***Children of God, No.2  
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The Children of God, section number 2. Romans 8:14-17. Romans 8:14 reads, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." This verse declares to us that the evidence of being a child of God is that one receives guidance from the Holy Spirit of God. God the Holy Spirit does not guide the unbeliever. No matter what rituals, no matter what prayers come from an unbeliever, they are of no help. God does not listen to unbelievers. God the Holy Spirit Himself gives only one dramatic direction in leading in guidance to the unbeliever, and that's relative to his understanding the Gospel and his need to believe it. And that's all that the Spirit of God does in leading an unbeliever. Beyond that, whatever the unbeliever does to get divine guidance, he will not have it.

God the Holy Spirit guides Christians, however, into the plan that God has for that believer's life. Now, the Christian indeed may go negative to this divine guidance at any point with consequent results. He may go negative to God's plan for his life for the whole life. He may waste his whole life in a profession that God never intended for him to be in. He may waste his whole life pursuing ambitions that God never intended him to fulfill. He may indeed completely ignore the guiding of the Spirit of God, but the guidance is nevertheless there.

Not every person, therefore, is a child of God, this verse indicates, but only those that are born again spiritually. There is, therefore, no such thing as the universal fatherhood of God, nor a brotherhood of man just because we were created by God. People are born spiritually dead, and they are morally guilty before God, and consequently, they cannot enter heaven on their own efforts. Personal acceptance and trust in Jesus Christ as one Savior from the penalty of sin results in regeneration, that is being born again, and results in entrance forever into the family of God.

So, those who are the sons and daughters of God are called upon to act accordingly. We are, the scriptures say, to imitate our heavenly Father in our thinking and in our conduct. The plan that God has for each of our lives includes appropriate thinking and appropriate conduct commensurate with the holiness of God. This requires, of course, a knowledge of what God the Father thinks, and requires therefore that we understand the teachings of scripture. We have to know the doctrines of the Word of God. This also requires the personal guidance of God the Holy Spirit into the will of God on a daily basis. The Christian must not block off that particular guidance. The objective of the Holy Spirit is to transform a believer into the image of Jesus Christ and thereby to maximize a Christian's blessings in time and in eternity.

So, what this has led up to is a very simple fact: if you are a child of God, you have direct guidance by God via the person of God the Holy Spirit through the scriptures. God has in that guidance and seeks to express in that guidance a detailed plan for each of us. Nothing is more important in the life of a Christian than to pursue the analysis of the plan that God has for his life and to follow it to the end. Those who do not do this will indeed muddle through life. They will indeed perhaps even think that they've had a very good life. But when they come into eternity, they will find that they had a very poor life, and they now have the rest of eternity to regret it.

**The Divine Decree**

This brings us to a very basic concept in the Word of God which we call The Divine Decree. The principle of divine guidance is based upon the fact that God has established a decree. When we talk about divine guidance, we talk about the leading of a child of God by the Holy Spirit of God into the will of God for that life. God does have a sovereign plan for each believer from eternity past. And I used the word "sovereign" to alert you to the fact that you do not have anything to say about the plan, nor did anyone else instruct God concerning His plan for you from the point of your conception. God is sovereign in establishing that plan. And this, of course, is a logical necessity of the sovereignty of God. If God is sovereign, the word "sovereign" means He is in total command. He decides everything. There is nothing that He does not decide. He decides when the sparrow is going to hop from one branch to the next. He decides every minute detail of everything that takes place in this universe and in your life personally. And so, the Bible tells us very clearly that God is aware of even when a sparrow falls to the ground. He knows that His plan is being executed, He sees the various parts meshing together, coordinating, and working themselves out. God has a plan.

Now, I'm getting into deep water this morning, and I hope we don't all drown in the process, but it's going to take some concentrating and some thinking about thoughts that are going to take us right to the very threshold of the limitations of human thinking ability. The smartest of you here are going to find yourselves staggered at a certain point of being able to go beyond where we can go. You're going to want to push one more step and you're going to find you're against a brick wall and you can't go any further. But you must not, because of that finite limitation of your mind, refuse to accept what the Bible teaches. God does have a sovereign plan for each believer.

