



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

TRANSCRIPT

“The Decrees of God, or the Foreordination of God and the Freedom of Man”

Well, it's seven o'clock and we have a lot of material to try to cover tonight in fifty minutes, so let's begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the opportunity that is again ours to open the word of God and to listen to His teachings. May our hearts be open and may our minds be clear and may we respond to the things that we learn. Help us Lord to think right thoughts concerning Thee and may these great truths that we are attempting to fathom mean something to us in our every day life. This we ask in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] We're going to read again a passage or two that we read last time for our Scripture reading. First, two verses in Isaiah chapter 14, verses 24 and 27 and then two verses in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Isaiah chapter 14, verses 24 and 27, “The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying, “Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed, *so* it shall stand.” And then the 27<sup>th</sup> verse, “For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul *it?* His hand *is* stretched out, and who will turn it back?” Now over to Paul's Letter to the Ephesians chapter 1, Ephesians chapter 1, verse 11, “In

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Him 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. And will you note it particularly, the last clause: who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. And it is all things.” Chapter 3, verse 11, “according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. The eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Now last time we began the study of the decrees of God or the foreordination of God and the freedom of man and we just had time to introduce it. And in the introduction, I pointed out that this, of course, is a difficult subject. Because it is difficult, we should not abandon it. We should study it; seek to discern what the Bible has to say upon it. And then I gave you -- Roman I of the outline -- the statement of God’s decrees and gave you two definitions. And we will just bear these definitions in mind. One of them was the one from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. 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. And then a definition by A. H. Strong, a Baptist theologian, “By the decrees of God we mean that eternal plan by which God has rendered certain all of the events of the universe, past, present and future.” That definition is not quite as comprehensive as the one that precedes, but in the parts of it that do agree, it agrees with the statement of the Presbyterians.

We want to move on next to the nature of God’s decrees and seek to single out some of the details that need a little stressing for us as we think about God’s purpose. And Capital A: The final cause, the glory of God. In other words, the aim of God’s decree is the glory of God. Let’s turn over to Revelation chapter 4, verse 11 for a text of Scripture. Revelation chapter 4, verse 11, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

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Now let’s turn back to Romans chapter 11, verse 36. Romans chapter 11, verse 36 -- if you remember Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11 have to do with the apostle’s explanation of how it is that Israel -- who was the recipient of the promises of God have managed to become the nation that is rejected and that the gentiles have now received the blessing of God and Paul explains, and he goes on to add as he concludes this discussion that Israel as a nation shall be saved. And so all Israel shall be saved and that she has a glorious future and that through her future, actually, the gentiles shall experience blessings that they have never experienced before. And when he finishes that chapter, he says in the thirty-third verse, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him (that is, He’s the source) and through him (He’s the agent) and to him (He is the ultimate aim or final cause) are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

Now the apostle states here that everything is from God, through God, and for God. And then ascribes to Him glory forever. I think as you study the Bible it becomes very evident that the Bible puts God first in almost everything that it discusses and his creatures second. In the plan of salvation, as Paul presented in Romans chapter 3, the big problem with God is not how he can save sinful men, but how he -- the Holy God -- can save sinful men. The problem is not so much how to get men to God, as it is how to get God to men because he is a Holy God. And that is the chief, or the important side, of the problem of reconciliation.

So in the Bible you will usually find that God is put first, his creatures second. His infinite perfections in revelations are the highest conceivable end of all things. In other words, in the final analysis, it is the revelation of God that is the important thing. And the more fully God is known, the more fully the highest good of the universe is promoted. I

don’t think we have to argue this point, you can begin at the beginning of the Bible and go through to the end, and you would come to the conclusion that the glory of God is the final cause of his activities among men, in nature, and in providence and in all of his other activities.

Capital B: The decrees of God are many and yet one. Now what we mean by this is that while there are many details in the program of God and the plan of God, we can look at all of these details as comprehending one divine purpose. For example, that passage in Ephesians 3:11 that we just read, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. That is, one purpose. God has in one sense, one purpose for his creation and for man. From all possible events, he determined on one divine plan. We can put at the top of all activities of God the word, foreknowledge. Of all the possible things that he might have done, he decided upon one, and that comprehends his purpose for man, for creation and so on.

