

The Ordo Salutis

The Order of Salvation

A Study

As of: 1/17/2021

Step 1. The Decree of God

Decree: *A formal and authoritative order, especially one having the force of law*

But as it pertains to God- the word, “Decree” means: *The eternal Purpose of God, by which Events are fore-ordained.*

So, how does the Bible teach us this concept?

Psalm 2:7

I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.

Isaiah 46:9&10

9 “Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me,

10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;

11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.

The Acts 2:22&23

22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—

23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

Romans 8:28-30

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Ephesians 1:7-12

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 3:8-12

8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;

10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

There is Only One Divine Decree

When human beings decide something- that Decision is made in accord with what that person knows and wants at that time. And that is because both our Knowledge and Desires (Wants) are *finite*. We know very little about our current situation; we have forgotten most of the past; and we know absolutely nothing about the future. And so, any wise Decision that we make always has “caveats” or “contingencies” attached to it- to provide for “unseen circumstances” that may arise over which we have no control. So, our Knowledge is “successive” in that it is based on what we know now plus what we *continue* to learn as we live our lives. And that means that our Comprehension about *anything*- is *always* incomplete.

But God has no such limitations. God’s Knowledge and Desires are both *infinite*- in that God Himself is Omniscient. So, while we discover new things almost daily- God already knows *everything* about *everything*. And that means that God’s Knowledge is “immediate” and “simultaneous”. So, God’s Comprehension about everything- is always fully complete and includes the Past, Present, and Future.

And that means that when God decides something or makes a Decree- it has several Qualities about it that are unique to God:

- God’s Decree is always one (singular)
- It is always a fully comprehensive and simultaneous Act

The great German Reformed theologian, Louis Berkhof (1873-1957) said,

“Though we often speak of the decrees of God in the plural, yet in its own nature the divine decree is but a single act of God. This is already suggested by the fact that the Bible speaks of it as a *prothesis*, a purpose or counsel. It follows also from the very

nature of God. His knowledge is all immediate and simultaneous rather than successive like ours, and His comprehension of it is always complete. And the decree that is founded on it is also a single, all-comprehensive, and simultaneous act. As an eternal and immutable decree it could not be otherwise. There is, therefore, no series of decrees in God, but simply one comprehensive plan, embracing all that comes to pass. Our finite comprehension, however, constrains us to make distinctions, and this accounts for the fact that we often speak of the decrees of God in the plural. This manner of speaking is perfectly legitimate, provided we do not lose sight of the unity of the divine decree, and of the inseparable connection of the various decrees as we conceive of them.”

The Providence of God

One good way for us to understand the “Decree of God” is to also understand God’s Providence. The word “Providence” is an amazing word- even though it is rarely used or discussed much anymore. And that is a shame because understanding this word will give us a better comprehension of how God operates throughout His Creation.

The word, “Providence” comes from the word “provide” which has two parts:

1. “*Pro*” (Latin: “forward” or “on behalf of”)
2. “*Vide*” (Latin: “to see”)

So, on a shallow reading- many people think that “Provide” would mean: *to see forward or to foresee*. But “Pro-vide” (Latin: *pro-veeday*) actually means: *to supply what is needed; to give sustenance or support*. And so, the noun “Providence” means: *the sovereign Act of God in providing for; sustaining; and governing the Universe*. And nowhere is this demonstrated more than in the Salvation of lost souls. And there are two reasons for this:

- A. Linguistically
- B. Theologically

A. Linguistically

Linguistically, “pro” not only means: *forward-* but it also means: *on behalf of*. So, the word, “pro-vide” actually means: *to see on behalf of*. But what sense does that make? The way this is used linguistically in English is when someone says: “*I’ll see to that.*” And when used this way- the phrase, “*see to it*” doesn’t have anything to do with vision, per se- it actually means: *to take care of or to provide for*. So, when someone says, “*I’ll see to that*”- they are not talking about literally “seeing” something with their eyes- but they mean to say that they will *provide for that* or they will *take care of that*.

In other words, they are “seeing” something with a specific Purpose in mind. And that “seeing with a specific Purpose in mind” results in specific Action being taken. So, “to provide” then is to “make provision for what you see”. “Seeing to” something is acting on behalf of something. And that is “providing.” Therefore- “Providence” is the sovereign Act of God “seeing to” the Order, Operation, and Maintenance of the entire Universe- specifically in Salvation. So, the Holy Bible teaches that God will “see to it” that all those chosen for Salvation will, in fact, be saved.

B. Theologically

Now when we move into Theology- there is also a reason to understand that “*seeing to*” something means “*providing for*”. For example- when Abraham was told to sacrifice his son Isaac- before they went up the mountain- young Isaac asked his father,

Genesis 22:7b

... where is the lamb for the burnt offering?

...and Abraham replied in faith:

Genesis 22:8b

... God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.

And not long after Abraham made that statement- God proved His Faithfulness and showed Abraham a ram caught in the thorns (**Genesis 22:14**). And in response to this Sovereign Provision-

Genesis 22:14b

... Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah (Yahweh) -jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen. (KJV)

Genesis 22:14

Abraham called the name of that place The Lord (Yahweh) Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided." (NASV)

Genesis 22:14b

... Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord (Yahweh) will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."(ESV)

Now the Name, “Jehovah” in this verse is actually the Covenant Name of God (Yahweh) that is used 6,825 times in the Old Testament. This Name was *transliterated* into English as “Jehovah” many years ago by Bible scholars who had insufficient tools and data.

