

The 1689 Confession of Faith, Chapter 5 – “Of Divine Providence”, Session # 7 – “God’s Being With David”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class, and presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 24th, 2019.

Paragraph 3 – “God, in his ordinary providence g) maketh use of means, yet is free h) to work without, i) above, and k) against them at his pleasure.”

g) Acts 27: 31,44; Isa 55: 10-11; h) Hos 1: 7; i) Romans 4: 19-21; k) Daniel 3: 27)

Paragraph 4 – “The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that his determinate counsel l) extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sinful actions both of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, which also He most wisely and powerfully m) boundeth, and otherwise ordereth and governeth, in a manifold dispensation to his most holy n) ends; yet so, as the sinfulness of their acts proceedeth only from the creatures, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or o) approver of sin.

l) Romans 11: 32-34; 2nd Samuel 24: 1; 1st Chronicles 21: 1; m) 2nd Kings 19: 28; Psalm 76: 10;

n) Genesis 50: 20; Isa 10:6-7, 12; o) Psalm 50: 21; 1st John 2: 16

We have been thinking about the subject of the Providence of God in relation to the Divine Concursus or Concourse. Concurrence is the Divine energy being operative in all that comes to pass. – Louis Berkhof I have given you three major points in relation to Divine Providence –

We have been looking at how, God by His Wise and Holy Providence, is with both the wicked and the righteous by a particular and immediate Concourse. Two weeks ago we looked at the Divine Concursus working in relation to wicked king Jeroboam who was standing before an altar that he had built; an altar that God did not approve of because Jeroboam was promoting idolatry among the people. When a prophet came and spoke to him about the sinfulness of what he was doing and how eventually He was going to raise up Josiah to burn the bones of false priests upon that same altar and that the sign to him would be that God would split that altar, he stretched out his arm and pointed his finger at the prophet and said – “Arrest him!” When he did this God withered his arm and he could not bring it back to himself. It was frozen in that position. He immediately became religious and asked that the prophet would pray to God to have Him restore his arm back to him, which God graciously did. By means of His Divine Concourse, God upheld Jeroboam in his sinful physical actions until that particular time when he wanted to deal with him to show him how he was not the ultimate judge or controller even of his actions; God was. God was “with” Jeroboam” upholding him in his physical life, while at the same time He hated Jeroboam’s wickedness and the sins that he was committing. He was not in the least approving of them, or “with” them, in participating in them at all.

Last Sunday we looked at the Divine Concourse “in” and “with” Elijah during the time of his great discouragement in 1st Kings 19: 1-18. He had confronted the prophets of Baal, and challenged them to prove that their god was God by telling them to call down fire from heaven upon the altar. They could not do it for God was not “with” them, or “for” them in regard to what they were trying to do. But He was with Elijah and sent down fire from heaven upon the altar and the sacrifices which were placed on it; water also being poured on everything to soak it really well, before he prayed. Elijah knew that God had successfully used him to prove to all Israel that the worship of the Baals was false and that God was the only true and living God, but he could not understand why God would not lastingly change the hearts of people in Israel, and why He would permit wicked Queen Jezebel to sending her troops after him to take his life. And so he fled.

Well, God knew that Elijah was discouraged and so He brought him to Mt. Horeb by the means of an angel instructing him and giving him food. God was “with” that food in an extraordinary way. Because in the strength that he received from eating that food, he went to Horeb, the mountain of God, which took

40 days and nights. That was God working “with” him, and “in” him. There, at Mt. Horeb, God demonstrated to Elijah certain tremendous acts of power. He broke up the rocks with a great wind, but the text there says that He was not “in” the wind. He then brought an earthquake which shook the ground, but the text says that God was not “in” the earthquake. And then He brought fire, the very element that He had used to prove Himself as real to all Israel on Mt. Carmel, and yet the text still states – “He was not “in” the fire. And then came the still small voice; the gentle blowing, and He was indeed in this. But He said to Elijah - “What are you doing here Elijah?” And Elijah repeated his mournful observation to the Lord once again – “I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword.” “I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.” God was teaching Elijah that it is not His way in salvation, usually, to work through great outward acts of power, to bring men to submission to Himself and to accomplish all of His purposes in relation to them. It is rather by the means of His word; that word which even though still and small in the heart, can speak there as God so wills it to be. We need to remember this ourselves, and trust that God is accomplishing all of His good purposes in relation to the salvation of men and the changing of their hearts.

Our Confession says that the Lord can work by means. He can make use of means, yet is free to work without means, above means, and even against them at his pleasure. He does this by the Divine Concursus. He chooses what He will be “in” and what He will not be “in”. He upholds and preserves all that He has created as long as He desires to preserve it. It strives with people over their sins and brings conviction of sin when He desires, and He saves and keeps the souls of all of His people, teaching them what He would have them to know and learn, being in their hearts and minds forever by His Spirit. As we have seen and shall see, we do not always know what God is “in” and what He is not “in” when it comes to the actions of men, but we do know this: He is not in the sinful actions of men, even if He does ordain and permit them to fulfill His great purposes.