Now, of course, involved in this are multitudinous details. So we may look at the decree of God as referring to the details in which case it is many. Or we may look at it with regard to its prime purpose as it comprehends the whole and in that, it is one. If I were an architect and I were to design a building, I might look at my building as one or as many. I may think of the one building that I am building. On the other hand, I may look at each one of the rooms and all of the parts to the rooms and everything else. My plan may be one; a unity, or I may look at the details. If I am designing a machine, I may think of the final product as one, a machine. But it is made up of many parts that function in their relationship, one to another.

So in the Bible his decrees are many and yet one. He does not -- as each emergency arises formulate a new plan. He looks from the ages of eternity past down into the future with his plan which he has designed himself out of his perfect knowledge,

his perfect wisdom, and has decreed that these things come to pass, and they do come to pass so there is no need for any new plan.

Capital C: The decrees are eternal. History is the evolution of the eternal purpose of God. As you know, it has often been said that history is really his story. In fact, I think the way in which that originated was this; someone said “history is his story;” that is, if a man can climb high enough so that he can see from God’s standpoint. But history in a sense is his story.

Now, if that is true, if it is true that the decrees of God are really his plan, then of course, they have to be eternal. God cannot have plans now that he did not have last week. He cannot have plans now that he did not have a year ago. He is the omniscient God. He would be increasing in knowledge if his plans were changeable such as this. But he is omniscient, and because he is omniscient, he knows from time immemorial, time eternal, what his plans are. His plans, by the very nature of his character, are eternal. Now, of course, with us from our standpoint, we may sense as we read the Bible that God repents of this, he repents of that. That’s the human side. That’s the way we look at it. From God’s standpoint, his decrees are eternal.

Fourthly, Capital D: The decrees are immutable. Now we know what immutable means. That is, they cannot be changed. James 1, verse 17 was our text on immutability. And you might also put down in your notes Isaiah chapter 14, verse 24, which we read for our Scripture. And Isaiah chapter 46, verses 9 and 10. You know when change takes place it usually takes place because of lack of wisdom or lack of power. In the United States during the last presidential campaign we heard a lot about change. Everybody was promising change. It was always a change for the better, of course. And usually the idea of a suggestion of a change arose out of the fact that the administration, according to its opponents had had lack of power or lack of wisdom to carry out the purposes that were deemed best. The administration was unwise in what it had done. Or else, it had

showed that it could not carry out its plan and a change is needed because of lack of wisdom on a part of the administration or lack of power.

Now with God all of these needs for change do not exist. He does not have lack of power. He does not have lack of wisdom. He has perfect wisdom. He has perfect power. Consequently, he plans and his purposes are immutable, they cannot change. When he makes a plan, it is a perfect plan. It is the perfectly wise plan. It is the plan that is backed up by the power of God so it must come to pass; it is immutable.

Capital E: The decrees are free. Now, we mean by this, the following. If you’d like a text, Isaiah chapter 40, verses 13 and 14. What we mean by this when we say that the decreed of God are free is that they are rational decisions based on sufficient reasons. God did not act out of near necessity of his nature. It was not like a machine. He didn’t really have to do what he did. He was free to create or free not to create. He did not have to create men. He did not have to devise the plan of salvation that he devised. He acted freely. He acted out of his own nature as the infinitely wise, eternal, immutable God.

Now those actions were free and his decrees are free. He is not like a machine who must act. Fatalism is not part of our God, as we shall see in our next section. By the way, men’s purposes -- later on we’re going to talk about the free will of man in connection with soteriology, not this year, perhaps next year -- but when we think about man’s freedom, we should remember that man has limited freedom to start with. We cannot, it is obvious, say when we shall be born, where we should be born, to whom we should be born. I cannot select my parents. I cannot select my country. I cannot select my century or my age. I am not really free. I am here with limited freedom to start with. But nevertheless, even when we form our decisions, we often form them under influences. And as far as I read the Bible, it seems to me that our decisions for Jesus

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Christ are formed under divine influence. It is by the Holy Spirit that we are brought to our decision, but they are not unfree decisions.

Now, just to give you a simple illustration, and I’m going to speak to you married men. You thought that you decided that you would marry that young lady freely, but the facts are that there was some persuasion exerted, wasn’t there? [Laughter] But you -- but you were perfectly free in your decision because it was what you wanted to do. And so persuasion is not opposed to freedom. And the fact that God in his love has persuaded me of the greatness and the grace and the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and that I have been won by his persuasion, is no evidence that I’m not free. That is, as I look at it. I am free. I decided that I would marry Mary [indistinct]. Matter of fact, the persuasion was so strong that I knew it was persuasion, but I liked the persuasion. I think I’m a person -- I think I would not have liked it if she did not persuade me. And so she did. And I said, “I do.” But it was loving compulsion, and I liked it. And I’ve liked it ever since. So men may be free and yet persuaded, but God’s decisions are rational decisions based on sufficient reasons because he was free.

