

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

We continue with the study of the providence of God as far as Jesus Christ is the gatherer and preserver of the church.

### God is most free

God had the power to have arranged his counsel otherwise, or to even have omitted it altogether, or to have accomplished things differently from what we see. But he decreed it as it is from everlasting, as was pleasing to himself, according to his immense wisdom, and goodness. He is indeed most free.

Psalm 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

Jer 18:6 "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel."

Psalm 135:6 The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.

Dnl 4:35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'

### God is most wise.

This is evident from the wonderful course of events, and things in the world.

Job 12:16 To him belong strength and victory; both deceived and deceiver are his.

Rom 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Ps 33:15 He who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.

Job 12:13 To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his.

Jer 10:12 But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

### God is most just

The will of God is the fountain and pattern of justice.

2Chron 19:7 Now let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the LORD our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery.

Neh 9:33 In all that has happened to us, you have been just; you have acted faithfully, while we did wrong.

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

Ps 36:6 Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep. O LORD, you preserve both man and beast.

Dan 9:7 Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame-- the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you.

Dan 9:14 The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

### God effects all good things

This God does in such a manner that no creature, great or small, can either exist, or move, or do, or suffer anything without his will and counsel. Because all things were created by God -- all quantities, qualities, and motions of things, as well as their substance -- they are necessarily included in his providence.

ISA 40:26 Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

MAT 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. 30And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

### Permits evil things also to be done.

We have dealt with this before when we discussed the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. It may be worthwhile to quote the complete general rule by which we understand the effectual working of the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit's presence is two-fold: First, as Almighty God, He is omnipresent: there can never be a place or a time when the Holy Spirit is not present. Second, He is also effectually present in the measure and to the extent that satisfies the execution of His offices. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit is 100% effectually present, there can be no evil. We see this complete effectual presence in Jesus Christ. When the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is effectually totally absent, there can only be evil. Within these extremes, the Holy Spirit executes His offices.

In practical terms, the Holy Spirit withdraws, to the exact measure and degree required, his divine grace by which He either does not make His will known to the evildoer, or He does not incline the will of the evildoer to render obedience and to perform that which is in line with God's will.

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

When we say that God permits evil, there might be an allusion to an active granting of permission to commit evil, which could imply that God participates in the execution of the evil, such as when a supervisor signs an authorization permitting a subordinate to perform certain actions and in this way sharing in the responsibility of the subordinate's actions.

To avoid this allusion it is sometimes said that God allows evil, but this might be seen as an indifferent contemplation or suspension of the providence and working of God as it pertains to the action of the wicked implying that God does not always control events and actions by His providence.

By applying the general rule about the presence of the Holy Spirit, we can use the words permit and allow with the correct understanding: That God controls and influences the evildoer in his sinning and deserted state, in such a manner, that God's will is accomplished.

It is in order to use the word permit in this context, since it is sometimes used in Scripture.

Evil is two-fold. The evil of guilt, which is all sin, and the evil of punishment, which includes every affliction, destruction, or vexation which God inflicts upon his rational creatures because of sin.

In Jer 18:8 we have a clear reference to both forms of evil:

And if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.

In the KJV we read "If that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them"

The evil of punishment is from God, the author and executioner thereof, not only in as far as it is a certain action or motion, but also in as far as it is the destruction or affliction of the wicked.

This is proven by the following:

- a) God is the chief and efficient cause of everything that is good. Every punishment has the nature of moral good because it is the declaration and execution of divine justice. Therefore, God is the author of punishment.

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

- b) God is the judge of the world and the vindicator of his own glory and desires to be acknowledged as such. Therefore, He is the author of rewards and punishments.
- c) Because the Scriptures everywhere, with one voice, attribute the punishments of the wicked, as well as the chastisements, trials and martyrdom of the saints to the efficacious will of God.

Isa 45:5-7 "I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; 6That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, 7The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.

Amo 3:6,7 If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it? 7Surely the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets.