**The Charismatic's View of Guidance by the Holy Spirit**

Guidance today is by means of the Bible, and the application of that, of God the Holy Spirit. God does not lead us today by voices from heaven. He does not lead us by visions that we get nor by electrical tinglings nor by omens of some kind. So when the young Oral Roberts on television says that you may have heard him that now that he has entered the realm of preparing himself to take over the Roberts empire, he has become the new healer in the family. And he is going around exercising his healing abilities. And several times, you may have seen him on TV, as I have, describe that when he feels God's healing going out from him, he tingles all over and then he flops around real rubber-like like that as he expresses this tingling effect.

The sad thing about that is that people who are into the occult, people who are into demonism know exactly what he is talking about. They precisely understand what he is referring to because they have experienced exactly that kind of electrical tingling feeling as they have communicated with the demonic world and found power flowing through them accomplishing the things of Satan. The poor man does not understand that God does not speak through tingles or omens or voices or visions. He speaks through the Word of God. And because He is in error on a basic point of scripture (God the Holy Spirit and His work in the age of grace and how He functions now in contrast to how He has functioned in days past), he is in total confusion and taking a lot of simple-minded people down with him.

I had a call from a taper in Huntsville, Alabama this week wanting to pursue some questions that were disturbing him about the charismatic movement. He could not believe what he sees. He could not believe what he hears. He could not believe that these people are absolutely what they seem to be, and I assured they were exactly, he was right on track, and that because he knew enough about the Word of God, he saw the total incompatibility of what was being done in the name of God. And I could just tell the shock in his voice as he spoke to realize that these people were so far out in left field in Satan's territory and assuming they were the most enlightened people spiritually.

How often have I heard charismatics say on The 700 Club, "We are the most enlightened? We are the most spiritual. We are the most knowledgeable people in the Word of God." When in fact, the reversionism that they suffer under has blinded them to their reality. Well, God does have something to say to us. He does have guidance to us. But Satan comes in and he gives us these nonsensical, secondary, false ways of seeking that guidance and seeking that plan so that we're out chasing rabbits and getting nothing done for the Lord - wasting our lives. He uses the doctrines of scripture to guide us into the will of God. God does not accommodate His methods to the disoriented weirdos with their emotions running amuck claiming messages from God.

On the Jimmy Swaggart program, in his Bible study class the other day, I noticed he was teaching the people that there are prophets today. We have prophets speaking today. And he was using Ephesians 3:11 which speaks about the fact that one time God did give these gifted men of prophets who bore direct communication with God, and that's what a prophet does. And there he is telling people we have prophets from God. Well, he has to, because every Tom, Dick, and Harry and every Mary, Jane, and Annie stands up in the charismatic services and is spewing forth what they call "prophesies" from God, giving prophetic utterances. It's a pity they don't write all those down, because that would be more scripture for us to all add to our Bible to enjoy these dramatic, prophetic utterances. No, there are no prophets, and God is not going to speak to you through some human prophet. He is going to speak to you through the Word of God, if you know it, and through the guidance of the Spirit of God accordingly.

The will of God is the plan of maximum blessing and fruitfulness for a believer's life in terms of the abilities that God has given you, in terms of the temperament type that you are, in terms of the level of IQ that you've been born with, in terms of your physical capacity. All these elements tie into God's special plan for you. The Holy Spirit leads the Christian to develop the spiritual capacity to be able to receive the plan of God for his life.

**The Past Tense Phase of Salvation (Justification)**

Very briefly, we should pause to review the fact that there are three phases in salvation, in order to peg ourselves relative to divine leading. Phase number one is in the past. Salvation in terms of the past. In terms of the past, salvation is summed up in the word "justification." That is the past aspect of our salvation. The Bible refers to human salvation as something which has been completed in the past for every believer. For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:18, we read, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved [in the past tense] it is the power of God."