Today, I want to show you how it is according to God’s Providential Purpose to change material things in the creation, and to change the hearts and minds of men, according to as He is either “with” or “in” His acts in relation to them. And that concursus, or Divine Providential acting is always done according to the particular reasons which are known only to Him. These acts are all done according to His Divine Decrees. Sometimes, the reasons are revealed to men personally or in the Scriptures. In any instance or person God may uphold the physical and material creature without being “with” that creature in an effectual spiritual sense to change their heart so that they will come to know Him. Still, He can, as we shall see in the next few minutes, use them, or he can be “with them” and “in them” to change them and use them as He wills to do so.

1. Let’s look first at king Saul, and how the Lord was “with him” for a time, and then later, because of his disobedience, he not only was not “with” him, but in His providence He sent him a distressing spirit to trouble him.

1st Samuel 10, verse 5, Samuel said to Saul – “After that you shall come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is.” “And it will happen, when you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying.” “Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man.” “And let it be, when these signs come to you, that you do as the occasion demands; for God is with you.” “You shall go down before me to Gilgal; and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and make sacrifices of peace offerings.” “Seven days you shall wait, till I come to you and show you what you should do.” “So it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart; and all those signs came to pass that day. “When they came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him; then the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.” “And it happened, when all who knew him

formerly saw that he indeed prophesied among the prophets, that the people said to one another, ‘What is this that has come upon the son of Kish?’ ‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’

I want you to see from this that God can be “with” an unregenerate man like Saul in certain ways to fulfill His purpose in regard to the kingdom, without His being “with” him and “in” him in terms of regeneration and giving him the gift of eternal life. Saul, for a time, became another man. It even says that God gave him “another heart”. (1st Samuel 10: 9) Saul even prophesied, and caused many to wonder whether he was one of God’s true children. But a few days later, when David kills the Philistine, and the women come out singing – “Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands, then Saul picks up the javelin to throw it at David and to kill him. But, we know from 1st John 3: 15 that no murderer has eternal life in him. So, in accordance with His Justice, God rejected Saul because Saul had rejected God’s word to him, in not utterly destroying the Amalekites, as it says in 1st Samuel 15: 18. God had been “with” Saul in certain ways, as king, to use his works to advance Israel’s interests, but He was not “in” his heart savingly, or “with” his works to own them and establish them in the way that He would be with David, because Saul’s heart was not right before Him. God had indeed chosen Saul as king to rule over the people, but it was in connection with the people’s sinful desire to have a king like the surrounding nations, instead of their wanting God to be their King. The people had had rejected God as being their King, God said to Samuel in 1st Samuel 8: 7.

God’s purpose in giving Saul to them to be their king was to show them that His purposes were wise and they were of greater importance to the wellbeing of their nation, than any of their selfish desires to have a king. Therefore, we ought to take notice of this, that God is not necessarily “with” or “in” that leader whom we might choose for ourselves without really thinking of what God is looking for in a man. He must be, as David was, “a man after God’s own heart”. And he must be a man who will not compromise the word of God to establish his own interests and further his own purposes. Rather, he must honor the Lord by actions of obedience coming from a heart that is loyal to God by trusting in Him in accordance with His word. It says in 1st Samuel 13: 13 – “And Samuel said to Saul, ‘You have done foolishly.’ “You have not kept the commandment of the Lord you God, which He commanded you.” “For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever;.” “But now your kingdom shall not continue.” “The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”

2. Keeping what we have just read in mind, let us now contemplate the Lord’s being “with” and “in” David.

1st Samuel 16: 14-23 – “But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him.” “And Saul’s servants said to him, ‘Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you.’ “Let our master now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is a skillful player on the harp.” “And it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well.” “So Saul said to his servants, ‘Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring him to me.’ “Then one of the servants answered and said, ‘Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the LORD is with him.” “Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, ‘Send me your son David, who is with the sheep.’ “And Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine, and a young goat, and sent them by his son David to Saul.” “So David came to Saul and stood before him.” “And he loved him greatly, and he became his armorbearer.” “Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, ‘Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight.’ “And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand.” “Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.”

Now, I want you to notice that if God did not grant repentance to a man like Saul it was not because He has not strived with Him in common grace by His Holy Spirit in all the events leading up to his rejection as king and his rejection in relation to eternal life and salvation. Samuel had anointed him on God’s

behalf, and he was even given some of the gifts and influences of the Holy Spirit. But let us understand that a person can be given gifts and influences of the Holy Spirit and still not know God. Matthew 7: 21 – “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name “ “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”