Now they’re also free in the sense that they’re absolutely sovereign decrees. That is, they’re not conditional. There’s no suspense or indecision. It’s not, I will do this if. There is no suspense in the decree of God. There is no indecision in the decree of God. They are free, without any limitations.

Capital F: The decrees are certainly efficacious. That is, they render certain the appearance of everything that he decrees. Certainly efficacious. Now when we talk about our Christian life, we talk often about the directive will of God and the permissive will of God. And we try to distinguish between what we think is God’s best for us and what may be his second best for us. Now his second best for us is usually something that follows as result of our refusal of his best and we call that his permissive will. God was not surprised by it, but nevertheless it was not his best for us as we look at it humanly.

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Now that has no relation whatsoever to the certainty of the eternity of events. God’s decrees are certain and whether we talk about the human angle about his directive or permissive will, the fact remains that all events are equally certain, whether brought to pass by his own power or whether they are permitted through agencies. He effects good. He permits evil, and these things are certain even though they are his permissions. They are certain. So do not be confused by that expression. That too will later come up -- directive and permissive will.

Now the fact that his decrees are certainly efficacious is proved by these things; his perfection which forbids the ascription to God of uncertain purposes -- we really couldn’t think of a God who couldn’t make up his mind. How would you like a God like that, or a God whose plan had no unity to it? You know, it’s a striking thing, but even the world has noticed that history has a unity to it. I ran across this quotation ten days ago. I thought it was striking. Dom Gregory Dix said, “The tapestry of history has no point at which you can cut it and leave the design intelligible.” In other words, there is a plan in history. All of the manifold events of history form one great plan.

Now that proves a certainty of his decrees but they are efficacious -- certainly efficacious. I think, also, the evident linking of these events together in the progress of history shows that. All things are intimately connected and this is particularly seen when we realize that some of the most important events that have ever happened among men have depended upon the most trivial of things. For example, I think we all would agree, because most of us have lived through this event, that one of the great events of the twentieth century was the escape of the British army across the channel during World War II. They were facing certain defeat. In fact, almost all agree that if Hitler had bothered to cross the channel or to make some attempt to do so, he still would have eliminated the British army from the field and taken Britain. And wasn’t it a very striking thing that the very moment that the British forces arrived at the channel, it should be a day that was so



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overcast -- I think it was about three days -- that the great majority of the forces of the British army were unable to cross and all kinds of boats -- that little twenty mile or so channel. Now we look back and see how important that was. Churchill has written about how important it was, just a trivial event, but tremendously important apparently in the plan of God. What would have happened if Hitler had won World War II that quickly?

Or take the Battle of Gettysburg; this is a more painful, even. Think of Gettysburg -- Lee having made his trip into Pennsylvania -- now at Gettysburg everything seems right for the conquest of that area of Pennsylvania and perhaps a death blow to the Union -- I’ve often wondered whether it was really God’s will or not; but that’s the Southerner speaking, you see. At any rate, why was it that Stuart was unable to get back to the line? Was it just an accident? Probably not, probably it was the providential hand of God.

Or something even more painful -- why was Stonewall Jackson killed by one of his own men -- a stray bullet, a man that probably held the hopes of the Confederacy? Why? Well, the southern explanation would be that God said I want the North to win and I can’t win unless Jackson’s dead. So we’ll have to get rid of Jackson. But as we look at it from the standpoint of Scripture, we would have to say that it was the will of God. It was God’s will that the North should win. And Jackson -- a great man, a great Christian -- lost his life. Perhaps God said, “I want Jackson with me.” And -- a trivial event, just a chance bullet, but with Jackson’s death, probably went Lee’s possibility of victory. And Lee, himself, seemed to recognize that. So the decrees of God are certainly efficacious and His perfection, the unity of His plan, the evident linking together of all events show this.

Finally, the decrees relate to all events. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 11 -- remember that text? -- “Who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.” Now notice, worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. All things, not some

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things, all things are worked according to the counsel of God’s will. Some events are necessary, some events are contingent, acts of free agents, some are good, some are evil; all are included in the plan of God.