This past tense salvation is perfect because it is entirely in divine provision so that it cannot be reversed. Since man is not involved, man cannot contaminate it. Therefore, the Lord Jesus in John 10:28-29 says, "And I give unto them eternal life [those who believe in Him]; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." So that once we are saved, the salvation in the past is perfect.

**The Present Tense Phase of Salvation (Sanctification)**

Now, past tense salvation has to with the subject of sanctification, which is what we're interested in this morning, and we call that positional sanctification. Positional sanctification. This has to do with our being set apart to a divine plan in the past. In 1 Corinthians 6:11, we read, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The verses immediately preceding this talk about a lot of evils that are expressed through the sin nature: drunkenness, stealing, coveting, revilers, extortioners, and so on. But, in verse 11, he says, "That's in the past. You are now justified, and because you are justified, you enjoy positional sanctification.

Then there is phase two of our salvation, and phase two is present tense. The word summarizing present tense salvation is sanctification. That's the primary element. The Bible refers to human salvation as something that exists in the present as freedom from the reigning power of the old sin nature. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, we read, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." It's speaking about a current standing of the believer who was chosen for salvation that he is now in a position of sanctification before God - one who has been set aside for a certain kind of life. The Christian who is filled with the Spirit is not controlled by the sin nature anymore. Salvation in the present tense is tied to the concept of salvation as experiential sanctification. We have this in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." Experiential sanctification means our daily life. Because salvation has a present application, it is expressed in our current experiential sanctification.

**The Future Tense Phase of Salvation (Glorification)**

Then there is phase three of salvation that has to do with the future, a future aspect of salvation, and it is summarized by the word "glorification." The Bible refers to human salvation as something in the future when all of us are going to be made sinless and be transformed into the very image of Jesus Christ in terms of His character. 1 John 3:2 says, "But beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see Him as He is." The work of eternal salvation is entirely the product of God and depends upon His faithfulness alone for us to realize it. It does not depend upon human faithfulness. Your faithfulness does not determine the future of your salvation. It is entirely a work of God.

So, in Philippians 1:6, we read, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Future tense salvation deals with sanctification in terms of what we call "ultimate sanctification." That means that the time is coming when we will be totally free from all sin. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 says, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." So that all aspects of your being - your spirit, your soul, and your physical body - will enjoy the ultimate sanctification, the phase 3 factor of our salvation.

**Pursuing the Will of God for One's Life**

Now, getting back to apply this now to Romans 8:14. Romans 8:14 is speaking about this phase - phase two - the present phase of our salvation with experiential sanctification. That's what we're talking about. It is the thing that Paul refers to specifically in Philippians 2:12-13 where Paul says, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." In Philippians 2:12, the Philippian believers have devoted themselves to the pursuit of the will of God in experiential sanctification while Paul was there teaching them. They tried to live day by day according to the Word of God. That's what they pursued. Their sanctification in experience, or being set aside to the Word of God, in their experience. Paul says, "Now that I am absent from you here in prison in Rome from where I am writing this letter, I want you not to neglect your continued pursuit of experiential sanctification. Because if you pursue this, you are pursuing the will of God. And the will of God for your life is the most important thing that God has prepared for you."

So Paul commands them - not asks them - commands them here to work out phase two of their salvation in terms of their experiential sanctification so that the will of God can function in them. The means, then, to carry through to an ultimate goal is what Paul is pursuing. How to carry ourselves through in our experiential salvation. Salvation worked out now in terms of earning or retaining our salvation but to attaining the will of God in experience. That's what he means to "work out your salvation in fear and trembling" - to carry yourself through to God's ultimate goal. Now, this deals with learning and utilizing doctrine after salvation in order to reach the high ground of spiritual maturity and the capacity for receiving God's blessings. The will of God, furthermore, is to be pursued with fear and trembling.

