumstances will be what they are; the facts will be what they are; and God knows what we are thinking and what we will decide. Man's acts are a result of man's free will, not because the sovereignty of God causes man to perform the act.

c:\docs\doctrines\brettell\upload\divdec.doc

12/4/22, 1:17 pm

Divine Decrees: Doctrine of

- (3) That all present conditions of the act shall be what they are. The action takes place in a moment of time and is our very own act.
 - (4) That the act shall be perfectly spontaneous and free on the part of the agent. There is no coercion.
 - (5) That it shall be certainly future.
 - g. Hence, the decree from God's will settled only what His creation would be.
 - h. Because God cannot contradict His own nature or His being, the essence and attributes of God necessitated His willing the highest and best for mankind.
 - i. The decrees of God are His eternal and immutable will regarding the future existence of events which will happen in time and the precise manner and order of their occurrence. The decisions are made, the circumstances are all there on tape. Our life is on tape, and the tape is running. God wouldn't be God if He didn't know it all beforehand. Yet God never violates our volition.
 - j. The decrees express the eternal plan and will of God by which God has rendered certain all events of history, past, present and future.
 - k. Therefore, the decrees are eternal and simultaneous knowledge of omniscience expressing the will of God by which all things are brought into being and controlled, made subject to His divine pleasure, and result in His eternal glory.
3. The Printout Applied to Believers.
- a. The printout applied to believers includes election, foreknowledge, predestination or foreordination.
 - b. Foreordination is also known as predetermination. Predetermination is an act of the infinite and eternal omniscience of God determining the certain futurity of all events related to the believer.
 - c. Foreknowledge is not the same as omniscience. It is more limited because it deals with only the actual, and only with believers.
 - d. Being omniscient, God knows all that would have been involved had He adopted any one of an infinite number of plans of action as well as the consequences had man chosen alternatives.
 - e. Foreknowledge refers only to those things which are within the plan of God, adopted for the believers only.
 - f. The decree alone establishes certainty.
 - g. The logical order is as follows: omniscience, foreordination (the decree), then foreknowledge. The decrees make all things certain.
 - h. Election is the plan of God for believers only.
 - (1) Election is the key to the Jewish problem related to the four unconditional covenants.
 - (2) These promises can only be fulfilled to the elect, to those who believe in Christ. Therein lies the great problem in every generation of Israel--to possess the genes of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but not to follow them in regeneration.
 - (a) Romans 9:11-12

11 for though {the twins} were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to {His} choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls,

12 it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." (NAS)

God knew in eternity past that Jacob would believe in Christ for salvation and Esau, his twin brother, would not believe.
 - (b) Hebrews 12:17 For you know that even afterwards, when he [Esau] desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears. (NAS)

Esau's scar tissue of the soul completely clogged up his stream of consciousness and garbage in his subconscious finished the job of blocking gospel information from circulating in his soul. All he had left was emotion, and emotion will not save anyone.

Divine Decrees: Doctrine of

In eternity past, God the Father entered this information into the computer of the divine decrees. Crying for salvation is an insult to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

(c) Regeneration sets aside the order and precedence of physical or natural birth. There is no equality in biological life, but in the soul life created by God at birth, there is equal privilege and equal opportunity for every member of the human race to believe in Christ and have spiritual life. No one is handicapped by biological life because God provides equality of opportunity to believe in Christ.

(d) Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (NAS)

(3) The gracious unconditional promises can only be fulfilled to the elect, to those who at the moment of faith in Christ receive the imputations of perfect righteousness and eternal life.

