



The Providence of God

▶ Providence Defined

- ▶ Foresight; literally “before” + “to think”; make provision for (Acts 24:2; Romans 13:14)
- ▶ “foresight; timely care; particularly, active foresight, or foresight accompanied with the procurement of what is necessary for future use, or with suitable preparation....the care or benevolent guidance of God or nature” (Webster)
- ▶ God’s “foresight and forethought in creating the universe whereby he could be in control and carry out his purpose to its ultimate consummation” (Hailey)
- ▶ “the wisdom and power which God continually exercises in the preservation and government of the world, for the ends which He proposed to accomplish” (McClintock and Strong)
- ▶ **We are talking about God’s hand working in the world and in the affairs of men – His control including His foresight, His provision, His care, His will being worked**

1. What is God's providence not?


- ▶ Certainly not deism – “the belief, based solely on reason, in a God who created the universe and then abandoned it, assuming no control over life, exerting no influence on natural phenomena, and giving no supernatural revelation” (AHD)
- ▶ Not talking about the miraculous
 - ▶ Miracles have ceased
 - ▶ Miracle: conception of Jesus (miracle) vs. conception of Samuel (providence)
 - ▶ Miracle: Jesus calms the storm (miracle) vs. end of 3 ½ year drought (providence)
- ▶ Not talking about God overriding man's free will; He does not
 - ▶ God uses men and events to accomplish His will, but within the free-will choice of men

2. The Bible teaches that God is active in this world and in the affairs of men, and this includes His foresight, His provision, His care, and His will being worked

- ▶ Some great chapters describing His providence include Job 38, 39, Psalm 103, 104, 147
- ▶ God's providence is declared in the Scriptures regarding...
 - ▶ The stars & heavens
 - ▶ The sun/Earth
 - ▶ The weather
 - ▶ The seasons & harvest
 - ▶ Plant life
 - ▶ The animal kingdom
 - ▶ Nations
 - ▶ Even the sparrow that falls
- ▶ Special promises and care for His children – Philippians 4:19; 2 Corinthians 9:8

3. We don't know all the inner workings of God's providence

- ▶ Esther 4:14 – “who knows”
- ▶ Philemon 15 – “perhaps”
- ▶ Deuteronomy 29:29
- ▶ Often not perceived nor clearly discernable
 - ▶ Hindsight – Genesis 45:5-8; 50:19-21
 - ▶ Objection: “if I cannot see it in action, then how can I believe in it, and what good is it to me?”
 - ▶ What we believe, we believe because of testimony – what is written, not because of what we have seen with our eyes (“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” John 20:29)
 - ▶ We believe God is active because the Scriptures say so!

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- ✓ 1. What God's providence is not
 - ✓ 2. The Bible teaches that God is active in this world and in the affairs of men
 - ✓ 3. We don't know all the inner workings of God's providence
4. Three great examples of God's providence
5. What faith in the providence of God should help us do

4. Three great examples of God's providence

▶ Joseph

- ▶ Sold by brothers
- ▶ Slave in Egypt
- ▶ Unjustly imprisoned
- ▶ Set free upon miraculous interpretation of Pharaoh's dream
- ▶ Promoted to second
- ▶ Famine in the world
- ▶ Joseph's brothers come for grain lest they perish

4. Three great examples of God's providence

▶ Esther

- ▶ Esther, a Jew, made queen
- ▶ Cousin Mordecai discovers plot to kill the king and saves him from it
 - ▶ Written in the chronicles of the king
- ▶ Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman
- ▶ Haman gets the king to sign a decree to destroy all the Jews
- ▶ Mordecai learns of it
- ▶ He sends word to Esther: “And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: ‘Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?’” (Esther 4:13-14)
- ▶ Esther determines to go to the king, risking her life

