

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 – “Of God’s Decree”, Message # 18 –  
“Marred in the Potter’s Hand”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class  
by Pastor Paul Rendall, on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

**Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 7** – What are the Decrees of God?

**Answer:** “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.”

**Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 8** – How doth God execute His Decrees?

**Answer:** God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence.

*And, I would add – The Redemption of His people, and the judgment of the wicked, through our Lord Jesus Christ)*

**Paragraph 6** – As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so he hath, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto; wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

- 1) Ephesians 1: 4; 2: 10; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2: 13 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1: 2
- 2) 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5: 9 & 10 Titus 2: 14
- 3) Romans 8: 30 Ephesians 1: 5 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2: 13
- 4) 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1: 5
- 5) John 6: 64, 65 John 8: 47 John 10: 26 John 17: 9 Romans 8: 28 1<sup>st</sup> John 2: 19

**Paragraph 7** – The doctrine of the high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election; so shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.

- 1) Deuteronomy 29: 29
- 2) 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1: 4 & 5 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1: 10
- 3) Ephesians 1: 6 Romans 11: 33
- 4) Romans 11: 5, 6, & 20 Colossians 3: 12
- 5) 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1: 10
- 6) Luke 10: 20

### **1. All men are either vessels of mercy or vessels of wrath.**

**Romans 9: 18-24** – “Therefore God has mercy on whom He will, and whom He wills He hardens.” “You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault?’ ‘For who has resisted his will?’ ‘But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God?’ ‘Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ ‘Does not the potter have power over the clay from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?’ ‘What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory, on the vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?’”

**All men are clay pots, or vessels of God’s own fashioning.** Out of the same lump of common humanity, considered before time began by God, as fallen in Adam; he chose some, in Christ, to eternal life, to the praise of His glorious grace.

**He has the power to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor.** Both fulfill His purpose. The people whom He has mercy on, give Him honor and praise and adoration that, even though they did not deserve to be shown this mercy, they were shown it. They heard the gospel and believed it. They received Christ and they were saved. God makes the riches of His glory known to them by and through the grace which His Son purchased at the cross.

**Others hear the same gospel, and they do not believe it.** They do not think that they need Christ or to be saved. They refuse to heed the one preaching the gospel to them, and they refuse to think of

themselves as sinners who need to be saved. In this case, according to His purpose, God can show them mercy or pass them by. All of their lives they may know a measure of common grace. God causes his sun to shine on them and gives the rain in its season. He satisfies their hearts with food and earthly joys and gladness. Looking at them, we cannot see the purpose of God and therefore, it is good for us to pray for them to be saved. It is good to hope for their conversion to Christ and to continue to share the gospel with them as we can

**But let us remember this: No one can ultimately resist God's will, for He is all powerful.** Will a person question why he was formed the way that God wanted to form him? Let that person think over the fact that God knows them better than they do themselves. And that He says certain wonderful things in His word about the good things that He will show to those who will repent and believe in Jesus. Yours, if you are an unbeliever is not to try to figure out whether you are a person chosen of God or not; a vessel of mercy or wrath. Yours is not to judge God for desiring to make His wrath known. Yours is to believe that God has good will towards all people in Christ.

## **2. From the Standpoint of the Gospel – All Men are vessels marred in the Potter's Hand**

**Jeremiah 18: 1-6** – “The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, ‘Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.’ “Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel.” “And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again in to another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.” “Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?’ says the Lord” “Look at the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!”

**So, here we find Jeremiah being given a pictorial illustration of all men in their sins;** a potter is fashioning vessels of clay on a wheel. You will notice that it is called “making something at the wheel”. God wanted Jeremiah to know, and He wants us to know, that all men are marred in the Divine Potter's hands. All men are marred by sin as they come into this world, because of Adam's sin in the beginning of the world. Adam's sinful nature was passed on to all mankind descended from him, and so when God creates a person in the womb, He is working with clay that is already marred in his hands.

**God's work is always perfect. This marring was not at all God's doing,** but the result of Adam's bringing sin into the world. We therefore, are created in Adam's fallen sinful image and likeness. **Genesis 5: 3** – “And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

**Yes, God forms and fashions us in the womb to accomplish His purpose,** even though we are fallen creatures. Because each of us are born with Adam's sinful nature within us, we confirm his disobedience to God by our own sinful disobedience during the course of our own lives, unless Christ and His grace saves us from ourselves and our sins. If nothing changes, we will perish in our sins, which, once again, is not God's fault. It is ours.

## **3. God can remake a marred vessel into another vessel as seems good to Him.**

**Genesis 2: 7** – “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

All men are fallen in Adam. All bear his image and likeness. So, as vessels they must be re-formed to please God and fulfill His righteous purpose towards them. He must take the initiative.

**Ezekiel 36: 26 and 27** – “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

Vessels are people descended from Adam, who was formed from the dust of the ground. Vessels of mercy are those chosen before time began by God, and then called to Himself through hearing the gospel. The hard heart, the heart of stone is taken away, and God gives a heart of flesh. He puts His Spirit within the believer and causes them to walk in His statutes.

Seeing as all men are children of wrath before conversion, they must be born again. They must be remade as vessels; they must be given a new heart, and have a new spirit put within them. The clay pot, the vessel must be reformed in the inner man. They must, as vessels, be given the Holy Spirit and filled with the Spirit in order to glorify God; to walk in His statutes to keep them and to do them

**Isaiah 64: 8 & 9** – “But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand.” “Do not be furious, O Lord, nor remember iniquity forever; indeed, please look – we all are Your people!”

We need to understand that not only must the Potter remake the clay of our lives in the New Birth, but He must also continue to have His hands upon us, molding us and shaping us into the image of Christ. The prayer offered up here was the prayer of a believer who greatly desires God to sanctify Him; not remember their iniquity, but transform them into vessels who show forth the wonders of God’s having worked in them to bring them to the place where He is pleased to see Christ formed in them.

#### **4. God uses means – The preaching of the word concerning repentance and faith.**

**Ezekiel 18: 30-32** – “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, everyone according to his ways,” says the Lord God.” “Repent, and turn from all your transgression, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.” “Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.” “For why should you die, O house of Israel?” “For I have no pleasure in the death of the one who dies, says the Lord God.” “Therefore turn and live!”

**1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2: 1-6** – “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

It is prayer which is the means whereby God’s elect people can see God decree concerning who will be saved come to fruition.

#### **5. Vessels of Mercy will cleanse themselves from all dishonorable thoughts and actions.**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2: 20-22** – “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.” “Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the master, prepared for every good work.”

#### **6. God’s Purpose with wicked men is to gain honor over them.**

**Exodus 14: 1-4** – “Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea.’ “For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.” “**Then I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army,** that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.” “And they did so.”

**So, these Egyptians and Pharaoh were vessels of wrath,** fitted for destruction, because they hardened their own hearts, and then God further hardened them to their own eternal destruction.