

Lords Day 9 Q 26

26. Q. What do you believe when you say: I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and all that is in them, and who still upholds and governs them by his eternal counsel and providence, is, for the sake of Christ his Son, my God and my Father. In him I trust so completely as to have no doubt that he will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul, and will also turn to my good whatever adversity he sends me in this life of sorrow. He is able to do so as almighty God, and willing also as a faithful Father

What does it mean to **believe in God?**

- **It means we believe *into* God**
 - Rather than simply acknowledging certain truths *about* God
 - So many people today confess an *acknowledgement* of God
 - But they have never truly trusted *into* God
 - The difference is a matter of life and death
 - **The faith that simply **acknowledges about** God is not saving faith**
 - It cannot save you
 - This person continues to remain in their sins
 - Churches have always been and still are full of people just like this
 - There exists a real danger here
 - This is why understanding this distinction is so important
 - **The faith that **trusts into** God brings salvation**
 - This is the faith that results in a person being born again
 - Where Christ is both Savior and Lord at the point of conversion
 - It leads to a genuine relationship with Christ
 - Rather than just believing in something about Him
- **Professing our belief into God means we have genuinely accepted His invitation**
 - **It goes deeper than acknowledgment –**
 - It is much more than stating our opinion about God
 - **It cuts to the bone –**
 - We exercise the faith granted to us by the Father (Phil 1:29)
 - It is an irresistible faith that leads to genuine repentance (Acts 16:14-15)
 - It is a faith that results in knowing God personally in our soul (John 17:3)
- **We demonstrate this faith when as bow and submit to Christ as Lord**
 - When we meet the demand of the Creator
 - Who commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30)

What does it mean to believe in God **the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?**

- That we trust in the one true God alone for our salvation
- The Triune God of the Bible - One in essence / Three in Person

Lords Day 10 Q 27

27. Q. What do you understand by the providence of God?

A. God's providence is his almighty and ever-present power, whereby, as with his hand, he still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, indeed, all things, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand

Prov 20:24 – *Man's steps are ordained by the LORD, how then can man understand his way?*

- How do we interpret what happens in the world?
- How do I make sense out of my life?
- Does God violate my will in order to bring about what He wants?
- Am I a robot?
- How can God be in control over all things when I can make my own choices and direct my own life?
- How do we make sense of evil when God is all loving and all powerful?

Providence Defined

- God is continually involved with His creation in such a way that:
 - He keeps it existing
 - He maintains what He created
 - Works with what He created
 - In every thought, word, and action
 - God directs them all to fulfill his purposes
- **Hebrews 1:3** – *And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.*
- **Col 1:17** - *He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together*

God's will is the basis for what he **approves** and **determines** to bring about

- **Eph 1:11** - *also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will*
 - “All things” (τὰ πάντα) refers to everything that exists
 - “Counsel” / βουλή - plan, purpose, intention
- God's will (decree) includes whatsoever comes to pass in the world
 - It includes both:
 - Our good actions
 - **Eph. 2:10** - *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*

- Our sinful actions
 - **Prov 16:4** - *The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.*
 - **Acts 4:27-28** - *for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*
- How long we live - Job 14:5; Ps 39:4
- Where and when we live - Acts 17:26

Concurrence / Compatibility – how we willingly make our own choices and yet at the same time God ordains all the things we do

- God cooperates with his creation in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do
- Nothing happens in life without God’s providence
- This may not always be visible from our limited human perspective
- God is invisible, behind-the-scenes, directing and initiating everything that happens.
 - God is the primary cause = divine causality
- But at the same time - we choose to do what we do without being forced or coerced.
 - We (the creation) are the secondary causes = human causality
- God directs and works through the distinctive properties of each created thing, so that these things themselves bring about the results that we see.
- Our words, our steps, our movements, our hearts, and our abilities are all from the Lord.
- Events in life are 100 percent caused by God and at the same time fully 100 percent caused by the creature / creation
- God’s unseen providential guidance of all things in life should not cause us to deny the reality of our choices and actions.
 - Scripture clearly shows us that we actually do cause events to happen.
 - We are completely responsible
 - We make choices that bring about real results
- The question is “how?” How can God’s sovereignty and human choice both be true?
 - The Bible does not explain this to us.
 - But rather than deny one or the other, we need to accept both in order to be faithful to Scripture.
 - The Bible stands over human experience / over human understanding
 - The sovereignty of God stands over all things
 - And yet we possess the freedom/ agency to make choices and do what we do without being forced or coerced

Concurrence / Compatibility Illustrated

Prov 21:1 – *The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes*

Proverbs 19:21 - *Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand*

Proverbs 16:9 – *The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps*

Psalms 33:14-15 – *From His dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works*

Psalms 18:34 – *He trains my hands for battle, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze*

Example of Concurrence:

- The Inspiration of Scripture
 - As the author of each book of the Bible wrote what they wrote
 - At the very same time - God inspired every single word
 - Every word that was written came directly from the mind of the author that reflects his own style, purpose, and concern
 - Yet every one of his intentions came precisely from the Lord before it was written down
 - God made sure every author wrote exactly what He wanted written
 - And yet – the author made the choice to write down every word without being forced or coerced
 - How can this be?
 - We do not know

What About Evil?

- Confusion exists when attributing all the evil in the world to the will of God
- The Bible never states that God is directly doing anything evil
 - Rather – he brings evil about through the willful actions of the moral person
 - The evil already existed within the heart of the individual
 - God is bringing it out of the person
 - (Just think of how much evil God restrains in our hearts and does not allow us to act upon)
- God **bringing about** an evil action is not the same as God **commanding** a person to do the evil act
 - The person is not forced or coerced to do what they do
 - They do so willingly
- God does not produce the sin within the human heart
 - He *directs* it / He *restrains* it / He *stops* it
 - To accomplish His own purposes

- **Isa 45:7** - *The One forming light and creating (bara) darkness, causing well-being (shalom) and creating calamity (ra); I am the Lord who does all these.*
 - God is the one who brings about all things that happen in life
 - But He is not to be blamed for the things that happen
 - Everything exists and takes place because God has willed it to be
 - God does not create moral evil
 - But both well-being and calamity
 - He causes (allows) bad things to happen to people for His own purposes
 - As well as the good things in life
 - He does not cause people to make evil decisions
 - He simply draws out what is already in their hearts
- **James 1:13-14** - ¹³ *Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.* ¹⁴ *But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.*

28. Q. What does it benefit us to know that God has created all things and still upholds them by his providence?

A. We can be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and with a view to the future we can have a firm confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature shall separate us from his love; for all creatures are so completely in his hand that without his will they cannot so much as move