Now this is evident, I think, from the unity of the divine purpose. For example, if a general plans a campaign, he must plan for all of the details of that campaign. An inventor planning a machine must design all the parts. Suppose an inventor designed a machine but just designed the outward parts leaving the inner ones to chance? Why it’s ridiculous. When you design a machine, you must design every part so that every part works and every part has its place. So in the plan of God, you cannot have plan if you do not have plan for all events. And so within the teaching of Scripture and within logic, we must come to the conviction that the decrees relate to all events. This is proved by the universal dominion of God. He controls all things, and consequently, his decrees extend to all things.

We could argue this from the certainty of the divine government. You could not have redemption promised if God did not control everything. You could not have prophecy if God did not control everything. How is it possible for God to predict that something will come to pass if he does not control events? How is it possible for God to predict the cross if he does not control events? It’s impossible. Have you ever tried to predict anything? You see how difficult it gets and then when you realize that God has looked down through the years and he has predicted with precision the precise way in which events shall take place. And I think you can see that his decrees must relate to all events.

And also -- I think -- from Scripture itself we can see this. Will you turn with me to Matthew chapter 10, verses 29 through 31. It’s a rather startling thing some times to look at verses of Scripture which perhaps do not have any apparent significance until you try to think of such a thing as systematic theology and you’ll notice that some of these

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verses that don’t seem to have significance suddenly become very significant. Matthew 10, verses 29 through 31 says, “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father.”

Now isn’t that a trivial thing? Not a single sparrow falls to the ground outside the knowledge and will of God. Isn’t that an amazing thing? You would think God would not be bothered with something like that. Some years ago when I was in Birmingham before I was -- after I was converted but before I came to Dallas Seminary -- I had a Christian friend. He was in the insurance business; I was in the insurance business. And he had a wife and his wife was a Christian but she was one of the oddest Christians I’ve ever known. She was a Presbyterian too, a member of our church. And she was really odd but she had a very simple faith. And God honored her faith and people used to snicker at her behind her back. But she really did some things that counted for the Lord. She used to like to say that God controlled her life. And around her friends, she was a joke for that reason. She would say, “When I go to town, I look for the parking place that God had provided for me.”

Now remember one of our mutual friends is coming and telling me -- this person is not a Christian. You know, she is really odd. She thinks God finds parking places for us downtown. Can you imagine that? Do you think God is concerned about parking places? And I was such a young Christian, I said, “I don’t know if God is or not.” I think I was kind of embarrassed to be associated with her really. But really, what does this text say. There isn’t a single sparrow that falls to the ground without your Father. And then, the thirtieth verse is even more amazing, “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

Just think of it. Number one is gone a long time ago. I want to assure you. Just think. Now I don’t have many left but I have too many for me to number. And every one in my head is numbered. Just think of that. It’s what that text says. “Fear not

therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.” In other words, if God cares for the sparrows, he surely cares for me. The point is, as far as we’re concerned, is that the decrees of God relate to all events even the falling out of a hair from a graying head. And that’s amazing.

Now, of course, I think there are many other things that we could say -- that we could point to -- but the thing I want you to notice about this; that this appears to be a purely fortuitous event. You get up in the morning, you take your comb and brush and you brush your hair and some hairs fall out. That just seems to be chance but nevertheless, that is comprehended within the will and knowledge of God. Should make you think too, by the way, when it happens in the morning that this day is another day in which God is concerned for me and his will in my life. What these fortuitous events -- that is -- those that even elude of observation because you cannot even check on every hair that falls out of your head, even those things are predetermined. That’s what he says.

Now, of course, when we think about prophecies, when we think about the cross and all the things that God has set forth before us, why, it should be evident that his decrees relate to all events. And think of all things that the Bible says. The events that are evil, the events that are good; God knows all of them. He knows all about Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest, he knows about Cyrus the century before Cyrus even arrives on the scene, he’s already named in Scripture and it is stated what he should do, Joseph’s history is all set out in the word of God. All these things are designed to reflect the Son of God too, so they have double significance.

Suppose you had a God who could not control the future. What would you think about that God? You wouldn’t really worship that kind of God, would you? If the future was uncertain and if he could not control it, we wouldn’t have very much confidence in him. But if we know that he controls the future, then of course, he’s one into whose hands we can put the affairs of our life. That’s why it’s important that we have such a

God. He’s not surprised by anything because, you see, if there is one event that might surprise him and he didn’t know about it, it might concern me. And I wouldn’t want to be that person.

