

# **Belgic Confession 13 – Providence (神的护理) Gives Confidence**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: I love this doctrine of providence. You see, I was raised in a Pentecostal church (灵恩派教会) which taught of a weak God – with his hand tied behind his back - and it taught of strong mankind – who has within himself the power to control his destiny. Because I knew I wasn't strong-not strong enough to do what God expected-I became frustrated. I continued to be frustrated until I **came to the doctrine of providence(神的护理之教义)**. I hope you too can benefit from what God wants you to learn about providence today. This way, you won't be robbed as I was robbed by my Pentecostal teachers. You see, if this doctrine of providence is properly taught, accepted, and applied, it brings much blessing to the Christian. You'll hear about this today.

Our headings are:

**By Providence God Sustains you**

**By Providence God Governs you**

**By Providence God gives you Confidence.**

Our goals are: That you will **see the reality of the glorious Providence of God**, that you then **stop worrying about anything**, and that you **rest in the Lord's sovereign (统治) control**.

We believe that the same good God, after He had created all things, **did not forsake them** or give them up to fortune or chance, but that **He rules and governs them according to His holy will**, so that **nothing happens in this world without His appointment**; nevertheless, God neither is the Author of **nor can be charged with the sins** which are committed. For His power and goodness are so great and **incomprehensible** that He orders and executes His work in the most excellent and just manner, **even then when devils and wicked men act unjustly**. And as to what He does surpassing human understanding, **we will not curiously inquire** into farther than our capacity will admit of; but with the greatest humility and reverence **adore the righteous judgments** of God, which are hid from us, contenting ourselves that we are pupils of Christ, to learn only those things which He has revealed to us in His Word, without transgressing these limits.

This doctrine affords us **unspeakable consolation**, since we are taught thereby that nothing can befall us by chance, but by the direction of our most gracious and heavenly Father; who **watches over us with a paternal** (fatherly) care, keeping all creatures so under His power that not a hair of our head (for they are all numbered), nor a sparrow can fall to the ground without the will of our Father, in whom we do entirely trust; being persuaded that He **so restrains the devil** and all our enemies that **without His will and permission they cannot hurt us**. And therefore we reject that damnable error of the Epicureans, who say that God regards nothing but leaves all things to chance.

## **第十三条 论神的护理**

我们相信这同一位神，在创造万物之后，并没有放弃它们，或把它们交给命运或机遇，乃按照他圣洁的旨意管理万物 1。所以若没有他的指定，世界上是没有什么事会发生的 2；虽然如此，神并非为罪恶之源，也不能为所犯之罪受攻击或责难。因为他的能力与善良是如此伟大与不可测度，以致他以最优越与最公正的方式，来吩咐并执行他的作为，就是当魔鬼与恶人作不公正行为时 3，神也是如此。至于他作什么乃超越我们人的理解，在我们所能明白的限度之外，我们不可以好奇心的态度去追问；乃当用最谦虚与最恭敬的心去赞扬神公义的判断，这些事都是对我们隐藏的 4，并以为基督的门徒为满足，只学习那些神在他话语中向我们启示的事情，不越过其界限。神之护理的教义给了我们不可言喻的安慰，因为圣经教导我们没有任何事能够碰巧临到我们，一切事临到我们，都是出于天父极其恩慈的安排；他以慈父的关怀照顾我们，使一切受造之物在其全能之下 5，若没有我们天父的旨意，没有一根头发（我们的头发都被数过），或一只麻雀会落在地上 6，我们完全靠赖我们的天父；我们知道神控制那恶者以及我们所有的仇敌，若没有神的旨意与许可，它们是不会伤害我们的。因此我们拒绝伊比鸠鲁派的危险错谬，他们说神什么都不管，将凡事归之于机遇。（Translated by Rev. Charles Chao D.D.）

## **By Providence God Sustains You**

**1. Providence is that work by which God actively sustains and directs all creatures (被造物) so that his appointed purpose for them is fulfilled.**

**2. This doctrine of providence can only be believed by faith on the testimony (见证) of the Bible.** No one can physically prove the Doctrine of providence. Let's get to the details regarding the doctrine of providence from the Bible.