Mat 10:28 "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

The evils of guilt, as far as they are sins, have an evil nature. Hence, God does not will them, neither does He tempt men to perform them, nor does He effect them or contribute to them.

However, he permits devils and men to do them, or does not prohibit them from committing them even though he has the power to do so. God also prohibits evildoers from accomplishing their deeds.

Therefore, these things do indeed also fall under the providence of God, but not as if they were done by him, but only permitted or explicitly forbidden.

In the following passages of Scripture, pay close attention how God permits or prohibits the actions of the wicked.

Gen 20:1-6 Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar. 2Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. 3But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married." 4Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, will You slay a nation, even though blameless? 5"Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." 6Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. "

(Gen 31:7) "Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to hurt me.

Exo 21:12, 13 He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. 13But if he did not lie in wait for him, (not premeditated or accident) but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint you a place to which he may flee.

Psa 105:14 He permitted no man to oppress them, And He reprov'd kings for their sakes: 15"Do not touch My anointed ones, And do My prophets no harm."

Act 14:16 "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;

### He Directs All Things, Both Good And Evil.

God directs all things, including those before the creation of the world, past, present, and those things that are to come, even to all eternity.

Is 46:9, 10 Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."

So, we see that the providence of God is never inactive, but efficacious, as Christ declared,

John 5:17 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.'

### Let's look at this work the Father and Jesus are doing:

The working of God is two-fold, namely general and special.

#### General:

The general working of God is that by which he sustains and governs all things, especially the human race.

#### Special:

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

The special working of God is that by which He, in this life, commences the salvation of his people, and perfects it in the life to come. It is said in reference to both,

1Tim 4:10 "(And for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior (sotare) of all men, and especially (gr: malista: greatest degree or particularly) of those who believe."

***(If the question is asked: Especially of those who believe:***

*It does not mean that God is the Savior of all men in the sense that all will receive salvation, because that would contradict the Scriptures about eternal punishment and those who follow the beast into the abys; it rather means that his providence touches all men,*

*1Timothy 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

*ACS 17:25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.*

*JBO 12:10 In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.*

*ISA 42:5 This is what God the LORD says--he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it:*

*Act 14:16 "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; <sup>17</sup>Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."*)

*but especially the believers:*

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

*(Joh 3:16) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

*(Act 13:23) "From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus,*

*(Php 3:20) For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;*

*(2Pe 1:11) for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.)*

Rom 8:14 "Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."

Psalms 34:15 "The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry;"

God works in two ways, either immediately or over time.

### Immediately:

He works immediately when he does what he wills independent of means, or in a manner different from the order which he has established in nature. Such as when he supports life in a miraculous manner.

For example: He works immediately when he produces those effects, through other creatures and nature, that sustains us with food and health.

Num 20:10 and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, "Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" 11Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank.

Is 38:21 "Isaiah had said, 'Prepare a poultice of figs and apply it to the boil, and he will recover.' "

It is in this way that God reveals himself and his will to us through the Scriptures as we read it and hear it preached.

Luk 16:29 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' "

### Over Time:

The other way in which God works, is over time. It is effected through various instruments, such as voluntary and involuntary, good and evil, yet,

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

always in such a way that what God effects in and through them, is always most holy, just and good.

We will deal with some objections to this.

The goodness of the works of God does not depend upon the instruments, but upon his bounty, wisdom and righteousness.

Believers readily accept that God works through good instruments. But, when it comes to the use of evil and sinful instruments, there are differing opinions, as one might expect.

So, let's proceed carefully when we investigate the means by which God performs his works.

If we accept that the trials and chastisements of the righteous, on the one hand, and the punishments of the wicked, on the other, are a) just and b) proceed from the will and power of God,

...then it is inescapable to conclude that God also executes his just and holy judgments and works by instruments that are evil and sinful.

We must also accept that the virtues and actions of the wicked, which have contributed to the well-being of the human race, are gifts of God. God is not the author or originator of evil and sin, but the works of God in this respect, is accomplished by the wicked themselves.