C. The Will of God and the Divine Decrees.

1. There is one all-inclusive will and purpose of God concerning all there ever was or will be from the beginning of history until its termination.
2. This will and purpose of God originated within Himself long before any creature ever existed.
3. This means the will and purpose of God related to the decrees is designed for the glory, pleasure, and satisfaction of God.
4. All creatures have been placed into space and time; furthermore, all events related to space and time were simultaneously decreed. They result in divine action.
 - a. Related to the Godhead, these actions are immanent, intrinsic, and subjective.
 - b. Related to creation, these actions of God are extrinsic (cognizant of angelic and human volition), transient (chronological in their function), and objective (the function of divine justice as the point of reference for the human race)
5. God did not decree Himself to be. God eternally existed before and outside of the decrees, therefore, the decrees do not act upon God, but God acts upon the decrees.
6. God's decrees are efficacious, determining all that ever was or will be, including the directive, permissive, and overruling will of God.
7. All things depend on God's will and nothing is certain apart from God's will. There comes a point in theology where God's will and the decrees must be understood as synonymous.
8. God's decrees originate from His own omniscience in eternity past separating fact from fiction.
9. Therefore, distinction must be made between the omniscience of God and the foreknowledge of God.
 - a. God's decrees do not originate from His foreknowledge.
 - b. The foreknowledge of God makes nothing certain; it merely perceives what is certain, what is decreed. Only the decrees or foreordination makes anything certain.
10. Distinction has to be made between the decrees of God and the desires of God. The decrees include a lot of things that are not God's desires, because the decrees include everything we think, say or do.
 - a. Sin and human good are not the desires of God, but they are in the decrees because they are performed by our free will.
 - b. God desires His perfect will and sovereignty, but both angelic and human creatures use their God-given free will and self-determination to violate the desires of God. So, the decrees contain both the will of God and desires of God. The decrees are the all-inclusive will of God.
 - c. God does not desire to cast His creatures into the lake of fire forever, but it is so decreed under the printout of retribution for all who express negative volition at God-consciousness and at Gospel hearing.
 - d. God does not desire the discipline of believers, but it is decreed for all carnality and reversionism.

D. The Decrees and the Blessing of Man.

1. There are seven imputations in the plan of God.
 - a. Human life is imputed to the soul. It remains in the soul forever. This means that any child, no matter what the circumstance, who does not reach or cannot reach the age of accountability,

c:\docs\doctrines\brettell\upload\divdec.doc

12/4/22, 1:17 pm

Divine Decrees: Doctrine of

- automatically receives salvation. Since condemnation precedes salvation, the child must be condemned before the child can be saved.
- b. Adam's original sin is imputed to the old sin nature, automatically condemning each member of the human race at birth.
 - c. At the point of faith in Christ, eternal life is imputed to the human spirit, which human spirit is created by God the Holy Spirit (called regeneration). This provides eternal security, since once given, God can never take away eternal life.
 - d. Perfect righteousness is imputed as a judicial imputation to the believer at salvation. This creates a grace pipeline for the imputation of all blessings to the believer.
 - e. On the cross the sins of the world were imputed to Jesus Christ in His spiritual death.
 - f. Blessing in time is imputed to the believer's perfect righteousness.
 - g. Blessing for eternity is imputed to the believer's perfect righteousness at the judgment seat of Christ.
2. The Working Equation of the Plan of God: $X + Y + Z$.
- a. $X [I/HL + I/AOS = P1 + D = H1] + (I/EL)$
 - 1) This is God's plan for all unbelievers.
X radical contains God's will for the unbeliever.
 - 2) Human life begins at birth; biological life in the womb is not human life.
 - 3) The imputation of human life plus the imputation of Adam's original sin to the old sin nature, both occurring simultaneously at birth equals the first potential: that being condemned we have the potential of salvation.
 - 4) This means we are born in a totally helpless condition.
We are under total depravity, totally helpless to have a relationship with God, and totally helpless to do anything about it.
However, whenever we are in a hopeless situation, that is always a potential for divine solution.
 - 5) This potential plus the pertinent doctrine, i.e., the gospel, equals the first hope: absolute confidence that once we believe in Christ, we will have eternal life.
 - 6) The plus outside of the bracket represents the moment you believe in Jesus Christ, having faith and faith alone, adding nothing. That is the moment when God the Father imputes eternal life to the human spirit, which is created by God the Holy Spirit, called regeneration.
 - B. $Y [J1 + J2 = P2 + D = H2] + (I/BT)$
 - 1) This is God's plan for all immature believers.
Y radical is God's plan for the believer to receive blessings in time which glorify God.
 - 2). Judicial imputation number one is the imputation of all the personal sins of the human race to Christ on the cross and His substitutionary spiritual death.
 - 3) Judicial imputation number two is the imputation of God's perfect divine righteousness to the believer at salvation.
This is the basis for justification, for logistical grace support, and for becoming the recipients of God's personal love.
 - 4) The sum of these two judicial imputations equals the second potential: to execute God's protocol plan for the Church Age and become a mature believer.
 - 5) This potential plus the pertinent doctrine, the mystery doctrines of the Church Age, equals the second hope: absolute confidence that at the moment I advance to spiritual maturity, I am manufactured into a mature believer having my greatest impact for the Lord.
Then I will receive escrow blessings beyond my wildest imaginations from the justice of God, which glorify God.
 - 6) The plus outside of the bracket is the point of the execution of the protocol plan of God, when you reach spiritual maturity, become a winner in the Christian way of life, and become the recipient of your escrow blessings.
 - C. $Z [I/EL + I/BT = P3 + D = H3] = \text{Plan of God.}$

