



THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE – PART 1

The doctrine of creation teaches us that God sovereignly created the world. The doctrine of providence is His continuing relationship to the world.

I. Reasons to study God's Providence

1. How can a good God allow so much evil?
2. How do we interpret a divine occurrence?
3. How do we understand prayer if God is sovereign?
4. How do we understand natural disasters?
5. How do we understand God's sovereignty and salvation?

II. Definition of God's Providence

“Providence is the continued exercise of the divine energy whereby the Creator upholds all His creatures, is operative in all that transpires in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end” (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Great Doctrines of the Bible*, vol 1, 143).

“God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his purposes” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 315).

III. 3 Aspects of God's Providence

1. Preservation: God Upholds and Sustains All Things

- Definition: Preservation is the “continuous work of God by which He maintains the things which He created, together with the properties and powers with which He has endowed them” (Lloyd-Jones, *Great Doctrines of the Bible*, vol 1, 143).
- Scripture:

“You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.”
- Nehemiah 9:6

Psalm 104:5, 13-15

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”
- Hebrews 1:1-3

“In him we live and move and have our being” - Acts 17:28

Colossians 1:15-17

- Application:
 - We **PRAISE** God for His continual work of preserving life in this world.

2. Concurrence: God Works In and Through All Things

- Definition: “The cooperation of God and His divine power with all the subordinate powers according to the pre-established laws of their operation, causing them to act and to act precisely as they do” (Lloyd-Jones, *Great Doctrines of the Bible*, vol 1, 145).
- Scripture:

Genesis 45:4-8

*“The heart of man plans his way,
but the Lord establishes his steps;
The lot is cast into the lap,
but its every decision is from the Lord.”
- Proverbs 16:9, 33*

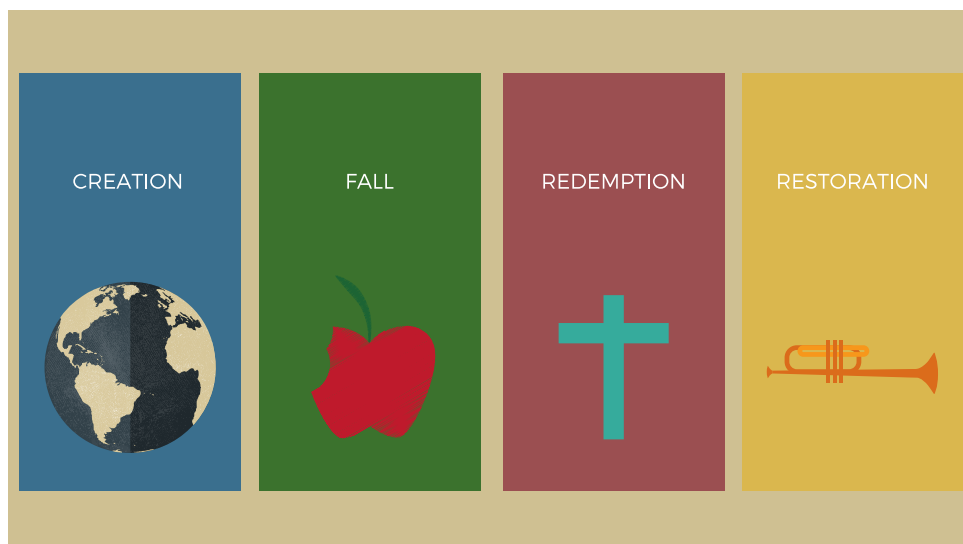
*“Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.”
- Proverbs 19:21*

Job 1-2

- Primary Cause
- Secondary causes
- Application:
 - We have **HOPE** because nothing is out of God’s sovereign rule and reign.

3. Government: God Rules and Directs All Things

- Definition: “God’s activity in guiding and directing the course of events to fulfill His **purpose**” (Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 360).
- Scripture:



Romans 8:18-22

“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

Colossians 1:19-20

Revelation 5:9; 7:9

*“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things **according to the counsel of his will**” - Ephesians 1:11*

*At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever,
for his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;
all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
and he does **according to his will** among the host of heaven
and among the inhabitants of the earth;
and none can stay his hand
or say to him, “What have you done?”
- Daniel 4:34-35*

*“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called **according to his purpose**.” - Romans 8:28*

- Application:
 - We can **TRUST** in God’s providence knowing that His purposes will be accomplished. (Sin will not thwart God’s will).

IV. What Providence is Not

1. Deism
 - Example: God is a watch maker
2. General Providence
 - A. Open Theism
 - God is a Risk Taker
 - God does not know the “future actions of free moral agents, He often has to change His plans in light of unforeseen developments” (Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 369).
 - Response:
 - We cannot trust God if He does not know the future. If He merely responds to us as humans, that makes Him weak and not worthy of worship.
 - “If God is not sovereign, He is not God.” (R.C. Sproul, *The Invisible Hand*, 82).