**3. Providence teaches God continues to sustain everything – the sun and the sunflower, the child and the cherry blossom. What God made, he keeps until it completes his purpose.** If God were to withdraw his aid from anything or anyone, that thing or person dies!

**Psalm 104:29** You hide Your face, they are troubled; You **take away their breath, they die** and return to their dust.

**Job 34: 14-15** If He should set His heart on it, **If He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, All flesh would perish together.** And man would return to dust.

**God's hands aren't tied...as Arminians 阿民念主义 teach!** Who can tie God's hands? Apostle Paul sums this doctrine up well...

**Acts 17:28 "for in Him we live and move and have our being..."**

**In summary, the world and everything in it depend on God for survival.**

## **4. Lessons:**

a. If you realize that God sustains you and all things by his Providence, you would **bow in worship without fail – in your home and in the congregation of his saints.** You will not be careless about worship.

b. If you realize that God sustains you and all things by his Providence, **you would work harder** and better for him! After all,

won't you work harder and better for an employer who provides well for you? You see, providence does not make you lazy. And more, because you know God rules over all things, you could work without being distracted by fear.  
c. If you realize that God sustains you and all things by his Providence, you would pray to him more. You will want to ask him for more things to do his work better.

## **By Providence God Governs you**

**1. God governs the world in such a way that only the things he wants to happen will happen.** Nebuchadnezzar, 尼布甲尼撒 who personally experience God's governance, had thought he was the ultimate sovereign! But God showed him!

Daniel 4:35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth, **No one can restrain His hand** Or say to Him, "What have You done?" (世上所有的居民都算为虚无, 在天上的万军和世上的居民中, 他都凭自己的意旨行事。无人能拦住他手, 或问他说: "你作什么呢?")

**2. God determined ahead of time, from all eternity, what would happen. (Sovereignty)** Let me illustrate this.

Psalm 139:15-16 My frame was not hidden from You, When **I was made** in secret, And **skillfully wrought in** the lowest parts of the earth. **Your eyes saw my substance**, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The **days fashioned for me**, When as **yet there were none of them**. (15 我在暗中受造, 在地的深处被联络, 那时, 我的形体并不向你隐藏。16 我未成形的体质, 你的眼早已看见了。你所定的日子, 我尚未度一日, 你都写在你的册上了。)

God had determined before the world began who David's parents would be, what he would look like, what he would do...every detail of his life to the end of it. Note the distinctly passive nature (被动语态) of the verses. **Even David's sin was determined** by God from before he was born. God determine **where the Devil would go and not** go, do and not do. Remember Job! God **determined that Joseph would be sold as a slave** and then become Prime Minister of Egypt to provide food for his family later. (Remember what Joseph said: **You meant it for evil, but God meant it -the evil works of his brothers - for good.**) God **determined that you would be here** today!

Proverbs 16: 33 The lot is cast into the lap, But its **every decision is from the LORD**.

**3. But don't misunderstand: God's sovereign rule does not take away your responsibility.** Men and creatures simply act in line with their natural abilities (choosing and deciding), and while doing so, bring to pass the very things which God has ordained. You are 100% responsible for what you do and how you obey God.

James 1:14 But each one is tempted when **he is drawn away by his own desires** and enticed. (但各人被试探, 乃是被自己的私欲牵引诱惑的。)

1John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, **is not of the Father, but is of the world**.

Acts 4:27a-28 - both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together **"to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before** to be done.

God's providence works in such a way that **God is not the source of sin, but man**. Consider the example of how God used the Assyrians to punish his people but then God punished the Assyrians for murdering his people.

Isaiah 10:10-12 As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols (偶像), Whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria, **As I have done to Samaria and her idols, Shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols?**" Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, **"I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart** of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks."

The Bible does not explain how God could be sovereign and you are responsible at the same time. Don't snoop (打探, 窥探)! Those are secret things. Accept what God says!

**4. But even while God controls every activity, there is a common degree of predictability (可预测性) in providence.** Even though God could make your car work without breaking down, if you don't maintain your car, it will develop engine trouble. Even though God could make you well without medicines, if you don't take your medicines and choose to listen to Benny Hinn, you will probably get sick and die. While God could save you if you fall from a 10 storey building, if you jump off of it you can expect to die. So don't use providence as an excuse to be lazy or indifferent.

