

Belgic Confession 13 – Eat, Work, and Sleep with Confidence

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: I really, really love the doctrine of providence. You see, I was raised in a Pentecostal church which taught about a weak God – a God with his hands tied behind his back - and the church taught of strong men who have within themselves the power to control their destiny. Because I knew I wasn't strong-not strong enough to do what God expected-I became frustrated. I was frustrated until I **came to the doctrine of providence**. 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 by my Pentecostal teachers. So receive these blessings today!

Our headings are:

By Providence God Sustains you

By Providence God Governs you

By Providence God Comforts you

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

By Providence God Sustains You

1. Providence is that work by which God actively sustains and directs all creatures so that they fulfill his appointed purposes.

You can only believe this doctrine by faith on the testimony of the Bible. No one can physically prove providence. Let's then consider what the Bible teaches.

2. Providence teaches God sustains everything – the sun and the sunflower, the child and the cherry blossom.

Hebrews 1:3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and **upholding all things by the word of His power**, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...

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 teach! Who can tie God's hands? Apostle Paul sums this doctrine up well...

Acts 17:24 "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 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.

3. How should you respond to this doctrine?

a. If you realize God sustains you and all things by his Providence, worship him in your home and in the congregation of his saints.

b. If you realize that God sustains you and all things by his Providence, work harder and better for him! After all, won't you work harder and better for an employer who provides well for you? **Providence does not make you lazy!!!**

c. If you realize that God rules over and sustains all things, work without being distracted by fear.

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, who personally experienced God's governance, 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?"

(Providence is the rule of God by which his sovereignty is established. Providence is the outward working of sovereignty.)

2. God determined ahead of time, from all eternity, what would happen.

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**.

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 passive nature 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. God **determined that Joseph would be sold as a slave** and then become Prime Minister of Egypt to provide food for his family. (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 providence 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.

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, 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. Those are secret things.

4. But even while God controls every activity, there is a common degree of predictability 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. Pentecostals run afoul of the Scriptures here by rejecting this doctrine because it can't fit into their 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 think man has ultimate control over his life and rob God of his glory. Others 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 sympathy 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. There are the natural disasters – earthquakes, famines, droughts. **But theology must never be developed from human trials.** Rather it must be developed from Divine truths.

This doctrine is repulsive 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 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 to arrogant man!

By Providence God Comforts you

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.

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 black hole...recently a giant meteor...ISIS domination... your child being indoctrinated 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.

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 God's tools. You will credit God for the doctor and banker. People who don't grasp this doctrine will often praise others or themselves!

3. Since nothing happens by chance, but everything is in your Father control, sing about God's providence and memorize these verses about providence to show your thankfulness.

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.

4. Since nothing happens by chance, but everything is controlled by God, 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...**

To do this, 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, your plant dies because of the cold, or someone side-swipes your car on the 404, or your house burns down...**you can face it because your heavenly Father controls all things...and he will turn even what appears to be 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 if you forget this doctrine you may not enjoy it. So let this truth sink in.

Conclusion

By providence God sustains and governs everything and everyone: plant, animal, the earth, and man. He will do this till Jesus comes again! What a comfort this is to the Christian, especially when things are bad.

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. Don't say: 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, knowing the Lord will always do what is best for you.** Let the knowledge of God's providence **give you a confident hope of heaven.** If you deny this doctrine you are robbing yourself.

2. 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. And God's providence is a terror to those who reject him. Why? No one can resist his powerful control. You will have to stand before him as your Judge. Are you ready for that meeting? Only if your sins are taken away by Jesus Christ will you be ready to meet him.