Now, we must -- the remainder of our time -- deal with a few objections because, of course, all good things have their objections and some of them are very honest and we must deal with them as honest objections. At the same time also acknowledge that we do not know everything either. It’s only natural that some of the things that I’ve been saying to you should arouse objection, so let’s deal with Roman III: The Objections to God’s Decrees. Some of you may be wondering why I’m not dealing with the subject of salvation. That subject in connection with sovereignty of God and our salvation comes up under the doctrine of election when we come to soteriology. We’re talking about broader things now; foreordination inconsistent with free agency. Foreordination, of course, is the prefacing beforehand of events.

So someone has said and we are inclined to think this -- all of us -- we believe then, that God has certainly decreed that all things shall come to pass in a certain way, then that seems to be inconsistent with free agency. Now, if an act to be free must be uncertain, then there is a contradiction. But a free act does not have to be uncertain, a free act may be certain. For example, a parent may be free to help his child out of a dangerous situation, or not. But it’s certain that he will. He’s free, but that act is certain. Free acts have been predicted; therefore, their occurrence is certain. Our Lord is free. He was free. It was certain that he would not commit sin.

The decrees of God secure the certainty of events. There is liberty as to the mode of their occurrence. If there is no foreordination, then God is constantly increasing in knowledge. For example, if God does not really know that a certain thing is to come to pass when it comes to pass, doesn’t he gain the knowledge? Yes, he gains the knowledge. All it’s saying, well it’s not that he knows just when it comes to pass, but he

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foreknows how it will come to pass. Well then, if he only knows that it will come to pass because he foreknows it, then logically, there was a time when he didn’t foreknow it. Therefore, he has come to additional knowledge.

If he had come to additional knowledge, then there was a time when he didn’t possess full knowledge. And if there was a time when he didn’t possess full knowledge, he’s not omniscient. Hence he’s not God. There cannot be that uncertainty. Some of my friends like to say, “I believe that God foreknew a certain thing would come to pass.” I don’t believe that he foreordained it, but that doesn’t help us out of the difficulty because, you see, if he foreknew something would come to pass, it’s just as certain as if he had foreordained it because God’s knowledge is certain, isn’t it? So an act that is foreknown is just as certain as one that is foreordained. So we don’t gain anything by that.

But why is an act foreknown by God? The Bible speaks of foreknowledge, why is it foreknown by God? Because he knows what man will do? No, his knowledge does not depend upon man. An act is foreknown by God because he has foreordained it. That’s why he knows it. It’s not foreordained because he foreknew, for then man is responsible for the decision of God. But it is foreknown because he has foreordained it, and that’s how he is so sure of his foreknowledge.

By the way, a completely free man would not be a good man. I would not want to have a completely free man around me. Do you know why? If he was really completely free, then one day he might decide that which is right, the next day, that which is wrong. A completely free man would have no more ethical moral value than a tossed coin. We cannot trust free men, men who are completely free. You know why? Because you can’t count on them, there’s no character. We’re able to trust he who makes right decisions and whose character is built upon that. That’s the kind of man in whom we have trust. A free man we can never trust. So the wholly unpredictable man is not an ethical moral man.

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Capital B: Foreordination of sin is inconsistent with holiness. Now there are two ways that we can deal with this. We may turn to the Scriptures and say this objection bears against the plain teaching of the word of God. It’s vain to argue that God cannot permit misery and sin if misery and sin exist. It’s vain to say he cannot foreordain sin if he foreordained the cross of Jesus Christ, because that was the sin of man in its greatest manifestation. So if we don’t look at the Scripture on facts, it’s obvious foreordination is a divine doctrine. Listen to what Peter says concerning Jesus Christ’s work, “Who was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have with wicked hand taken and have crucified.” In other words, there are two sides to the cross of Christ, both included within the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God: the salvation that results from the finished work and the manifestation of the sin in the death of the son. God is not the author of sin in the sense that sin has proceeded from him. But he has permitted sin because of the greater good involved in the permission of sin.

We might answer it also in this way; an agent is not responsible for all the necessary consequences of his acts. Because God has permitted sin, that does not mean he is responsible for sin. Higher ends are accomplished by what he has permitted. For example, suppose we have a judge who is getting ready to sentence a criminal. He may know this criminal fairly well. He may know that the moment he sentences this criminal, that this criminal is going to show bitterness and rebellion to the Lord. In fact, he is going to commit further sin but he knows that the decision is correct and just and right in accordance with the law. Now he cannot be held responsible for the reaction of the criminal to the law, which is righteous and just even though he knows the response that is to be made. Or a father may punish a son, and he may know that his son will be rebellious and resist, but he must do what is right. God cannot be held responsible for his acts in that sense.

