

Shalom Church Adult's Christian Education Class
Divine Providence
4th & 11th September 2016

Orthodox Catechism

Q27: What doth this knowledge of the creation and providence of God profit us?

A: *That in adversity we may be patient¹, and thankful in prosperity², and have hereafter our chief hope³ reposed in God our most faithful Father. We can be sure that there is nothing which may withdraw us from His love⁴, forasmuch as all creatures are so in His power, that without His will they are not able not only to do any thing, but not so much as once to move⁵.*

¹Job 1:21; Romans 5:3

²Deuteronomy 8:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:18

³Romans 5:4-5

⁴Romans 8:19, 38

⁵Job 1:12; 2:6; Proverbs 21:1; Acts 17:27

Modern translation

Q: What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and by His providence, doth still uphold all things?

A: *That we may be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from His love; since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move.*

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In our previous studies on OCQ26 – *What is the providence of God*, we learnt that our Almighty God and Father is everywhere, and He is actively at work. He didn't just create this world and then walk away from it, but He continues to be fully involved in absolutely everything. We are who we are, where we are, and what we are . . . all because His Fatherly hand brought it to pass! His providence can be more minutely understood as . . .

Preservation -- He preserves and keeps all things in existence

Concurrence -- He works through the actions of creatures

Government -- He rules and directs all things

The doctrine of God's providence is sometimes called "*the doctrine of God's Fatherly hand*". He loves His children, has His hand in everything and has everything in His hand. Nothing (be it *rain*

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and drought, fruitfulness and barrenness, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty) is outside the fatherly hand of God!

As we come to OCQ27, we are going to consider *how* belief in divine providence can/will/should affect and transform us, to His glory.

First of all, note the phrase “*that . . . we may be . . .*”

It implies that this may **NOT** what we are currently. Indeed, if we are honest, we have to admit that this is **NOT** true of us right now!

However, the ideal is held out to us, as something we are to strive after, *that we may . . .*

(i) *Be patient in adversity*

(ii) *Be thankful in prosperity*

(iii) *Have hereafter our chief hope reposed in God our most faithful Father.*

(I) *That in adversity we may be patient*

- In your understanding, what does “*patient in adversity*” mean?

- The catechism cites **JOB 1:21** and **ROMANS 5:3** to help us understand this phrase.
 - (a) For **JOB 1:21**, recall/consider its context. How can we see “*patient in adversity*” from **JOB 1:21**?

Cf. **JAMES 5:11** ~ *Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance (NASB: endurance, ESV: steadfastness, KJV: patience) of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.*

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- (b) **ROMANS 5:3** ~ *And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance (KJV: patience)*

The literal meaning of “*tribulation*” is “*pressing, pressure, crushing*” while metaphorically it means “*oppression, affliction, distress*”.

The Greek word “*perseverance*” is “*hypomone*”. Do some research and find out what is the meaning of “*hypomone*”.

The word “*hypomone*” is used many times in the New Testament, among them **II THESSALONIANS 1:4, 3:5, TITUS 2:2, HEBREWS 10:36, 12:1**.

Look up these verses and see how they can help you have a better understanding of the word “*hypomone*”.

[If you have access to internet, you can consider using www.studylight.org and/or www.blueletterbible.org to help you in your research.]

- (c) Take time to review your answers to (a) and (b) above.

So what does “*patient in adversity*” means?

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The heart of spiritual patience is submission to the will of God.

*Spiritual patience, trusting in God as Father, is simply to say with all my heart,
"Our Father which art in heaven . . . Thy will be done on earth and in my life as it is in heaven."*

Joel Beeke

[a] *And he said, "It is the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him."* **(I SAMUEL 3:18b)**

[b] *Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place. But if He says thus: 'I have no delight in you,' here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him."* **(II SAMUEL 15:25-26)**

[c] *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."* **(JOB 1:21)**

Please run now to meet her, and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?'" And she answered, "It is well." **(II KINGS 4:26)**

[d] *Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him* **(JOB 13:15a)**

And the mother of the child said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So he arose and followed her. **(II KINGS 4:30)**

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(II) *That we may be thankful in prosperity*

- The catechism cites **DEUTERONOMY 8:10** and **I THESSALONIANS 5:18** to help us understand "*thankful in prosperity*".
 - **I THESSALONIANS 5:18** ~ *In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

"In everything" could mean "*in every circumstance*" while "*give thanks*" is in the imperative, meaning this is a command. Hence, the message of **I THESSALONIANS 5:18** is clear: *We are to give thanks to God in every circumstance, and that includes times of prosperity.*

Ponder: ***Why is it even necessary to call us to be thankful in times of prosperity? Don't we naturally thank God for good times?***

- **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.*

Why do you think the Israelites need to be commanded to bless//reminded to thank the LORD for the good things they have enjoyed?
(Consider the context by reading all the 20 verses of **DEUTERONOMY 8**).