It is a great tragedy when Christians are not in awe of the consequence of missing God's plan for their life. It is true that most Christians do not give a great deal of thought to that, nor do they have a great deal of concern as they wake up in the morning, that they should spend that day in a way that their life is frittered away, that they have not concerned themselves with what is God's plan for that day. It is a great tragedy when a Christian misses God's purpose for his life because of his indifference for experiential sanctification. Maximum blessings from God in personal fulfillment and happiness is subject to fulfilling our divine mission, just as Jesus Christ fulfilled His and for which He was exalted.

Now, of course, Satan directs a great deal of attack against the idea of pursuing God's plan by offering attractive, glamorous, reasonable alternatives which only serve to fulfill selfhood rather than the plan of God. There are even Bible teachers who seek to deny that God really has a plan for every life. Because if God has a plan for your life, just think for a moment what that means. If God has a plan, then that means that all the details are in there. And if all the details are in there, it means you've got a perfect setup. The best of all possible, from this point of view, of divine omniscience.

Now, that's very sobering. If you're a young person and you're not married, suddenly you realize there's somebody out there in this vast group of human beings, that the divine plan has fingered as the one I'm to marry. Serious consequences if you miss. Sufferings and tragedies beyond belief if you miss. There is in God's plan a way for me to earn my livelihood. Serious consequences if I miss it. And I go off on a tangent on something else. Now, you can multiply this in every aspect of your life. It's something indeed that a thoughtful Christian will take very seriously.

In Philippians 2:23, Paul indicates the pursuit of God's plan is a work of God in the believer. He says, "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." God the Father works in the Christian through God the Holy Spirit to execute His divine plan. God creates the will or the desire to follow God's plan, and then He provides the capacity to execute it. He wills in us to do His will, and to do it in terms of what pleases God. It's just His good pleasure. God wills His plan in our will and then carries us through to fulfillment if we don't kick the thing over, if we don't foul the setup by our resistance. The purpose of this divine leading and enablement is to fulfill God's good pleasure.

Ah, now there's a basic guideline. What will fulfill God's good pleasure? Oh, I know what will fulfill God's good pleasure: for me to get a new car. That is absolutely - I gotta have one of these latest jobs. I can't go riding around in one of these old little things that everybody looks at and says, "Where did he ever get that?" Oh, it is the will of God for me to make another million dollars. I just know that's the will of God." Why do I know - well, that would please me. Wouldn't it please you to make a million dollars this week? Well, obviously if it would please you, it's got to be the will of God. Ah, it would be the will of God for me to be healthy as well as wealthy. Obviously, it would please me to be in good health and have full capacity. Wouldn't that? That would bring me great pleasure to have good health! That must be the will of God; it would please me. But what about the poor doctor? It's not going to please him if you feel all that good. That can't be the will of good for him for you to feel all that good. Personal pleasure equated with the will of God. No, it is not. Dramatic statement, "For it is God who works in you to will to do of His good pleasure."

And sometime, the doing of His good pleasure is going to be doing it surrounded by a lot of flak and a lot of turmoil and a lot of suffering. And who knew that better than the Apostle Paul. God wills His plan in our wills, and then he carries it to fulfillment. The purpose of this divine leading is His pleasure. The perfect, holy pleasure of God brings glory to Him. This pleasure is an expression, of course, of God's sovereignty. So God provides the believer's life with the goals, with the means in executing those goals, and with the results of Christian service that produce eternal rewards. These are the real blessings.

So, a Christian who is adjusted to divine holiness through the Word of God is the Christian who can receive divine blessings without personal injury. You see, God does have plans for some of you that include a position of power in life. He has plans for some of you that include the position of wealth. He has plans for some of you that includes a position of great influence. But if he gives you that without you having the capacity to bear it, you will use that to your self-injury and to the injury of others. And so that's why so often some of the very things that we are capable of achieving in life keep alluding us. About the time we think we have achieved something, it slips out of our hands because God is jerking it back and saying, "You don't have the spiritual capacity for me to let you have this much money, for me to let you have this much influence in life, for me to let you have this much power to exert. And I'm going to pull it away from you."

