

The 1689 Confession of Faith, Chapter 5 – “Of Divine Providence”, Session # 8 – “God’s Providence with David”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class, and presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 31st, 2019.

Paragraph 5 – The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, p)that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends. So that whatsoever befalls any of his elect is by his appointment, for his glory, q)and their good.

p) 2nd Chronicles 32: 25-26,31; 2nd Corinthians 12: 7-9; q) Romans 8: 28

Paragraph 6 – As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as the righteous judge, for former sin doth r)blind and harden; from them he not only withholdeth his s)grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understanding, and wrought upon their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth t)the gifts which they had, and exposes them to such u)objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and withal, x)gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they y)harden themselves, under those means which God uses for the softening of others.

r) Romans 1: 24-26,28; 11: 7-8 s) Deuteronomy 29: 4; t) Matthew 13: 12; u) Deuteronomy 2: 30;

2nd Kings 8:12-13; x) Psalm 81: 11-12 2nd Thessalonians 2: 10-12; y) Exo 8: 15,32 Isa 6: 9-10

1st Peter 2: 7-8

I want to examine with you the reasons for the differences between the godly man and the wicked man in terms of God’s being “with” them. God was “with” Saul for a time, but later on left him and actually sent him a distressing spirit because he refused to repent of his sins. God was “with” David in a permanent on-going way because He had caused David to be born again, and as a result he became a “man after God’s own heart. It is this difference between God’s dealings with Saul and David that we want to look into this morning.

Last Sunday I set before you this proposition – It is according to God’s Providential Purpose to change material things in the creation, and to change the hearts and minds of men, according to His eternal purpose, as He is either “with” or “in” His acts in relation to them. And that concursus, or Divine Providential acting is always done according to the particular reasons which are known only to Him. These acts are all done according to His Divine Decrees. Sometimes, the reasons are revealed to men personally or in the Scriptures. In any instance or person God may uphold the physical and material creature without being “with” that creature in an effectual spiritual sense to change their heart so that they will come to know Him. Still, He can, as we shall see in the next few minutes, use them, or he can be “with them” and “in them” to change them and use them as He wills to do so. This was the case with king Saul. Last Sunday we saw that –

1. The Lord was “with” Saul only for a time. The Lord it says in 1st Samuel 10: 5, had His Spirit come upon Saul, and it even says that he would prophesy with other prophets and he would be “turned into another man”. He was in that instance, instructed by Samuel the prophet to “do as the occasion demands” “for God is with you”. He was instructed by Samuel that he would go down before him to Gilgal and that Samuel would surely come down to him to offer burnt offerings and make sacrifices of peace offerings. Seven days he was to wait, till he would come to him and show him what he should do.” Verse 9 says – “So it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart; and all those signs came pass that day.” These ways of describing Saul might make us think that he had been truly born again; that he was indeed a new creature in Christ. But as we shall see, this was not the case.

Saul started out well in his being zealous for the Lord, and acting as a valiant leader over Israel for a time. In 1st Samuel 11, it speaks of Nahash the Ammonite coming up and encamping against Jabesh Gilead and saying to them that he would make a covenant with them to have them serve him only if he could put out all their right eyes. Not a very nice man. The elders of Jabesh said to Nahash that he should hold off seven days so that they might send messengers to all the territory of Israel and if there was no one to save them, they would come out to him. But when king Saul found about it, he said to them – Why do the people weep? Then they told Saul all the words of Nahash and when he heard this news, and his anger was greatly aroused, and so he took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying – Whoever does not go out to battle, so it shall be done to his oxen. The fear of the Lord then fell on the people and they came to Saul. There were three hundred thirty thousand of them from Israel and Judah. Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch and killed Ammonites until the heat of the day, and thus they delivered the men of Jabesh Gilead. A good start it was.

2. But then God not only was not “with” Saul in the subsequent sins which he committed, but He actually gave to Saul a distressing spirit on account of his sins.