4. Three great examples of God's providence

▶ Esther

- ▶ She finds favor in his eyes three days later, and he extends the scepter to her
- ▶ She requests a banquet that includes Haman
- ▶ Haman expects to be honored, and he builds a gallows for the hanging of Mordecai
- ▶ The king cannot sleep one night, and reading the records of the chronicles of the king, he finds the record of Mordecai's good deed, and he wants to honor Mordecai
- ▶ Haman enters the king's courtyard to suggest Mordecai be hanged, but it ends up from this encounter that Mordecai is honored
- ▶ At the banquet, Esther reveals what Haman wanted – to have all the Jews exterminated
- ▶ The king is wroth and has Haman hanged on his own gallows
- ▶ The Jews are given permission to deliver themselves, and they do

4. Three great examples of God's providence

▶ Paul

- ▶ Intention to go to Rome – Acts 19:21. His prayer – Romans 1:9-10; 15:30-32
- ▶ What happens?
 - ▶ Arrested in Jerusalem – Acts 21:28
 - ▶ Great dissension; the commander feared Paul “might be pulled to pieces” – Acts 23:10
 - ▶ Promise from the Lord that he will bear witness at Rome – Acts 23:11
 - ▶ Paul's nephew learns of plot of more than 40 men to murder Paul; officials alerted – Acts 23:16
 - ▶ Whisked away from Caesarea by night to avoid being murdered – Acts 23:31
 - ▶ Two years in prison in Caesarea – Acts 24:27

4. Three great examples of God's providence

▶ Paul

▶ What happens?

- ▶ He appeals to Caesar – Acts 25:11
- ▶ Boards ship to Rome, continuing journey during dangerous sailing season, perceiving the voyage will end in disaster and much loss including “our lives” – Acts 27:1, 9-10
- ▶ All hope given up – Acts 27:20
- ▶ Angel at night promised Paul would appear before Caesar – Acts 27:24
- ▶ Shipwreck – stay with the ship – Acts 27:31
- ▶ Arrives in Rome – Acts 28:16
- ▶ “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.” (Acts 28:30-31)

5. Because of our faith in the providence of God...

▶ We should trust in God and wait on Him

▶ Romans 4:21

▶ Hebrews 13:5-6; 2 Timothy 4:16-17

▶ Job 13:15; 19:25-27

▶ Esther 4:14, 16

▶ Psalm 37:3-7; James 5:7

5. Because of our faith in the providence of God...

- ▶ We should not be plagued with worry

- ▶ Philippians 4:6-7

- ▶ Matthew 6:24-34

- ▶ But can be content

- ▶ Philippians 4:11-13

5. Because of our faith in the providence of God...

- ▶ We should accept what we cannot change
 - ▶ Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 12-14
 - ▶ Philippians 1:12-18
 - ▶ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
 - ▶ Avoid bitterness
 - ▶ Hebrews 12:14-15

5. Because of our faith in the providence of God...

- ▶ We should pray
 - ▶ 1 Peter 3:12, 5:6-7
 - ▶ James 5:14-16
 - ▶ James 5:17-18
 - ▶ 1 Kings 18:44-45

5. Because of our faith in the providence of God...

▶ We should be actively working

▶ Matthew 6:11 + Ephesians 4:28

▶ Matthew 6:13, 1 Corinthians 10:13 + Romans 13:14

▶ Nehemiah 2:12 + 2:20

▶ Colossians 4:3 + 1 Peter 3:15

The Providence of God

Walter E. Brightwell

Tune: Lloyd O. Sanderson

- ▶ Verse 1: The mighty God, Omniscient One! His ways we cannot trace. He reckons ev'ry good begun And crowns it with His grace.
- ▶ Verse 2: Lo! I can see Him in His word: I will not doubt or fear; My steps are ordered of the Lord, His guiding hand is near.
- ▶ Verse 3: No trial can my spirit break, For God will not forsake; He will with each temptation make A way for my escape.
- ▶ Verse 4: The future beckons and I bow: My God removes the care! Behold, He goes before me now, And will my way prepare.
- ▶ Chorus: He's here and there, and ev'rywhere In all the ways I've trod. I've never passed beyond the sphere Of the providence of God.