Now, how are you going to get to the point where that blessing can be given? When you have reached the high ground of spiritual maturity so that you have built in you through the Spirit of God's leading of the Word of God in your life, the capacity to have these things without self-destruction or the destruction of others. That is the will of God for you. And how will that be accomplished? When God the Holy Spirit produces something through the absolute righteousness of God that He can bless.

For this reason, you must be aware of the fact that even good things that you may do that are legitimate in life in terms of Christian service, the exercising of Christian priesthood, are not necessarily under the blessing of God. You may be giving money to God's work out of resentment, out of seeking to be glorified, out of some other object than the fact that the Spirit of God has led you to do it to the glory of God. In that case, it is not going to result in either temporal or eternal blessings. It is a thing that you are obliged indeed to do, but doing it without the spiritual capacity to do it under the leading of the Spirit of God, gains no benefit to you. God can only bless what comes from His production in us. And when you realize that, then you realize how puny and small and limited is the capacity that we have to receive God's blessings. We are struggling in life, we are moving along, we're doing this, we're doing that, but we don't do the main thing to put ourselves in the position where God can pour out blessings upon us. And until He has something of His righteousness in us that He has produced an expression of, He can't have a target for His blessing.

**The Decree of God**

Absolute righteous functioning in the Christian acts like a magnet attracting the divine blessings and producing eternal rewards. The will of God into which a Christian is led by the Holy Spirit is then based upon the sovereignty of God. God's sovereignty means that he's the absolute authority in the universe who is subject to nothing but His own holiness. He cannot violate His own integrity. God's sovereignty, His absolute authority, is expressed in what the Bible calls and what we theologically refer to as the decree of God. That's the total plan. The whole plan of God.

Notice a few scriptures. In Acts 15:18, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the age." "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the age." What does that mean? That means that God decided what He's going to do, so He knows everything that's going to take place.

Ephesians 3:11 says, "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." God has as purpose relative to His Son. How old is it? It always existed; it is an eternal purpose. That's an expression of God's sovereignty.

The Old Testament was very clear about this concept. Job 28:26, "When he made a decree for the rain, And a way for the lightning of the thunder." He made a decree. He made a decision. That's what it means in terms of decree. He made a plan that controlled the extent of the lightning and the rain and so on.

In Psalm 2:7, we read God the Father saying, "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto thee, 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee [speaking concerning Jesus Christ].'" In Psalm 148:6, we have, "He hath also established them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass."

So you see, we're dealing with a biblical word when we speak about the decree of God, and the decree of God is the total plan that God has for the universe - every creature in it: human, angelic, animal, the whole thing. The decree of God, in short, is His eternal purpose with respect to all things in His creation. It is His eternal and absolutely perfect purpose with respect to all things in His creation. The plan of God is based on His omniscience by which He has proceeded in all His acts, and God does this apart from any advice, apart from anything outside of Himself.

Now, we are seeking to establish firmly that God is in charge. Because if God is really this much in charge, then that puts a whole different picture on what you and I do with our lives. Because I guarantee you that if we try to outwit Him, if we try to outmaneuver Him, if we try to outflank Him, we're going to be sorry for it. We're going to be due. We're going to consequences.

Isaiah 40:13-14 say this, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice, and taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding." And, of course, the answer is, "No one!" Who has taught God? Who has created His character and His essence? Who has told God that love is the right thing and hate is the wrong thing? Who has told God that any of these qualities of truthfulness is the right thing, telling a lie is a wrong thing - these things that characterize him? No one. This is His character; all His decisions have been made apart from Him consulting any of us.