In Chapter 13, verse 1 we find that Saul reigned two years over Israel, and then things began to happen which showed what Saul’s character was like and the reality that he would act independently of the Lord’s word began to manifest itself in his life. His not waiting for Samuel to come to him during the time of his attacking the Philistines. Saul had not shown up in the time that he had said that he would on the seven day, and so Saul took matters into his own hands and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings because the people were scattering from him. Right after he did this sinful thing, taking the responsibility of a priest upon himself, then Samuel showed up. He tried to rationalize to Samuel why he had done this thing – 1st Samuel 13: 11 – “And Samuel said, ‘What have you done?’” “Saul said, ‘When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, then I said, ‘The Philistines will not come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.’” “Therefore I felt compelled and offered a burnt offering.”

1st Samuel 13: 13 and 14 – “And Samuel said to Saul, ‘You have done foolishly.’” “You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you.” “For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.” “But now your kingdom shall not continue.” “The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have kept what the Lord commanded you.”

What does it mean when Samuel says that God has sought for Himself a man after His own heart? God was looking for a man who would honor Him, reverence Him, love Him and His word more than anything else in His life. He would love God with all His heart in the sense that his highest loyalty would be to God Himself.

Psalms 18: 20-24 – “The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.” “For I have kept the ways of the LORD, And have not wickedly departed from my God.” “For all His judgments were before me, And I did not put away His statutes from me.” “I was also blameless before Him, And I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to the cleanness of my hands in His sight.”

Psalms 18: 32 – “It is God who arms me with strength, And makes my way perfect.”

Providentially, God put David right next to Saul during his time of being distressed by the evil spirit. David would play on the harp and Saul would find relief. God did this because He wanted David to learn to minister to this man who was experiencing such great difficulties following his having sinned against God and being rejected from continuing to be king. God did this as a part of David’s sanctification. David learned to love his neighbor as himself, even when he became his enemy later on.

Expositor’s Bible Commentary on 1st Samuel 10: 9 – “So the Spirit of God, when He came on Saul, did not necessarily regenerate his being; alas for in Saul’s future life, there is only too much evidence of an unchanged heart! Still it might be said of Saul that he was changed into another man. Elevated by the prospect before him, but awed at

the same time by a sense of God's nearness, he had no heart for the pursuits in which he would have engaged on his return home had no such change occurred. In the mood of mind in which he was now, he could not look at anything frivolous: his mind soared to higher things. When therefore he met the company of prophets coming down the hill, he was impelled by the surge of his feelings to join their company and take part in their song. They were returning from the high place where they had been engaged in worship, and now they seem to have been continuing the service, sounding out the high praises of God, and thankfully remembering His mercies. It was the same God who had so wonderfully drawn near to Saul, and conferred on him privileges which were as exalted as they were undeserved. No wonder the heart of Saul caught the infection, and threw itself for the time into the service of praise! No young man could well have resisted the impulse. Had he not been chosen out of all the ten thousands of Israel for an honour and a function higher than any Israelite had ever yet enjoyed? Ought he not, must he not, in all the enthusiasm of profoundest wonder, extol the name of Him from whom so suddenly, so unexpectedly, yet so assuredly, this marvelous favour had come?

But it was an employment very different from what had hitherto been his custom. That utter worldliness of mind which we have referred to as his natural disposition would have made him scorn any such employment in his ordinary mood as utterly alien to his feelings. Too often we see that worldly-minded men not only have no relish for spiritual exercises, but feel bitterly and scornfully toward those who affect them. The reason is not far to seek. They know that religious men count them guilty of sin, of great sin, in so neglecting the service of God. To be condemned, whether openly or not, galls their pride, and sets them to disparage those who have so low an opinion of them. It is not said that Saul had felt bitterly toward religious men previous to this time. But whether he did so or not, he appears to have kept aloof from them quite as much as if he had. And now in his own city he appears among the prophets, as if sharing their inspiration, and joining with them openly in the praises of God. It is so strange a sight that everyone is astonished. "Saul among the prophets!" people exclaim. "Shall wonders ever cease?" And yet Saul was not in his right place among the prophets. Saul was like the stony ground seed in the parable of the sower. He had no depth of root. His enthusiasm on this occasion was the result of forces that did not work at the heart of his nature. It was the result of the new and most remarkable situation in which he found himself, not of any new principle of life, any principle that would involve a radical change. It is a solemn fact that men may be worked on by outer forces so as to do many things that seem to be acts of Divine service, but are not so really. A man suddenly raised to a high and influential position feels the influence of the change, - feels himself sobered and solemnized by it, and for a time appears to live and act under higher considerations than he used to acknowledge before. But when he gets used to his new position, when the surprise has abated, and everything around him has become normal to him, his old principles of action return. A young man called suddenly to take the place of a most worthy and honoured father feels the responsibility of wearing such a mantle, and struggles for a time to fulfill his father's ideal.

