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Section: Doctrine of God

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**Q18. Does God control and have authority over all things?**

Yes. He rules in and over all things. He is in control of all things. God does all that He wills with creation.

**(Part 2 of 3)**

* **Introduction**

**Proverbs 3:5** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

* **God's Sovereignty Over Mankind: Each and Every Person to Ever Live**
* **Two pillars of truth from Scripture:**
* God is absolutely sovereign, and He never sins; His will is supreme, He has preordained all that comes to pass, and He is the first cause of all things.
* Each human has a real will, genuinely acts accordingly as a second cause, and is morally responsible for all he/she does.
* **Biblical View: Divine Concurrence**
* God is the first cause of all things;
* Two (or more parties) can act truly and genuinely in the same event; and
* These acts can produce an outcome without all parties having the same intent.
* **Two False Views: Deism and Pantheism**

**Deism:** Belief in the existence of a supreme being—a creator—who generally does not intervene in the universe.

**Pantheism:** Belief which identifies God with the universe or regards the universe as a manifestation of God—inflating universal, divine agency unto no longer acknowledging genuine non-divine causes.

Orthodox (meaning historically, biblically sound) Christians reject both Pantheism and Deism.

Deism and Pantheism share the common false belief that God and the creature cannot both be genuine causal agents producing the exact same effect.

* **Divine Concurrence Considered**

**The 1689 Confession of Faith:** “From all eternity God decreed everything that occurs, without reference to anything outside himself. He did this by the perfectly wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably. Yet God did this in such a way that he is neither the author of sin [meaning God is not to be blamed for sin, and He is not guilty of doing sin] nor has fellowship with any in their sin. This decree does not violate the will of the creature or take away the free working or contingency of second causes. On the contrary, these are established by God’s decree. In this decree God’s wisdom is displayed in directing all things, and his power and faithfulness are demonstrated in accomplishing his decree.”

**The 1689 Confession of Faith:** “All things come to pass unchangeably and certainly in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, who is the first cause. Thus, nothing happens to anyone *[or anything]* by chance or outside of God’s providence. Yet by the same providence God arranges all things to occur according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”

God is the first cause of all things, and (where man is involved) man is the second cause—both are *genuine* causal agents.

* **God Is the First Cause of All Things**

**Acts 17:28** “… ‘In him we live and move and have our being ...’”

**Acts 17:28 (**NASB) “… in Him we live and move and exist …”

God is the sovereign One in creation’s existing *and* creation’s doing—our existing *and* our doing.

All non-divine powers of operation and agency are *caused causes*.

**Isaiah 10:15** Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood!

God is not violating the nature of creatures when He causes them to move. That’s the Creator-creature distinction.

God sets creatures in motion *in harmony with* their nature.

**Acts 17:28** “… ‘In him we live and move and have our being ...’”

* **Real “Second Causes”**

**The 1689 Confession of Faith:** “… God… is the first cause…nothing happens to anyone outside of God’s providence. Yet by the same providence God arranges all things to occur according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”

Each human has a real will, genuinely acts accordingly as a second cause, and is morally responsible for all he/she does.

Yes, you do things, and you truly will to do things. That is God’s design—it’s how He made us. But just know that you do what you do in accordance with His sovereign will—*concurrently*.

Not every cause caused by God does its causing (horizontally speaking) in the same way. The fact that every cause is an instrument of God does not flatten out the distinctions between the instruments themselves.

God not only causes all causes to do *their* causing, He also causes them to do their causing *with respect to the kinds of things that they are*—according to the nature of the created thing.

* **Biblical View: Divine Concurrence**
* God is the first cause of all things;
* Two (or more parties) can act truly and genuinely in the same event; and
* these acts can produce an outcome without all parties having the same intent.
* **Divine Concurrence Taught in Scripture**

**Acts 14:17** “… he [God] did not leave himself without witness, for he did good giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”

**Psalm 104:14** You [God] cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth

**Philippians 2:12-13** (NASB) So then my beloved ... work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

**Psalm 18:37-38** I [David] pursued my enemies and overtook them, and did not turn back till they were consumed ... they fell under my feet.

**Psalm 18:39** For you [God] equipped me with strength for the battle; you made those who rise against me sink under me.

God is the sovereign One, the first cause. And humans genuinely and truly are a second cause. God is not violating the nature of creatures when He causes them to move. God sets them in motion in harmony with their nature.

* **Different Intents**

**Exodus 7:3** “... I [God] will harden Pharaoh’s heart ...”

**Exodus 8:32** ... Pharaoh hardened his heart ...

Remember the third clarity of Divine Concurrence; it says the acts (of doers) can produce an outcome *without* all parties having the same intent.

**Genesis 45:5** (NASB) “Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.”

**Genesis 50:20** (NASB) “As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”

**Acts 2:23** “… Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

**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.”

* **God's Freedom**

**The 1689 Confession of Faith:** “In his ordinary providence, God makes use of means [i.e. second causes], though he is free to work apart from them, beyond them, and contrary to them at his pleasure.”

* **Practical Implication**

**Philippians 2:12-13** (NASB) So then my beloved ... work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

**Psalm 97:1** The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice ...

Preview some of the topics for next week:

* **God’s Sovereignty Over All Aspects of Our Lives**
* **Man’s will**
* **Man’s will is always subject to God's will**
* **Man’s will is seriously affected by sin**
* **God’s Sovereignty in Salvation**
* **God’s Sovereignty in the Life of the Saved Living on This First Creation**