c:\docs\doctrines\brettell\upload\divdec.doc

12/4/22, 1:17 pm

Divine Decrees: Doctrine of

- 1) Z radical contains God's plan for the mature believer.
It combines the two pluses in the above two brackets.
 - 2). The imputation of eternal life (the plus at the end of X radical) plus the imputation of escrow blessings in time (the plus at the end of Y radical) equals the third potential: to receive escrow blessings for eternity at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
 - 3) This potential plus the pertinent doctrine, eschatological doctrine and specifically that which teaches about the Rapture, the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the distribution of escrow blessings for the eternal state, adds up to the third hope: the absolute confidence of the believer that he will receive the most fantastic eternal rewards and blessings above and beyond the resurrection body at the bema seat of Christ.
 - 4) All three radicals, X + Y + Z, equal the protocol plan of God for the human race. These hopes are the anchors for momentum in the Christian life.
These hopes, when acquired, give great confidence toward the present and the future.
- D. A Brief Recap of the Working Equation of the Plan of God: X + Y + Z.
- X [I/HL + I/AOS = P1 (salvation) + doctrine (gospel) = H1 (confidence of imputation of eternal life at salvation)]
- Y [JI/Sin + JI/+R = P2 (potential of blessing in time) + doctrine = H2 (confidence in escrow bless when we reach maturity)]
- Z [I/EL (in X radical) + I/Blessing in time (in Y radical) = P3 (the potential of blessing at the judgment seat of Christ) = H3 (confident of blessing and rewards at the bema seat)] = the protocol plan or imputation plan of God.
3. Principle of this Formula.
 - a. The omniscience of God, in taking cognizance of the fall of man, graciously provided a plan based on imputations from divine justice.
 - b. This plan involves the omniscience of God feeding into the computer of divine decrees seven imputations that provide maximum blessing for mankind in time and eternity.
 - c. The decrees contain the historical reality of every member of the human race in degree of attainment.
 - d. Non-meritorious human volition can fall short of any potential of God's plan.
 - e. To what extent every individual advances in this plan was known to the omniscience of God in eternity past and fed into the computer.
 - f. In too many cases the potential exceeds the reality. Only the reality was decreed.
 - g. From this fact emerges the principle that the attainment of divine blessing through imputation is the means God has chosen to glorify Himself and to give Himself pleasure.
 - h. Therefore, the glory of God is related to the believer's advance to maturity and resultant imputation of divine blessing.
 - E. The Decrees and the Glory of God.
 1. The decrees unite in one final and all-inclusive objective--the glory of God (Proverbs 16:4; Romans 11:36; Hebrews 2:10; Revelation 4:11)
 2. Being alone before all creation, the decrees of God concern no one but the members of the Trinity and their eternal glory. There is nothing we can do to promote God's glory. We can glorify God, but we cannot promote His glory. Our failure doesn't stop His glory. Nothing depends on us; everything depends on God.
 3. Being eternal and infinite, God the Father, Son, and Spirit are worthy of all glory.
 4. God's glory is what He is and always has been in eternity past, and always will be.
 5. As the origin and subject of the divine decrees, it is inevitable that every thought, decision, and action in history will glorify God. That means the plan moves on with or without us. The plan of God never stops moving. If we are to advance along with the glory of God, we must develop thought, i.e., learn doctrine.
 6. God is glorified in what He is and in what He has decreed.

