


The Doctrine of Providence


Romans 8:28

Presented by Bob DeWaay
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Overview

- Providence defined
- Denials of the doctrine of providence
- Providence proven from “all things” statements in Scripture
- Primary and secondary causes
- Concurrence explained
- Concurrence shown in the Joseph narrative
- The purposes of providence: comfort for the people of God and to show God’s glory



Providence Defined

- Charles Hodge

God’s works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions. Providence, therefore, includes preservation and government. By preservation is meant that all things out of God owe the continuance of their existence, with all their properties and powers, to the will of God. This is clearly the doctrine of the Scriptures.

Denials of the Doctrine of Providence

- Open theism
- The “eternal now” theory of time
- Emergence Theory – panentheism
- Deism
- Biblical ignorance of many Christians

Proving the doctrine of providence:
Are “all things” statements literal?

- **Hebrews 1:3**

And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Christ is the creator of all things:
sentient or non-sentient, physical or spiritual

- **Colossians 1:16**

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Christ is the sustainer of all things:
every type of existence there is outside
of God Himself

■ **Colossians 1:17**

He is before all things, and in Him all things
hold together.

first "all things" = *pas*
second "all things" = *ta panta*

Preservation and Government

■ Charles Hodge

Providence includes not only preservation, but
government. The latter includes the ideas of design
and control. It supposes an end to be attained, and
the disposition and direction of means for its
accomplishment. If God governs the universe He
has some great end, including an indefinite number
of subordinate ends, towards which it is directed,
and He must control the sequence of all events, so
as to render certain the accomplishment of all his
purposes.

Providence as governance

■ **Acts 17:24 - 26**

The God who made the world and all things
in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth,
does not dwell in temples made with hands;
nor is He served by human hands, as though
He needed anything, since He Himself gives
to all people life and breath and all things;
and He made from one man every nation of
mankind to live on all the face of the earth,
having determined their appointed times and
the boundaries of their habitation,

Primary and secondary causes

- God is the primary cause of all things
- Humans, angels and demons are secondary causes
- Properties of the physical universe are secondary causes
- God was the direct, primary cause of creation as He is of miracles

Secondary causes


- Wayne Grudem

“These verses all make it clear that ‘secondary causes’ (human beings, and angels, and demons) are *real*, and that human beings do cause evil and are responsible for it.”

Secondary causes


- Wayne Grudem

“Though God ordained that it would come about, both in general terms and in specific details, yet *God is removed from actually doing evil*, and his bringing it about through ‘secondary causes’ does not impugn his holiness or render him blameworthy”


 **Concurrence**

- Wayne Grudem

In Ephesians 1:11 Paul says that God “accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will.” The word translated “accomplishes” (*energo*) indicates that God “works” or “brings about” *all things* according to his own will. No event in creation falls outside of his providence. Of course this fact is hidden from our eyes unless we read it in Scripture. Like preservation, God’s work of concurrence is not clearly evident from observation of the natural world around us.

 **Westminster Confession**

“God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of *second causes* taken away, but rather established.”

 **“All things” in the Old Testament**

- **Psalm 119:89-91**

Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations; You established the earth, and it stands. They stand this day according to Your ordinances, For all things are Your servants.

Concurrence in the Old Testament

- **Genesis 45:8**

Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

God used Joseph's brother's evil to bring about His good purpose

- **Genesis 45:5, 7**

Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. . . . God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

God is the primary cause of physical events

- **Psalm 135:5 - 7**

For I know that the Lord is great And that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps. He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who makes lightnings for the rain, Who brings forth the wind from His treasures.

One purpose of God's providence is the ultimate glorification of His people

■ **Romans 8:28**

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Another purpose of God's providence is to demonstrate his own glory

■ **Ephesians 1:5, 6**

He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

God's providence covers time and space and everything contained therein

■ **Ephesians 1:10, 11**

with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

Far from teaching fatalism, providence delivers us from it

■ **Ephesians 1:21, 22**

far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

Fatalism is pagan

■ Pagan belief in fate derives from fear of fickle gods and demigods

■ Pagan fatalism is based on not knowing what the personal, transcendent, creator of the universe has spoken

■ Secular materialism teaches fatalism through the uniformity of cause and effect in a closed system. All events are determined by previous physical causes, even our thoughts.

Applications

■ The purpose of the doctrine of providence is to comfort God's people

■ The only reason we know about providence is what God has said in Scripture

■ When we let personal, philosophical issues keep us from believing what God said, we dishonor God even if we claim not to

■ We have to be satisfied with the fact that there are some things we cannot fully understand or explain.