V. Examples of the importance of God’s Providence:

1. God and Evil
 - If God wills/causes all things to happen, then does that make God the author of evil?
 - James 1:14; 1 John 2:16
 - God works through the evil in the world, allowing it and even ordaining evil, but holding us morally responsible for the evil.
 - Acts 2:22-23; 4:26-28; Genesis 50:20
 - Job 1-2
 - There is not a “problem of evil” if God is fully sovereign.



THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE (PART 2)

I. Review: Providence is God's Ongoing Relationship with Creation.

1. Preservation - God Upholds and Sustains All Things
2. Concurrence - God Works In and Through All Things
3. Government - God Rules and Directs All Things

In light of God's specific providence over all things, how does that work with the doctrine of salvation? How do we understand God's sovereignty and providence in light of our salvation?

II. 2 Propositions

1. God is absolutely sovereign.

*"Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory,
for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!
Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases."
- Psalm 115:1-3*

Isaiah 14:24-27

Isaiah 46:9-11

Daniel 4:34-35

Jonah

2. Human beings are morally responsible creatures. - human beings are completely responsible for their sinful actions.

Genesis 3:1-7 - Sin has entered into the world through Adam and Eve

Genesis 6:5-7 - Man's heart is evil because of sin

Genesis 45:4-8 - Men are held responsible for their sin, but God is working good through it

Acts 2:22-23

Acts 4:26-28

Ephesians 2:1-3 - Men are spiritually dead because of their sin

Romans 3:9-12 - No one seeks the Lord, no one does good

Romans 5:6-12 - Because of sin, men are enemies of God.

We aren't sinners because we sin, we sin because we are sinners.

Understanding our sinfulness and how offensive it is to God who is holy, helps us better understand the doctrine of predestination.

III. God's Sovereignty and Salvation

Romans 8:28-30

A. **Predestination**

- Everyone believes in predestination to some extent. As Christians, we have to believe it because it is a biblical word.
- What is Predestination? (2 Views)
 1. Arminian View - "Those who are predestined by God are those who in his infinite knowledge he is able to foresee will accept the offer of salvation made in Jesus Christ" (Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 853).
Response:
 - If we are dead in our trespasses and sins, then we cannot truly be alive to respond to God.
 - Example: Lazarus in John 11
 - John 6:44, 65
 2. Calvinist View - "By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which He determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man" (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.21.5)

"What predestination means, in its most elementary form, is that our final destination, heaven or hell, is decided by God not only before we get there, but before we are even born. It teaches that our ultimate destiny is in the hands of God. Another way of saying it is this: From all eternity, before we existed, God decided to save some members of the human race and to let the rest of the human race perish. God made a choice - He chose some individuals to be saved unto everlasting blessedness in heaven and others He chose to pass over, to allow them to follow the consequences of their sins into eternal torment in hell" (R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*, 12).

- Scripture:

Ephesians 1:4-11

Romans 9:10-23

Revelation 13:7-8

B. Response:

- "That's not fair" - Romans 9:19-23
- Judging God - Romans 9:20

- Does predestination dismiss free will?

Compatibilism - Though the free will of man seems irreconcilable with the proposition of God's sovereignty, they both do exist and are "compatible" with one another.

"The sinner is free, but free in one direction only - free to fall, free to sin. . . The sinner is free to do as he pleases, always as he pleases, but his pleasure is to sin" (A. W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, 108).

"In and of himself the natural man has power to reject Christ; but in and of himself he has not the power to receive Christ. And why? Because he has a mind that is 'enmity against' Him (Rom. 8:7); because he has a heart that hates Him (John 15:18). Man chooses that which is according to his nature, and therefore before he will ever choose or prefer that which is Divine and spiritual a new nature must be imparted to him; in other words, he must be born again" (A. W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, 102).

IV. Application

- A. We should **praise** God for showing us grace and mercy.

Romans 11:33-36

Ephesians 1:6

- B. We should be **humbled** by the fact that God chose to save us, we should not arrogant about it.
- C. We should have **confidence** in our **salvation** because our sovereign Lord has ordained and accomplished our salvation.
 - If God chose me unto salvation, then I have confidence He will keep me (Phil 1:6)
 - "Your salvation is secure as the hands that hold it." - Jeff Lethco
 - If we could enable enough faith in and of ourselves to save ourselves, then we would have room to boast, not God.
- D. We should have **confidence** in **missions** knowing and trusting that God has a chosen people that He will save.

- **MYTH**: If God is sovereign, then there is no need to do evangelism.

Acts 13:48

Acts 18:9-10

2 Timothy 2:10

- What about the innocent man in African who has never heard the Gospel?
 - No Innocent man
 - All are morally culpable
 - If he is innocent, we should not go.
- God has ordained not only the ends, but the means (Evangelism and prayer)

Romans 10:13-15

- "The wish to win the lost for Christ should be, and indeed is the natural, spontaneous outflow of love in the heart of everyone who has been born again" (J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 75).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0ft41HWYFk>