

**The 1689 Confession of Faith, Chapter 5 – “Of Divine Providence”, Session # 6 –
“Providence In and With”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class, and
presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 17th, 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 –

1. God not only is the First Cause in being the Creator and Preserver of All Things, He is the 1st Cause in the Governing of All Things.

2. God’s Providence is also seen in His ruling and directing second causes in such a way that they may accomplish the ends determined by Himself.

3. God by His Providence Governs by a particular and immediate Concourse.

Last week I showed you from 1st Kings 13: 1-6 that Jeroboam had to learn the hard way about the Divine Concursus; how God in His providence can at any time interfere with what He normally upholds in our physical being. Normally, most people do not think about God as doing this, or even being able to do it. But He often does it in ways which are too subtle for us to understand or comprehend. In the case of Jeroboam that we studied last week, it was obvious. Jeroboam had built 2 altars for false worship with 2 golden calves for the people to worship and he was leading them into idolatry. So God sent a prophet to confronted him with a prophecy of how God would raise up a king named Josiah who would bring such great reform that this altar which Jeroboam had set up to please the people with false worship, would have the bones of those who sacrificed upon it, burned on it, and the sign to Jeroboam was that the altar would split apart by an invisible hand, and the ashes on it poured out. Jeroboam was angry with this prophet and his words and so he said – “Arrest him!” As he said this he stretched out his hand and pointed toward the prophet, but God instantaneously caused his arm to wither and to freeze in position so that he could not withdraw it to himself.

John Trapp says on 1st Kings 13: 4 – “A fearful stroke, had he well considered it: but his heart was as hard as his hand withered.” “Jeroboam had as great a miracle wrought before him herein, as St. Paul had at his conversion; but without the Spirit’s concurrence neither miracle, nor ministry, nor misery, nor mercy, can in the least measure mollify the heart of an obdurate and obstinate sinner.” “Valens, the Arian emperor, would have signed a sentence of banishment against Basil, but could not, by reason of a sudden trembling of his right hand, so that he could not write one letter of his own name, but for anger tore the paper in pieces, and let Basil alone.” “There is a story of one of our late innovators, who, turning with the times, and beginning to bow toward altars, never went upright more:

and of another, who, hearing perjury (lying during sworn testimony in a court) condemned by a godly preacher, and how it never escaped being unpunished, said in a bravery, 'I have often forsworn myself, and yet my right hand is no shorter than my left.' "These words he had scarce uttered, when such an inflammation arose in that hand, that he was forced to go to the surgeon, and cut it off, lest it should have infected the whole body; and so it became shorter than the other." "The Jews tell us, that when Jeroboam's hand was dried up, the false prophets told him that this happened by chance, and so kept him from thinking of God who had smitten him." "Let the saints learn to put their confidence in God: for if he (*whosoever denies*) deny concourse and influence, the arm of all adverse power shrinks up presently."

1. Divine Concourse "In" and "With".

Today, I want to show you how God's Providential Purpose to change material things in the creation, and to change the hearts and minds of men, is according to whether He is either "with" or "in" His acts. And that concursus, or Divine Providential acting is always done according to the particular reasons which are known only to Him, and they are 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 them or to use them, or he can be "with them" and "in them" to change them and use them as He wills to do so.

1st Kings 19: 1-18 – "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword." "Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.'" "And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree." "And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough!'" "Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" "Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, 'Arise and eat.'" "Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water." "So he ate and drank, and lay down again." "And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, 'Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.'" "So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God." "And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" "So he said, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for 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.'" "Then He said, 'Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.'" "And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice." "So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave." "Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" "And he said, '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." "Then the LORD said to him: 'Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria.'" "Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel." "And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place." "It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill." "Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

Now, as you heard me read this passage, did you see anything of the Divine Concourse in it? If so – What? Well, you see it in the angel's providentially coming to Elijah and giving him food which would give him the strength to go 40 days and nights to Horeb the mountain of God. (verse 8) He

was “in” and “with” that food to establish greater than normal strength, by and through His giving him that food, than he would have had eating any other food. Next you see concurrence being doubted by Elijah in the spiritual sense, when he speaks to God about his lack of seeing God’s hand with him in his ministry in verse 10. He is saying – God, if I have been zealous for You, and I have confronted the prophets of Baal. You enabled me to call down fire from heaven and yet it does not appear to have changed any hearts. I have slain the prophets down at the Brook Kishon, I have torn down their altars and destroyed their false religion. But why is it then, that Jezebel seeks my life? Why is it that You are not “with” me to protect me and bless my ministry to the salvation of the souls of these people? I alone am left as a prophet and they are seeking my life. Why is it that You, O God, do not work to destroy them and save Your people from these false kings and prophets? God, it does not appear that You are with me!

Well, the Lord had an answer for Elijah and it is found in verses 11 and following. He tells Elijah to go out and stand on the mountain before Him, and it says – “Behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind.” It is obvious that the Lord caused this wind to blow which tore into the mountains and broke the rocks, but it says that the Lord was not “in” the wind. Then it says, “And after the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.” “And after the earthquake, a fire, but the Lord was not “in” the fire.” “And after the fire, a still small voice”, it says in the King James translation. Or the “delicate whispering voice” it says in the margin of the New King James translation. “The sound of a gentle blowing”, it says in the New American Standard Translation. What was the Lord teaching Elijah here? He was teaching him about the Divine Concursus. He was saying to Elijah that He does not usually use great and mighty displays of power to change the hearts of men. Neither does He use the thunderings of His law to save the soul. Instead, by the Spirit, by the Divine Concursus, by the Holy Spirit working in the heart and the mind of a person He brings regeneration to them and changes them in this quiet imperceptible way; a still small voice speaking there in the heart.

This was what Elijah needed to learn, and it is what you and I need to learn as well. 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.

2. We can further develop this truth of Concourse “in” and “with” by thinking about it negatively in the life of king Saul and positively as it is portrayed for us in the life of king David.

We have seen that the Lord can be “with” and “in” what He does in His Providential acts in creation. Now we will see how, according to His eternal purpose, He is “with” and “in” the lives of His elect people to establish all of His good purposes to save them and bring about spiritual growth and maturity in their lives by His grace. But to set the stage for this we will 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 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.”