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Foreordination destroys all motives to exertion. We’ve all heard this. If everything is foreordained, well then why don’t we all just sit back and relax? No need to do anything; it’s all going to come to pass. Now, of course, this supposes that God has determined the end without respect to the means. And so far as I can tell, while God has purposed that things come to pass, he has also purposed in the sense that it is his directive will that this be accomplished through individuals. And it is possible for us within the directive and permissive will of God to lose our reward by our failure to respond to God’s purposes. From his standpoint everything is certain and secure but from ours, who are the secondary agents, we may miss that which is best for us.

Furthermore, the fact that something is sure to come to pass acts as a motive to attempt to carry it out rather than to neglect it. In fact, I think I could argue this case very well; that the stronger the hope of success, the greater the motive. The less hope of success, the less disposition to exert one’s self. Just take two young men who are going in to business. Suppose they should be convinced there is very little likelihood that they shall succeed. Will they work harder? I doubt it. I think the first thing that came along to discourage them would probably throw them. But if they were convinced they could make a go of it, then a lot of things may come along to disturb them. But if they were convinced that they could succeed, well the greater the likelihood of their succeeding. So the idea that foreordination destroys all motive to exertion is foolish.

And it’s foolish also in experience. The greatest of our evangelists have often been the strongest of Calvinists. Did you know that? Do you remember George Whitefield? One of the great evangelists of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the friend of Wesley who was the Arminian. Whitefield was a great evangelist and came to this country, too. Some of the most tremendous evangelistic work done by a man who was a strict Calvinist, believed to all terrible things that the Calvinists believed, but literally spent his life exerting himself for what he was sure God would bring to pass. Take C.H. Spurgeon,



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recognized as perhaps the greatest preacher of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, one of the strongest of the Calvinists. Not to mention Augustine, Paul and others.

Capital D: Foreordination is fatalism. After all, if everything is going to come to pass, well then what’s the difference between that and the Mohammedan’s doctrine of fatalism? This past weekend I was in Houston for a weekend of meetings and the pastor of the church in which I was preaching is a man who is kind of wavering on the fence between Calvinism and Arminianism. He’s a very good boy, and I can’t imagine how he got through Dallas Seminary with -- and he’s not straight on these things -- but he’s not. Never really studied them too much. It surprised me. I was really startled. And we had some very interesting discussions. Thursday night -- I flew down Thursday afternoon, preached Thursday night, flew back. We talked about these things from the airport to the meeting and then from the meeting to the airport again.

And then when I got in the car, I recommended a certain book for him to read. So Friday afternoon when he picked me up at the airport again, he had the book with him, had been reading it. And so we talked about it and I said, “I don’t see how you can keep from being a fatalist.” And I think I got through to him. I tried to point out to him this; that there is no difference between fatalism and foreordination in so far as the certainty of events is concerned. Both preach the certainty of events.

But the difference is this; that fatalism comprehends no goal, foreordination comprehends a goal. Fatalism is the operation of laws which have no soul, have no spirit. The sequences are determined by an unintelligent linking of events. In foreordination, it is a wise, all-wise, all-loving Father who is responsible for the events in their sequence and in their accomplishment, and also in their prescience in the sense of his purpose and his design. So what we have is a loving Father who has infinite wisdom, who has out of his infinite wisdom planned for mankind and for his creation.

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Now you can expect that these shall be the best things for creation and the best things for us. It’s the difference between a machine and a man. Of course, fatalism leads ultimately to the denial of all moral distinctions and to despair. The other leads to filial confidence in a heavenly Father who is truly eternal.

So what are the values that result for foreordination? Our time is up but let me just state them; a sense of humility in the presence of the sovereignty of God, a sense of confidence in a God who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, and also there is involved in this a warning to the impenitent that his punishment is sure to come and that he must receive God’s salvation before it’s too late.

Time’s up, we must stop. I’m so thankful that I have a God who controls all the events of history and more particularly, the events of my little history. And I’m so glad that he’s planned it all in accordance with his wise counsel, perfect counsel and I can put my life in his hands and know that his purpose is the greatest purpose for me. It gives my life meaning and significance and a purpose, too.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for these great truths. We pray that as we ponder them, we may be led by the Spirit to understand them in a way that will bring honor and glory to Thee, as we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.