## **5. Lessons:**

**a. Pentecostals run afoul 抵触, 冲突 of the Scriptures here by arrogantly asserting the right of rejecting this doctrine because it does not fit into their puny brain.** In doing this, they reject portions of God's Word. The Arminian says: "If I can't understand it, then it can't be true." But it is a sin to try to take away God's freedom by saying he can't do what he can do, and it is a sin to give man ultimate control over his life and rob God of his glory. **Other think God is absent when they see wars and diseases. They assume that God made the world, but left it.** And it is easy to have some sympathies for this considering what has happened in the last 100 years: World War 1 & 2, Korean War, Vietnam war, slaughters in Rwanda and Somalia, 2 Iraqi wars, horrors in Syrian, Libya, and now the murderous terrorists of ISIS. And then there are the natural disasters – earthquakes, famines, droughts. **But theology must never be developed from human trials (试炼)**. Rather it must be developed from Divine truths.

**b. Learn that this doctrine is so repulsive (令人讨厌的) to man because it strikes at man's heart. Man wants control. Man thinks his wealth is because of himself. Providence puts control in the hands of God. Man simply discovers what God does. Radioactive material (放射性材料) didn't develop their qualities because man discovered it. The earth did not start to spin around the sun when man discovered it. How humbling!**

## **By Providence God Gives you Confidence**

**1. Since nothing happens by chance, but everything is in your Father's control, do not worry** about anything- the future, finances, church, wife, husband, children, mother-in-law... a monster computer that will control the world... ISIS domination... your child being indoctrinated (被灌输) by the state, etc. Your future on earth and in heaven is secured. God gives you everything you need (sustains you) and he governs all the circumstances of your life.

Job 1: 21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there.

The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Even death is not a cause for worry. Job: The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord.

Matthew 10:29-31 "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. **Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.**

**2. Since nothing happens by chance, but everything is in your Father's control, be thankful when** things go well.

Remember, the good things you experience come from God!

Deuteronomy 8: 10 "When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

If you realize that God sustains you and all things by his providence, **you will not give too much credit to the doctor, or your investment banker!** They are only tools in God's workshop. You will credit God for the doctor. People who don't grasp this doctrine will often like praise others or like to receive praise!

**Learn to sing about God's providence and memorize these verses about providence** to show your thankfulness.

Yes, this doctrine goes against human arrogance, but God commands you to sing truth!

Psalms 115:3 But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD. (签放在怀里, 定事由耶和华。)

**3. Since nothing happens by chance, but everything is controlled by God, you can be patient when things** are not going well. Do you need to be reminded of the life of Job and the patience he showed?

Job 42: 2 I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld...

Surely this is easier said than done. To do, you must impress God's greatness and goodness into your hearts. Then your confidence will increase. If you lose your job, lose your cell phone, plant dies, or someone backs into your car, or your house burns down... you can face it because your heavenly Father controls all things... and he will turn even your troubles into good. If you miss the stop light, God may be saving you from an accident. Yes, God's providential care is always around you, but you may not enjoy it. So let this truth sink into your heart so you can enjoy it.

## **Conclusion**

By providence God sustains everything: plant, animal, and man. And by providence, God governs everything he has made: plant, animal, man, the universe... everything.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

**1. No man can explain how God's Providence works, but that does not make it untrue.** It is true. So be thankful for God's providence when things go well. Let the knowledge of God's providence remove fear and worry from you. You don't have to think: What will happen to me now that I've lost my job... or my spouse... or my finances. Let the knowledge of God's providence make you patient when things don't go so well. Let the knowledge of God's providence give you a confident hope of heaven. If you deny this doctrine you are robbing yourself.

**2. Of course the reason you can confidently rest in God's providence is because you are his child through Christ's death on the cross for you and so your heavenly Father bound himself to always do what is good for you!**

**Finally, God providence controls even those who reject him.** God's providence is a terror to those who reject him. Why? No one can resist his powerful control. So you will have to stand before him as your Judge (审判官). Are you ready for that meeting? Will you be able to say: I am ready? Only if your sins are taken away by Jesus Christ will you be ready to meet him.