The Jews considered this Name of God to be so holy- that they only used the letters “YHVH” (ho*hy+ the “Tetragrammaton”). The corresponding English letter “J” was used to replace the Hebrew “Y” in the earlier English translations of the Bible and the English letter “V” replaced the Hebrew “W” thus “YHVH” became “JHVH”.

This alteration of the Hebrew “Tetragrammaton” was pronounced “Jehovah” in English. A more accurate transliteration of “YHVH” would be to replace the English “V” with the Hebrew “W”- and keep the Hebrew “Y” thus making “JHVH” to be “YHWH” which is pronounced as “Yahweh” in English- which today is almost *universally* recognized by Biblical scholars as the closet English understanding of the Hebrew Covenant Name of God.

But the Hebrew word, “jireh” (**h~~a~~r=y**) used in this verse is a proper noun which, when added to “YHWH”, literally means: *the Lord will see to it.*¹

¹ The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament Copyright © 2003 by AMG Publishers.

So literally, Abraham relied to his young son,

“God *will see* for Himself the lamb.”

Now why does God’s “seeing” in Hebrew mean that He will “provide”? We can find the answer in one of the Characteristics of God that we previously studied. Back when we studied God’s *Omniscience*- we found that this Divine Attribute allows for God know everything about everything- past, present, and future. So, it is true to say that the God of the Bible “sees” and “understands” the future fully- *before* it happens.

But although God is totally Omniscient- that is not all that He is. We also found out that in *addition* to being completely Omniscient- the Bible declares clearly and repeatedly that God is also *Effectual*- meaning that God doesn’t simply passively *understand* what will happen at some point in the future- but God also orders, controls, and governs all of the thoughts and all of the actions and all of the decisions of all the people in the earth- past, present, and future- to such an extent- that He assures that His Perfect Will (Decree) comes to pass. And this “ordering” and “controlling” of all things- is called, God’s “Providence” or God’s “Decree”.

So, because of the *combination* of both God’s Omniscience and His Effectualness- God never simply “*sees*” without “*acting*”. God doesn’t simply “*know*” on an intellectual level that something will occur at some point in the future- while He sits back passively- allowing Man to struggle to try to carry out His Will. The Bible does not teach that. The Bible teaches that God actively *controls* and *orders* and *governs* all of the circumstances and all of the situations (including Man’s choices, actions, and desires)- even things we would call, “Evil”- in such a way that two things will always be true:

- ✓ Man will be held completely accountable for all of his thoughts, words, decisions, and actions and will be judged if he does not do the “right” thing
- ✓ That which God has determined (from before the foundation of the world) will happen- *exactly* as God has ordained it (God’s Decree).

And *both* of these two things will be carried out in such a way that God will be glorified! So, God *always*; and in all cases; remains absolutely Sovereign; while Man is always; and in all cases; held accountable by God for what he does.

So, as we have already studied- every “Good” thing that occurs is because God sovereignly and actively *caused* it to happen. And therefore, He receives all Glory for that. But every “Evil” thing that occurs- is because God sovereignly and passively *allowed* evil people to do *what was already in their hearts anyway*- and God chose to do one of two things:

1. He chose to *not* stop them at all
2. He chose to limit/alter/restrict the Evil they planned to do

... and yet, even though God allowed them to do what was already in their hearts to do- those people will be held fully accountable by God for the Evil they carried out.

So, even though God *could* have stopped them- He chose not to. Or He chose to merely *limit/alter/restrict* the Evil that they intended. But the Bible teaches that the only reason God allowed people to carry out the Evil of their heart was because by allowing that particular evil to be manifested- God brought forth a greater “Good”- that would NOT have been manifested had that Evil not occurred.

And this is true whether we are talking about the Salvation of unworthy sinners by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone (through the evil betrayal of Judas Iscariot) or the evil thoughts and actions of wicked people toward Job.

Job 1:1-2:10

1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.

2 Seven sons and three daughters were born to him.

3 His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

4 His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

5 When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts."

Thus Job did continually.

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.

7 The Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

8 The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."

9 Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"

10 "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

11 "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."

12 Then the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.

13 Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house,

14 a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them,

15 and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

16 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

17 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

18 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house,

19 and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.

21 He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

2:1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord.

2 The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.”

3 The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause.”

4 Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.

5 “However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face.”

6 So the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.”

7 Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

8 And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes.

9 Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!”

10 But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Ephesians 1:3-6

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

We must remember as we comprehend all of God’s Characteristics- that the one true living God of the Bible is *not* a passive Observer in the Universe. That concept of God is an ancient heresy called, “Deism” and is neither Biblical or Christian. The created Universe can neither exist at all; nor could it continue to function at all- without God actively and continually sustaining and maintaining it. And that includes the everyday decisions of all the people on earth. And so, wherever God is “looking and seeing”- God is “acting”. If God perceives- He performs; If He inspects- He effects; and where He patrols- He controls.

In other words, there is a profound and very wise and important Biblical reason why “Providence” does *not* merely mean: *Foreknowledge* but means: *the active and determined*

Sustenance and Governance of the entire Universe and all the people on earth. So, every time God “sees”, He “sees to it”. In other words- God’s “seeing” is *always* with a view to Him “doing”. And God’s “doing” *always* has- as its final and supreme Objective- that His Will be done and that He is glorified.

So, when we say that God exercises His absolute Sovereignty through the ongoing Ordering and Governance of the Universe- we mean to say that *the* single most important Objective in all of God’s Creation is that His Will is *accomplished*- not merely *desired*. And that will always and in all cases- result in God alone being glorified.

And we have to understand that *nothing* else matters to God as much as this one Objective. Therefore- God sovereignly Governs and Orders the Universe with this one single Objective *always* at the forefront of His Mind.

... to be continued