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- What are some reasons why we will fail to be thankful in prosperity?

Using the incident recorded in **LUKE 17:11-19**, why do you think the nine lepers who were healed failed to return to give thanks?

(III) *Have hereafter our chief hope reposed in God our most faithful Father.*

What is the teaching?

Concept of Ebenezer, and its practice

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I will cry out to God Most High, to God who performs all things for me.

PSALM 57:2

"His extreme danger is expressed in both the title and the body of the psalm. The title tells us this psalm was composed by him when he hid himself from Saul in the cave. This cave was in the wilderness of Engedi among the broken rocks where the wild goats lived, an obscure and desolate hole; yet even there the envy of Saul pursued him (1 Sam. 24. 1, 2). And now he that had been so long hunted as a partridge upon the mountains seems to be enclosed in the net. His enemies were outside the cave, from which there was no other outlet. Then Saul himself entered the mouth of this cave, in the sides and creeks of which David and his men lay hidden, and they actually saw him. Judge to how great an extremity and to what a desperate state things were now brought. Well might he say: 'My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire' (verse 4). What hope now remained? What but immediate destruction could be expected?"

"He pleads former experiences of His help in past distresses as an argument encouraging hope under the present strait: 'I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me' (verse 2)."

"The duty resolved upon: 'I will cry unto God.' Crying unto God is an expression that denotes not only prayer, but intense and fervent prayer. To cry is to pray in a holy passion; and such are usually speeding prayers (Ps. 18. 6; Heb. 5. 7).

The encouragements to this resolution are taken from the sovereignty of God: 'I will cry unto God most high.' Upon this he acts his faith in extremity of danger. Saul is high, but God is the most high, and without His permission he is assured Saul cannot touch him. He had none to help, and if he had, he knew God must first help the helpers or they cannot help him. He had no means of defense or escape before him, but the Most High is not limited by means. This is a singular prop to faith (Ps. 59. 9)."

"The experience of His Providence hitherto: 'Unto God that performeth all things for me.' The word which we translate 'performeth' comes from a root that signifies both to perfect, and to desist or cease. For when a business is performed and perfected, the agent then ceases and desists from working. To such a happy issue the Lord has brought all his doubtful and difficult matters before;

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and this gives him encouragement that He will still be gracious, and perfect that which concerns him now, as he speaks: 'The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me' (Ps. 138. 8)."

"The text displays the efficacy of providential influences. Providence not only undertakes but perfects what concerns us. It goes through with its designs, and accomplishes what it begins. No difficulty so clogs it, no cross accident falls in its way, but it carries its design through it. Its motions are irresistible and uncontrollable; He performs it for us."

"And (which is sweet to consider) all its products and issues are exceedingly beneficial to the saints. It performs all things for them. 'Tis true we often prejudge its works, and unjustly censure its designs, and in many of our straits and troubles we say: 'All these things are against us'; but indeed Providence neither does nor can do any thing that is really against the true interest and good of the saints. For what are the works of Providence but the execution of God's decree and the fulfilling of His Word? And there can be no more in Providence than is in them. Now there is nothing but good to the saints in God's purposes and promises; and, therefore, whatever Providence does concerning them, it must be (as the text speaks) 'the performance of all things for them.'

"And if so, how cheering, supporting and encouraging must the consideration of these things be in a day of distress and trouble! What life and hope will it inspire our hearts and prayers with when great pressures lie upon us! It had such a cheering influence upon the Psalmist at this time, when the state of his affairs was, to the eye of sense and reason, forlorn and desperate; there was now but a hair's breadth (as we say) between him and ruin.

A powerful, enraged and implacable enemy had driven him into the hole of a rock, and was come after him into that hole. Yet now, while his soul is among lions, while he lies in a cranny of the rock, expecting every moment to be drawn out to death, the reflections he had upon the gracious performances of the Most High for him, from the beginning to that moment, support his soul and inspire hope and life into his prayers: 'I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.'"

Excerpt From: John Flavel. "The Mystery of Providence." iBooks. Excerpt From: John Flavel. "The Mystery of Providence." iBooks.