But ere long the novelty of his position wears away, the thought of his father recurs less frequently, and his old views and feelings resume their sway. Admission to the fellowship of a Church which sustains a high repute may have at first not only a restraining, but a stimulating and elevating effect, until, the position becoming familiar to one, the emotions it first excited die away. This risk is peculiarly incident to those who bear office in the Church. Ordination to the ministry, or to any other spiritual office, solemnizes one at first, even though one may not be truly converted, and nerves one with strength and resolution to throw off many an evil habit. But the solemn impression wanes with time, and the carnal nature asserts its claims. How earnest and how particular men ought ever to be in examining themselves whether their serious impressions are the effect of a true change of nature, or whether they are not mere temporary experiences, the casual result of external circumstances.

But how is this to be ascertained? Let us recall the test with which our Lord has furnished us. "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name have done many wonderful works? Then will I say unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." The real test is a changed will; a will no longer demanding that self be pleased, but that God be pleased; a will yielding up everything to the will of God; a will continually asking what is right and what is true, not what will please me, or what will be a gain to me; a will over-powered by the sense of what is due in nature to the Lord and Judge of all, and of what is due in grace to Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. Have you thus surrendered yourselves to God? At the heart and root of your nature is there the profound desire to do what is well-pleasing in His sight? If so, then, even amid abounding infirmities, you may hold that you are the child of God. But if still the principle-silent, perhaps, and unavowed, but real - that moves you and regulates your life be that of self-pleasing, any change that may have occurred otherwise must have sprung only from outward conditions, and the prayer needs to go out from you on the wings of irrepressible desire, "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me."

Thomas Scott in one of his Essays, On Regeneration says this – "If we allow the expressions, born of God or born again, to be figurative, we must also contend, that the metaphor is significant and proper." "A new born infant is a new creature, brought into the world by almighty Power, endued with life, and with certain propensities pertaining to our nature in a weak and incipient state: but by proper care and sustenance, it may grow up to maturity, and the

perfection of manhood.” – “In like manner, the divine power produces in the mind of a sinner such a change as renders him a new creature with new propensities and capacities: but these are only in a feeble and incipient state, and exposed to much opposition and danger on every side.” “Provision is made for this new-born babe, in “the sincere milk of the word” and in the salvation of Christ; by means of which , through the grace of the Holy Spirit, the regenerate man grows up gradually to maturity.”

“No new faculties are communicated in this change, as some pious persons have inaccurately state; by which the (whole) subject has been rendered less intelligible, and opening give to many plausible objections: but a new and heavenly direction is given to all those faculties which the creator had bestowed, but which sin had perverted.” “The capacity of understanding, believing, loving, and rejoicing, previously belonged to the man’s nature: but the capacity of understanding the real glory and excellency of heavenly things, of believing the humbling truths of the revelation in an efficacious manner, of loving the holy beauty of the divine character and image, and of rejoicing in God’s favor and service, belong to him as born of the Spirit.”

“Regeneration may then be defined – ‘A change wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the understanding, will, and affections of a sinner, which is the commencement of a new kind of life, and which give another direction to his judgment, desires, pursuits, and conduct.’ – The mind seems to be first prepared by a divine energy, (this would be the Divine Concursus, God’s Spirit coming to the spirit of a person to do a mighty work of grace), like the removal of a film or other obstruction from the eyes of a blind man, to perceive the real nature and comparative value of the objects around him, and of those proposed to him by the gospel; concerning which, through the ignorance and depravity of his fallen nature, the corrupt maxims of the world, and artifices of Satan, he had formed a very erroneous judgment.” “Thus the eyes of his understanding are opened; and the light of divine truth shines into his heart, and gradually rectifies his errors and misapprehensions.” “The will and affections also are influenced in the same manner: and the man feels a disposition to fear, hate, and shun what he before delighted in, or regard as harmless; and to love, choose, desire, and rejoice in those things, that before he despised or hated.” “He seems to be introduced, as it were, into a new world, in which he views himself, and all things around him, through a new medium.”