Divine Decrees: Doctrine of

7. Since manifestation of His declarative glory also secures the highest glory for His creatures and their greatest good (Romans 8:28), it is inevitable that imputing blessing to the mature believer will glorify God. It will emphasize His grace and exclude human talent and human good.
 8. To the finite mind the decrees are many, but to God they are all one plan, embracing both cause and effect, both means and end.
 9. The decrees include every detail in the experience of every creature, including such minute aspects as the very hairs of our head being numbered.
 10. The decrees of God related to His plan are those sovereign purposes of God which are efficacious, accomplished by God alone apart from creature ability, mentality, talent, function, and sacrifice.
 11. Therefore, God is glorified and pleased in the momentum and advance of believers within His plan.
 12. The omniscience of God knew in eternity past what thoughts, decisions, and actions would carry one believer to maturity and another to reversionism. God has prepared the most magnificent things for both categories by way of escrow blessing, but He has also prepared the most horrible discipline for the reversionistic believer.
 13. While omniscience knew the factual and potential, only the factual was fed into the decrees. Anything decreed by God will inevitably glorify God; it could not work out any other way.
- F. The Decrees and Human Freedom.
1. God does not decree mankind to sin, but He decrees that human beings have free will function of their volition with the option to sin or not to sin.
 2. God does not decree anyone to believe in Jesus Christ for eternal life, but He does decree that all human beings have free will--the function of human volition with the option of believing in Christ or rejecting Christ.
 3. While God permits sin, He does not sponsor sin. God was cognizant of all human sins in eternity past and the omniscience of God fed that knowledge of sin into the computer of divine decrees without being the cause of any sin in human history.
 4. While God permits the rejection of Christ as Savior, He does not sponsor it or encourage that rejection. In human history, the sovereignty of God and free will of man coexist as an extension of and resolving of the prehistoric angelic conflict.
 5. At the termination of human history, the justice of God will judge all those who reject Christ as Savior.
 6. The justice of God imputed all personal sins of human history to Christ on the cross and judged each one of them. This is the basis for the divine invitation to every member of the human race to believe in Christ.
 - a. Repeated rejection of Christ, when exposed to the gospel, produces scar tissue in the stream of consciousness of the soul's right lobe.
 - b. Esau rejected the gospel so many times that when he wanted to be saved, there was nothing left in his stream of consciousness except emotion.
 - c. No one can be saved by emotion. Salvation is a matter of faith in Christ and how we feel is inconsequential.
 - d. The decree of God removes no person from what, within the sphere of his own experience, is the outworking of his own choice based on the function of his own volition.
 7. Under the law of volitional responsibility, sin is a matter of personal decision and such decision carries a liability in time.
 - a. Under the law of volitional responsibility, every human being must take the responsibility for his own thoughts, his own decisions, and his own actions.
 - b. Human volition is the source of good decisions from a position of wisdom and strength, as well as bad decisions from a position of lust and weakness.
 - c. While all personal sins were judged on the cross, all sins and human good decisions have natural consequences of suffering in life, therefore, liability.