So, you see what idiots we Christians are - we puny little creatures - when we try to advise God. Oh, we don't pretend that we're doing that. We don't come up and say we're doing that. We only act like we're advising Him. We act like we're telling Him where to head in, and don't kid yourself that we don't. We made it very clear to Him that this is the course that we're going to follow, and we expect Him to understand how we expect Him to respond.

Remember the decree of God. The pattern is set, and it's irrevocable. God comprehended all the details, you see, of all the possible plans of creation and for mankind, and then He proclaimed the perfect one as His decree for His own pleasure. He knew all the possibilities, and He picked the one which His good pleasure chose to pick. And it's the perfect one.

Now, be careful that you do not fall into the trap that you presume that God's decree originate from his foreknowledge of events. This is a word that a lot of people get real fouled up on. Foreknowledge means just what it looks like - knowing ahead of time. Do not think that God established His decree on the basis that He knows ahead of time what's going to happen. Now, you and I know very well from the words that the Bible uses, words like "election," "called," "chosen," relative to each of us and our salvation, that the only way you're going to heaven, if you are going to heaven, is because out of the mass of lost humanity of Adam's race, God chose you.

Now, some of you may sit here, and you may be very religious. And some people who listen to these tapes may be very actively religious people who are not at all born again. And if they are not born again, they are not born again because they have not been chosen by God. Now, why have they been elect and chosen and called? Because God could look down the corridors of time and say, "Well, there's Mary Adams. She did not accept the Savior. My decree declares that she is lost. Oh, here's Sam Jones." God looking down the corridor of time, "Well, looky there, he did accept the Savior." And so, God's foreknowledge, looking ahead, because He can look ahead and see, He knows what's coming, He says, "In my decree, I'll put Sam Jones down as saved." Wrong!

Foreknowledge would imply, you see, that God is having to learn something. It's when God looked down in His omniscience and then He discovered that you are going to pick salvation, and then he says "Oh, now I know you're going to be saved." No, see, that would say that He is not omniscient. Before you get foreknowledge, you have the decree of God which is based on His sovereignty which is guided by His omniscience. The reason Mary Adams is not going to heaven is because God, in His sovereignty, exercising his omniscience of what is the best choice, the best decree, declared Mary Adams is not going to heaven, Sam Jones is. He decreed that; now, God knows it. That's what foreknowledge means. Foreknowledge is simply telling us what the decree already established.

Now, that raises some questions in your mind, doesn't it? I can tell you this: that the Bible never says that anybody is sent to hell by God. So don't push it that far. Now, we're coming up against the brick wall. We are told in the Bible that whosoever will may come. We are told in the Bible that nobody wills to come, there is none that seeketh after God - no, not one. Now, isn't that interesting? Whosoever will may come. There is none that seeketh after God - no, not one. Well, how in the world is anybody then exercise His will to believe and get into heaven? Would you like to know that - how they join? So would I. So don't ask me. Now, we're up against a brick wall.

But I know this: that God says, "Whosoever will may come," so you are responsible for going to hell or going to heaven. I do know this: that you're not going to go to heaven unless He has called and chosen you and by His decree has declared you to be in the family of God. And thus His foreknowledge knows that's where you're going to be. And somehow, we fall back, realizing that the justice of God will do what's right. He will be fair. He will not violate His absolute righteousness. We do know that somehow in a mysterious way, at the cross of Jesus Christ, the volition of man and the decree of God meet. That's where they meet. We make the decision, and the Bible says you are responsible for that decision, and you will bear the consequences of having accepted Christ or having rejected Him. And you will bear the consequences for every other move you make.

