

V.O.C. July 2017
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July 16, 2017: God in His Providence

Dear Listeners,

How come we see such a beautiful *order* in nature? How come that, what happens once will happen all the time? How come we know beforehand that, when we throw a rock up into the air, it will fall down again? We don't have to wait to see what will happen, but we may assume the result of certain actions. How come we may count on that order? It's because we believe in God, who *created* all things *according to their kind*. It is because we believe in the *Providence* of God, who is not whimsical or fickle but unchangeable. Also in this, that God *upholds* all things according to their kinds. He's not fickle. The scientist may observe laws, and may consider certain patterns logical, and therefore may conclude that all things continue to move and develop by themselves, but it's *not* by itself! It's by *God's power* that all things are the way they are!

God's power upholds all things according to their kind. This, dear listener, is the first thing I want to hold up to you as of foremost importance in our age of science and technology. We may note and observe this, not just as a matter of fact but to our comfort! We must confess it as a *miracle* that God continued to *uphold* it, because He wanted to live with us and He wanted that we should live with Him in a world created by Him in love. In order to accomplish this continued life in the unity of love, He gave His Son to save this world for Himself, to save many sons and daughters for Himself. Last week I spoke to you about this, about the fact that when we believe in Jesus Christ, this God will be *your* God and *your* Father, and it is as God and as Father that He maintains the order, that He shows His providence.

What this is, dear listener, the *Providence* of God? That's God's Almighty and ever-present power. The Bible does not use this term 'providence,' literally, but on every page of the Bible we see this power of God. The matter of God's providence is written all over! God clearly shows Himself as the God who *upholds* all things. God did not put man on earth to see how things would go, would work out. No, nothing happened or God was actively involved. The fall into sin, for instance, was not a surprise; it was not an event, which messed up all God's plans. Although God's providence does *not* make God the cause of sin, the author of sin, yet it did *not* happen *outside* of God's plan and providence. For His providence is His Almighty and ever present power by which He governs all things!

In Isaiah 45 we read, dear listener, *these* words of the prophet very concretely about the LORD God, "*I* form the light and create darkness, *I* bring prosperity and create disaster; *I*, the LORD, do all these things." Also the *evil* does not happen outside of God's will. As the prophet Amos prophesies, "When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it [3:6]?" That doesn't mean, of course, that *God* would *do* the sin; He hates all evil. Yet, He *uses* it nonetheless. He uses it for His plans. God hated the sin of Joseph's brothers, who sold their brother; God hated their envy, their wicked scheming.

Nevertheless, we hear Joseph say to his brothers, in Genesis 50:20, “You intended to harm me, but *God* intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the *saving of many lives*.” Joseph sees the governing God also in the evil plans of his brothers!

In the history of the people of Israel there are so many examples to illustrate this point. The people of Israel were disobedient and allowed the heathens to continue living in their land. Then God *used* that evil of disobedience to *test* His people, to see if they would serve Him faithfully. God *used* their negligence to test them in their spiritual struggle, even to strengthen them in it. Nothing in this world happens outside of God’s providence. God exceeds all things by far, also the evil things, for which the people themselves remain responsible.

Still, He works all things according to His plan and will. “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD,” we read in Proverbs 21:1, “he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.” That’s illustrated very dramatically in the history of King Ahab [1 Kings 22]. The LORD had decided that King Ahab had to die. The prophet Micaiah, then, discloses the following, “I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. And the LORD said, ‘Who will lure Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?’ One suggested this and another that. Finally a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, ‘I will lure him.’ ‘By what means?’ the LORD asked. ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,’ he said. ‘You will succeed in luring him,’ said the LORD. ‘Go and do it.’ So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you.” So the LORD *uses* a lying spirit to reach His goal! In his epistle to the Thessalonians, also the apostle Paul writes, “For this reason *God* sends them a *powerful delusion* so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”

Thus God is working in all things! Nevertheless, He Himself remains far from unrighteousness, even when He uses error to punish the people. He governs all things! “He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call [Ps. 147:8].” That’s not just poetic language but it is reality! The power of God is in everything! Nothing has power in itself; it’s all from Him! “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or dumb? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD [Ex. 4:11]?”

You see, dear listeners, that’s how comprehensive the work of God is. That does not mean that God wanted the evil expressly, yet His purpose is behind all these things. So many people today cannot accept this reality any longer. All this evil and misery in the world, that *can’t be* from the hand of God. People, even Christians who mean so well, try to excuse God for it. It’s Satan’s fault, all this sickness, war, and famine.” When they see people get upset sometimes, saying, “If God is *love* indeed, why does He let this all happen?” Then these well-meaning Christians apologize, saying, “Yes, but God did not want it. It’s Satan’s work.” Well, indeed, they are correct in this, that God hates sin and that He hates Satan’s work and that He is going to conquer Satan and remove sin. They

are not correct, however, in giving the impression as if God is perplexed about sin. God *doesn't* consider the world in the sense of 'what do I do with it now?'

Others have made some kind of new theology out of their ignorance about this providence of God. They say, "God is suffering along with the world. Actually the true God of this world cannot help it and would want it to be different too, but the ruler of this world has taken over most of the events." Thus, this theology shows us a suffering God who does not want this chaos either. Yet, dear listeners, that's not what the Bible reveals about God's providence. The Bible shows us the power of God, which is *almighty* and *ever present*! The Bible tells us that He *uses* even *sin* and its effects to accomplish His goal. We may not understand this many a time; yet, we confess it! Next week, dear listeners, I will elaborate on this more when I will speak to you about God in His *government*! We will see that especially in His coming to the Lord Jesus Christ and in Him to His work of salvation! That's the *gospel* that is being worked out *in* the history of this world in which God *governs* all things for that purpose and to that end! Thank you again for listening!