

"THE DECREES OF GOD"

God has sovereignly ordained all things according to the counsel of His will. God's decrees are eternal—formed before time. They areeffectual—incapable of being frustrated. They are exhaustive—encompassing everything. God's decrees are unconditional—dependent on no external cause. And God's decrees are perfect—reflecting His infinite wisdom. God sovereignly ordains all things and is not morally responsible for evil or sin. He ordains both the ends and the means by which those ends are accomplished. This doctrine has profound practical implications. God's decrees humble us by reminding us that salvation is entirely of grace. They comfort and steady us in suffering, embolden us in Christian service and missions, and ultimately move us to worship. We can trust that nothing happens outside God's wise purposes, nothing frustrates His plans, and nothing is wasted in His hands. This doctrine is meant to strengthen faith, not fuel argument.

// GETTING THE MESSAGE

:: Read **Ephesians 1:3–14**. What does this passage teach us about God's eternal purpose? How does God's sovereign plan shape the way we understand our salvation?

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:: Read **Isaiah 46:9–11** and **Daniel 4:34–35**. What do these passages reveal about God's sovereignty? Why is it significant that God's purposes cannot be frustrated?

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// GETTING THE MESSAGE

:: Read **Proverbs 16:33** and **21:1**. What do these seemingly ordinary examples teach us about God's sovereignty over both seemingly random events and the decisions of powerful people?

:: If God's purposes are perfect, what should we conclude when His providence seems confusing, painful, or unjust?

:: Read **Genesis 50:15–21**. How could Joseph's brothers intend evil while God intended good through the very same events? What does this teach us about God's relationship to human actions?

:: How can God's sovereignty and human responsibility both be true? Consider **Acts 2:22–23** and the responsibility of those who crucified Jesus. What does this passage teach us?

// GETTING TO CHRIST

:: Read **2Timothy 1:8–10**. What does it mean that God's grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began? How does this shape our understanding God's eternal decrees?

// GETTING TO CHRIST

:: Ephesians 1:10 says God's plan is to "**unite all things in Christ**". How does this reveal the centrality of Jesus in God's plan for history? What does this tell us about the ultimate purpose of creation and redemption?

:: How do the decrees of God assure us of the love of our sympathetic High Priest who personally knows, shares in, and sustains us through our suffering?

// GETTING TO YOU

:: Read **Romans 9:19–24**. Why might we object to God's sovereignty over human affairs? What might that objection reveal about our understanding of ourselves and our relationship to our Creator?

:: The doctrine of God's decrees teaches that God has ordained all things. How does this challenge both our tendency toward anxious control and our temptation toward cynical fatalism?

:: God's decrees are eternal, effectual, exhaustive, unconditional, and perfect. Which of these attributes do you find most difficult to understand or embrace? Why?

// GETTING TO YOU

:: If God ordains both the ends and the means, how should that shape our understanding of prayer? Why does God's sovereignty give us reason to pray rather than reason to stop praying?

// GETTING TO OTHERS

:: Read **Acts 13:48** and **18:9–10**. How does Christ's authority over all give confidence to the church's mission? Why should the doctrine of election encourage evangelism rather than discourage it?

:: How does God's sovereignty in salvation shape the way we approach evangelism? How should it affect our attitude toward those who reject the gospel or those who come to faith?

:: How does knowing that God accomplishes His purposes through appointed means embolden us to labor, sacrifice, pray, and persevere in gospel ministry? Where might this confidence change the way we invest ourselves in the work of the kingdom?