

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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It's quite common to hear weather reports mentioning "mother nature" as having brought forth storms, temperature trends, tornados, floods, hurricanes, and so forth. And yet, in reality there is no such thing as "mother nature" since all things are actually governed by Father God, for Holy Writ clearly states there is, "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:6)

Therefore, this month's topic is: **Divine providence.** *The term "divine providence" refers to the fact that God who created the world and all things actually preserves and governs the universe and all individual creatures through His omnipresence and omnipotence.*

Now, concerning the true God, let us never forget that He is the Triune God – three divine Persons and yet one divine essence – "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (1 John 5:7) Furthermore, Jesus Christ, being the eternal Word of God, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) Thus, Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God is He in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9)

And so, the Holy Bible relates in regards to Jesus Christ: **"by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."** (Colossians 1:16-17)

Comment: Note well that not only did the Lord create all things, but also it is by Him that ALL THINGS CONSIST. Thus, without God's sustaining power things would cease to exist, cease to stand together, cease to be supported and maintained. If God would desert this world in which we live, it would at once disappear. Holy Scripture informs us that after the six days of creation, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." (Genesis 2:1-3) However, realize the truth that God "rested" simply means God ceased from the work of creation— NOT that God ever ceased from preserving and governing.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 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 on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." (Hebrews 1:1-4)

Comment: Observe that not only were the worlds – plural – made by God by His Son, Jesus Christ; but, He UPHOLDS ALL THINGS by the word of His power. Hence, we surely owe God thanks and gratitude for His sustaining us, the world, and everything else.

“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.” (Acts 17:24-28)

Comment: Note that the continued existence of each human life is a preserving work of God. Every breath we take is a gift of God; every movement we make is a gift of God who created us.

“Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.” (Psalm 36:6)

Comment: Not only does the LORD – Jehovah God – preserve man; He also preserves the animals. Ponder the following words of Jesus: “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” (Matthew 6:26-32) Accordingly, the Holy Bible makes it clear that God cares for and preserves even birds and plant-life.

“Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.” (Psalm 147:7-9)

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matthew 5:44-45)

“Nevertheless he [i.e. “the living God” vs.15] left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” (Acts 14:17)

Comment: Consider from the foregoing Scripture verses the wonderful things God does by means of His ultimate control of the weather and its effects upon the earth. It's no mere chance or accidental occurrences when we have clouds in the sky, or when it is sunny, or when it rains, or when our crops grow, or when trees bring forth fruit; no, it's God's doing— it's God's gracious blessings upon us: “The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.” (Psalm 145:14-17)

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” (Romans 1:18-32)

Comment: It's evident from the foregoing Scripture quotation that God concurs in evil actions insofar as they are acts; but, God does NOT concur in evil actions insofar as they are evil, for Holy Writ says of God: “thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.” (Psalm 5:4-6) Indeed, the Lord God punishes sin with sin, by giving up folks who indulge in sin to more vile sins. Sin, evil, and wickedness are man's fault, NOT God's fault! It is man's fault when men follow the devil rather than following God, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (Romans 5:12)

“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.” (Romans 2:14-15)

Comment: Note that God enables heathens – unbelievers – to do civil righteousness because He has given them a conscience. Thus, when people sin they go against their God-given conscience; consequently, their sinning is their own fault.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have

praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” (Romans 13:1-4)

Comment: Civil government and those in the various offices of state are established by God to promote proper order in society, albeit God sometimes permits wicked persons to rule in order to punish rebellious sinners with further sin, for, “Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” (Isaiah 40:13-15)

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

Comment: The prayers of Christians for their fellow human beings can certainly be of help since God may thereby be urged to graciously move people to live in a civilly righteous manner.

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13)

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” (Romans 8:13-14)

Comment: Among Christians God not only gives the ability to do that which is good, but moves them to actually do the good that God would have them do to please Him.

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10)

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:16-18)

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Comment: Thank and praise God especially for caring about us sinful human beings so much that He has provided us with the way to be saved from sin, saved from the devil, and saved from never-ending death in hell, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) Yes, “thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:57)

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