You see what we're headed for? We're headed for the fact that God has a plan for your life. He has a path out here, and it leads to the clouds of eternal blessing. He has another path for you, and you may choose to follow it, and it leads to the turmoils of suffering. Now, exercise your volition. This is the plan of God. You may choose to go someplace else, but both are in the decree of God. And you're not surprising Him; you're not outwitting Him. But the Bible is very clear: if you do not seek to know the detailed plan of God for your life - and the sooner the better, the younger the better - then you can go ahead and make choices that are accommodated in the overall decree of God which will resort to your suffering, your loss, your disappointment, and worst of all to your eternal loss in terms of reward. Or you can take a path that's going to lead you up, up, up to that which you are going to take with you for eternal happiness beyond anything you can imagine or comprehend.

So, God's decree does not originate from his foreknowledge of events. God did not foreknow something that would happen and then decree it. Events take place because God has first decreed them, and thus He has foreknowledge of their existence. Foreknowledge, then, you see, makes nothing certain of occurring; it merely perceives what God's sovereign decree makes certain. Since God is sovereign, there is no chance happening in the universe; He decrees it all. You should understand that. There is no chance happening in the universe, and there is no chance happening in your life. That decree of God, that plan of God, that purpose of God, is eternal, and it's unchangeable; it's immutable.

People change their plans; God does not change His plans. People change their plans because they're unable to execute what they started out to do. People change their plans because they get more information so they get a better perspective and they see a different course is better to take. God doesn't suffer from any of that. He does not change His plan; the decree is inevitable.

Now, it's not clear to us, as I say, why some elements are included in the divine decree or the relationship between them. Why God, in His decree, permitted sin to enter the human experience, to enter the angelic experience, with all of those consequences. But within the decree of God, you can be sure sin was included. And it was included on the basis that it is just and fair, and man's volition is there functioning, yet that volition is not going to outwit or frustrate God. So, the decree of God includes the plan that He has designed for each person's life. This plan is the basis for our being led as a believer by God the Holy Spirit. When we talk about divine guidance, what we are asking for is for God the Holy Spirit, step-by-step, to unravel the decree of God for us personally. That's what we're asking Him to do.

All events related to your life are known to God, and I'm happy to say that all the problems that you may be experiencing at this particular point in time have already been solved in the decree, because in that decree of God, there's no loose ends. Everything is resolved. Everything is tied up neatly. So again, what's your problem? There's an answer in the decree of God, and this is where the guidance of God the Holy Spirit comes into the picture. This plan, the on that God has in your life, is the only one that really works for a Christian. We are in good hands when we commit ourselves into the hands of the will of God, and that is the objective that we pursue. This is the thing that above all else we should seek.

So, you see, it's not very smart to be too aggressive, to be too pushy about the ideals and the concepts and the desires that we may personally have. There is a question that you should ask yourself: whether God wants you indeed to be earning another million dollars. Whether God indeed wants you to pursue again further a certain ambition. Whether God wants you to add another room on your house. Whether God wants you to update the condition of your boat. Whether God wants you to expand your social life. Whether God wants you to do to all these myriad of things that click off the moment-by-moment time of your life. And if He does not, then you have squandered a golden opportunity. Now, eventually, he'll bring you around. Eventually, the plan and the decree that He has for you is going to be narrowing down to those objectives that He has for you. Painfully, if necessary, but it will be executed.

And so, we go through life and we made choices that are bitter choices, and we look back and say, "Why in the world did I ever do that? How could I have ever been so stupid?" I'll tell you how. Because you were not concerned with seeking from the Spirit of God the decree of God relative to that particular issue. You went running off amuck on your own and telling God that this was from Him. That's what I mean by these people who run around in an emotional, experiential-ordered relationship in their lives and declare that this is how God is working. And I'll tell you, He will not adjust His methods to their assumptions. God has a decree. God has a plan. You are included in the decree. All the details are there, and each day they're all clicking off one after another. Wouldn't it be nice to walk in compatibility to that plan and to that decree?

Now, we've come to the point where we need to delve a little more deeply into the specific nature of the decree of God - a little further exploration of this awesome doctrine, and this awesome fact, and this awesome reality. And then to look in scripture and see a few biblical applications of the divine decree and human volition functioning within it. And we shall do that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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