God sent Joseph into Egypt, through his wicked brothers and the Midianites;

He blessed Israel through the false prophet Balaam;

He permitted the people to be tempted through false prophets;

He vexed Saul through Satan;

He punished David through Absalom and the blasphemies of Shemei;

He chastised Solomon by the revolt of Jeroboam;

He tried Job by Satan;

He carried Judah and Jerusalem into captivity by the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, and so on.

This necessitates a look at cause and effect. Although we won't be able to delve deep into the cause and effect of God's works in this study, it would be worthwhile to merely take a closer look:

A general rule is in order, the truth of which is manifest in theology as well as in moral and natural philosophy:

When there are many causes of one and the same effect, some good and others evil, the effect in respect to the good causes is good, while in respect to the evil it is evil and sinful. Good causes are in themselves good, but by

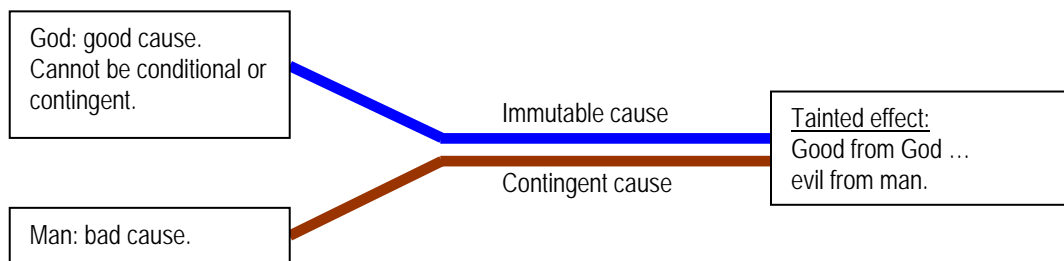


## Adult study of Jesus Christ

association they become the causes of effects of that which are evil and sinful; or they become the causes of the sin which is in the effect because of the sinful causes.

It is universally true that efficient and final causes make a difference in actions. It is for this reason that the same action, for instance, the selling of Joseph into Egypt, was a most wicked affair in respect to his brothers. At the same time it was good in respect to God on account of different, efficient and final causes. Just as the good work of God cannot be accounted to the brothers of Joseph, so their wicked deed cannot be ascribed to God.

Graphic depiction of good and bad causes and effects:



From the graphic above it is evident that God's cause always remains pure and good, while man's causes are always evil and, by association, the effects are tainted. It is also evident that God is not the author of the evil contemplated by man.

That which is done by the unchangeable decree of God, cannot be done contingently or conditionally, namely, it cannot be conditionally in respect to the first cause, or in respect to the same immutable divine decree. It may be done contingently in respect to a second and last cause working contingently and freely.

Contingency is the order between a changeable cause and its effect while necessity is the order between a necessary cause and its effect. Hence, the cause must be of the same character as the effect. The same effect may proceed from a changeable and necessary cause in different respects, as is the case with all things which God does through his creatures of which both God and the creatures are the cause. Thus, in respect to God there is an unchangeable order between cause and effect, but in respect to creatures, there is an changeable order between the cause and the same effect. Hence, in regard to God it is necessary, but in regard to the creature it is contingent in the same effect.

It is not absurd that the same effect should be said to be necessary and contingent in respect to different causes, that is, in respect to an

## Adult study of Jesus Christ

unchangeable first cause acting necessarily, which is God, and in respect to a changeable second cause acting contingently, which is man.

That what is done in the immutable decree of God is done freely, for it is not the necessity of immutability that takes away liberty, but that of constraint. God is unchangeable and necessarily good, and yet he is at the same time most freely good. The devils are unchangeably and necessarily evil and yet they are evil and do that which is evil with the greatest freedom of the will.

After it was all said and done, Joseph comforted his brothers by saying,

Gen 45:5 "Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.