

Systematic Theology - Lesson 7

Doctrine of Providence (Part 1)

I. Review

- **Doctrine of Creation:** God created all things—visible and invisible—out of nothing and for His glory.
- Creation shows God’s power as Creator; Providence shows His power as Sustainer.

II. What Is Providence?

- God’s ongoing relationship with His creation—He preserves, accompanies, upholds, directs, and governs all things in His goodness and power.
- Nothing happens by chance; all things come by His fatherly hand (Psalm 104; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:3).
- God is actively involved in every detail of creation at all times.

III. Preservation — God Upholds All Things

- God keeps every created thing existing and functioning according to its purpose (Nehemiah 9:6).
- Were Christ to cease sustaining creation, all things would instantly collapse (Acts 17:28).
- **Creation:** Without Christ, nothing comes into existence.
Providence: Without Christ, nothing continues to exist.
- Every breath and heartbeat depend upon His continuing power (Job 34:14-15).

IV. Concurrence — God Works In and Through All Things

- God’s activity and human activity run concurrently.
 - Divine agency (primary cause) operates behind and through secondary causes (creaturely actions).
- **Examples:**
 - Joseph told his brothers, “God sent me ahead of you to preserve life” (Genesis 45:5).
 - “He works out everything in agreement with the purpose of His will” (Ephesians 1:11).
 - Even seemingly random events are guided by Him (Proverbs 16:33).

- Human choices and natural processes are real, but always under God's sovereign direction (Philippians 2:13).
- God cooperates with created things, directing their distinctive properties so that creation acts according to His purpose.

Primary and Secondary Causes:

1. **Primary Cause** – God's sovereign direction of every event.
2. **Secondary Causes** – the natural or human means God uses to bring about His will.
 - Example: rain grows crops (secondary), yet God sends the rain (primary) (Acts 14:15-17).
- Not a single drop of rain or gust of wind falls apart from His direction (Job 37:6-13).

V. Government — God Rules and Directs All Things

- God governs all creation to its appointed end. The world is not ruled by chance or fate.
- **His Rule Is:**
 - **Universal:** All people and events fall under His control (Ephesians 1:11).
 - **Good:** He works all things for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28).
 - **Personal:** He is intimately concerned for His children.
 - **Sovereign:** None can stay His hand (Psalm 103:19; Daniel 4:34-35).
- All things find their fulfillment and unity in Christ (Ephesians 1:7-12).

VI. Why Providence Matters

1. **Trust — Confidence in God's Care**
 - He has already dealt with our greatest problem — sin.
 - Therefore, we can trust Him for the daily needs of body and soul.
2. **Patience — Confidence in Adversity**
 - God is at work even in trouble and pain.
 - Every trial is ordained for our good and His glory (James 1:2-4; Romans 8:28).
3. **Gratitude — Thankfulness in All Things**
 - Whether in prosperity or poverty, we acknowledge His sovereign care.

- Faith does not require understanding every reason; it only requires trusting His purpose.
- 4. **Hope — Confidence for the Future**
 - Nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8:38-39).
 - Providence assures believers that God's plan will reach its perfect end.

Summary

- **Providence** means God sustains, governs, and directs all creation for His glory and our good.
- Every event and circumstance is part of His sovereign plan through Christ.
- Understanding Providence leads believers to trust, patience, gratitude, and hope.