Divine Decrees: Doctrine of

- d. While all sins were judged on the cross, personal sins carry liability in time (not in eternity, since personal sins are not an issue in eternity at the last judgment) and are subject to the law of volitional responsibility.
- e. The function of human volition in making decisions is the source of the sins of ignorance as well as the sins of cognizance, therefore, each of us is held responsible by God for his or her own decisions.
- f. Scripture.
 - (1) Galatians 6:7, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a person sows, this he will also reap."
 - (2) Hosea 8:7, "For they sow to the wind, and they reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; it yields no grain. Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up."
 - (3) Colossians 3:25, "For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of that wrong which he has done, and there is no partiality."
 - (4) Proverbs 12:13, "An evil snare is the transgression of the lips, but the person with integrity will escape from trouble."
 - (5) Proverbs 19:3, "A person's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord." A fool blames God for his own bad decisions and consequent discipline from the Lord.
- g. Conclusion.
 - (1) Sin's liability creates punitive action from God.
 - (2) Therefore, while all sins are judged at the cross, personal sins carry liability from God under the law of volitional responsibility.
 - (3) However, at the great white throne judgment, the unbeliever is never indicted on the basis of his sins because his sins were judged at the cross, but on the basis of his good deeds. We cannot commit a sin without it effecting someone else, without it hurting someone else. The liability for personal sins does not extend outside of time. Sin is not a liability outside of time, i.e., in eternity, therefore, there is no contradiction between our liability for personal sins in time and the judgment of all personal sins on the cross.
 - (4) Romans 9:10-13 is a printout of the divine decrees, where the omniscience of God knew simultaneously in eternity past that Jacob would believe in Christ and Esau would reject Christ.
- 8. In the function of the rebound technique of 1 John 1:9, the purpose is to receive forgiveness and cleansing from post-salvation sin through citing personal sins to God the Father. As a result, two things can happen to the believer with regard to the liability of sin: the believer is forgiven and the sin liability is completely removed, or the believer is forgiven and the sin liability continues and punitive suffering is replaced by suffering for blessing.
- 9. The decree of God removes no person from what, within the sphere of his own experience, is the outworking of his own choice based on the function of his own volition.
- 10. The plan of God and the decrees of God are totally consistent with human freedom and volition. God does not limit and coerce human freedom or violate self-determination. Free will isn't free unless man can decide against God and His plan.
- 11. However, distinction must be made between what God causes directly (such as the cross), and what God permits indirectly (such as sin and human good)
- 12. God created man with a free will, therefore, He permits human volition to function in self-determination; otherwise, there would not have been the fall of man. It is His permissive will. The permissive will is just as much a part of the decrees which glorify God as the directive will. Remember, the decrees are simply human history in the mind of God in eternity past before any creature existed.
- 13. God is not the author of sin or human good. Free will and self-determination is the origin and source of sin and human good.

Divine Decrees: Doctrine of

14. Both sin and the cross are fed into the computer by omniscience. One is the direct will of God. The other is the permissive will of God, but the permissive, directive, and overruling will of God are all a part of the decrees.
15. The sovereignty of God and the free will of man coexist by divine decree. Every decision and desire of God and man were recorded on ROM and PROM chips respectively. Omniscience programs this data into the decrees.

G. Practical Application of the Divine Decrees.

1. Since the decrees of God are the sum total of God's plan and indicate His purpose designed in eternity past, they must inevitably center around Jesus Christ as the God-man.
2. Therefore, the free will of man must face the issue of Christ and the issue of His work on the cross. It is at the cross that the sovereignty of God met the free will of man for the glory of God and the momentum of the plan of God.
3. Under the divine policy of grace, the work of salvation is accomplished by God while man benefits apart from his own human merit.
4. God's plan in eternity past was so designed so as to include all events, all actions related to their causes and conditions as a part of one indivisible system, every link being a part of the integrity of the whole.
5. Without violating human volition, God has provided and designed a plan so perfect that it includes direction, provision, preservation, function, plus cause and effect for all believers.
6. Under this plan God has decreed to do some things directly, some things through secondary agencies (Israel and the Church), and some things through individuals (e.g., Paul).
7. This means there are primary, secondary and tertiary functions within the plan of God, but all of these functions constitute one all-comprehensive plan which is perfect, eternal, and unchangeable without any loss of integrity ever. This is why the plan of God is so consistent with human freedom and does not unfairly coerce human freedom. The revelation of the decrees is found only in the Bible, therefore, the most important priority of the Christian life is perception of doctrine.

(See also the doctrines of Election and Theology of the Perfect Plan of God.)