

# God and Providence

Matthew 6:26-33

# Matthew 6:26-29

- “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

# Matthew 6:30-33

- “Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

# Defining Providence

- The word provide (from Latin providere) means “to foresee”
- Greek word, pronoia, means “forethought”
- Found only twice in the Scriptures
  - Translated as “foresight” (providence, KJV), and applied to Felix - Acts 24:2
  - Translated as “provision” in Rom. 13:14
- While the word providence is not used in scripture, the principle of providence permeates the word of God.

# Defining Providence

- “Forethought and foresight imply a future end, a goal and a definitive plan for attaining that end”  
*(International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)*
- “Providence has come to be used to signify the preparation, care, and supervision necessary to secure a desired future result” *(ibid)*
- “Literally means foresight, but is generally used to denote God's preservation and governance over all things by means of secondary causes”  
*(Easton)*

# Defining Providence

- While miraculous acts of God can be described as providential, the concept of providence is generally used to describe His care through natural means
- Believers often wish to see direct Divine interaction in their lives. In this uncertain, unsafe, and often unpleasant world, we want to see a personal, powerful, active force caring for us
- God has instead shown His eternal, infinite foresight and wisdom in arranging matters in this world in such a way as to provide for our needs

# Describing Providence

- General Providence
  - “The widespread care and supervision which God exercises over His created universe is commonly designated as general Providence embracing the evil and the good alike” (*ISBE*)
- Special Providence
  - The Scriptures teach that there is an additional, special care over the lives of the spiritually good that is not given to the wicked who do not fear God

# God's General Providence Extends To:

- The natural world
  - Psalm 104:14 - “He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the service of man, That he may bring forth food from the earth”
  - Psalm 135:5-7 - “For I know that the LORD is great, And our Lord is above all gods. 6 Whatever the LORD pleases He does, In heaven and in earth, In the seas and in all deep places. 7 He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasuries.”
  - Acts 14:17 - “Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

# God's General Providence Extends To:

- The animal world
  - Matt. 6:26 - “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”
  - Matt. 10:29 - “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.”

# Psalm 104:21-29

- “The young lions roar after their prey, And seek their food from God. 22 When the sun rises, they gather together And lie down in their dens. 23 Man goes out to his work And to his labor until the evening. 24 O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions- 25 This great and wide sea, In which are innumerable teeming things, Living things both small and great. 26 There the ships sail about; There is that Leviathan Which You have made to play there. 27 These all wait for You, That You may give them their food in due season. 28 What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good. 29 You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.”

# God's General Providence Extends To:

- The affairs of men in general
  - Job 12:23 - “He makes nations great, and destroys them; He enlarges nations, and guides them.”
  - Dan. 2:21 - “And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding.”

## Matt. 5:44-45

- “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”

# Special Providence

- How does God's Providence for His children differ from His general Providence for all of the world?
- The Scriptures teach that there is an additional, special care over the lives of the spiritually good than over the wicked who do not fear God

# Special Providence

- Psalm 37:23-25 - “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand. 25 I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.”
- Prov. 3:5-6, 13, 16-26

# Special Providence

- Matt. 6:31-33 - “Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”
- Rom. 8:29-39

# Special Providence

- The ultimate end sought is His children's spiritual good, not material benefits
  - Material blessings may come to one as a result of special Providence
  - Yet God may also allow financial hardship, illness, or other physical trials to occur if He considers them necessary for our spiritual benefit

# Special Providence

- Rom. 5:3-4 - “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”
- James 1:2-4 - “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

# We Should Not Assume All Things Are The Result Of Special Providence

- Some things occur as random accident
  - Ecc. 9:11 - “I returned and saw under the sun that -- The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all.”

# We Should Not Assume All Things Are The Result Of Special Providence

- Some things occur because the Adversary still exerts a very real influence
  - 1Peter 5:8 - “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

# We Should Not Assume All Things Are The Result Of Special Providence

- Some things occur because this world is populated by evil men
  - Psalm 140:1-5 - “Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men; Preserve me from violent men, 2 Who plan evil things in their hearts; They continually gather together for war. 3 They sharpen their tongues like a serpent; The poison of asps is under their lips. 4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; Preserve me from violent men, Who have purposed to make my steps stumble. 5 The proud have hidden a snare for me, and cords; They have spread a net by the wayside; They have set traps for me.”

# Special Providence Requires Our Cooperation In Physical Needs

- Matt. 6:11 - “Give us this day our daily bread.”
- 2Thes. 3:10 - “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”
- 1Tim. 5:8 - “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

# Special Providence Requires Our Cooperation In Spiritual Needs

- Phil. 2:12-13 - “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”
- 1Peter 3:10-12 - “For He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”

# How Can I Know Whether Something Is Coincidental Or Providential?

- If you are truly grateful and you thank God daily for all of the blessings in your life, is it really necessary to know it, and does it serve any purpose to assert it? All things are of God.

# Determining Providence

- Many are quick to interpret everything with implications of God's judgment
  - If something bad happens, those who suffer it must be wicked
  - If something good happens, those who experience it must be righteous

# Determining Providence

- The Bible reveals many exceptions
  - Bad things often happen to the righteous
    - Job
    - Martyrs
  - Good things often happen to the wicked
    - Psalm 73:1-13
    - Job 21:7-15

# The Right Approach To Providence

- Do not presume
  - Esther 4:14 - “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?”

# The Right Approach To Providence

- Accept the possibility that the Lord's will and wisdom may differ from yours
  - Rom. 1:9-10 - "...without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, 10 making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you."

# The Right Approach To Providence

- Acts 18:20-21 - “When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, 21 but took leave of them, saying, I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing. And he sailed from Ephesus.”
- James 4:15 - “Instead you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.”

# The Right Approach To Providence

- In everything give thanks -- for the good things that come our way, and for the ill things too, as they can be used for our spiritual growth
  - Phil. 4:6 - “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God”

# The Right Approach To Providence

- Leave the ultimate determination of providence to God.
- We can believe in God's Providence without having to recognize every occurrence. It is not necessary for our faith

# The Right Approach To Providence

- The Providence of God is a great blessing
  - We know that He is working toward our ultimate good, the salvation of our souls
  - His care has already provided what we need, and often far beyond our desires

# The Right Approach To Providence

- To ensure God's providential working for our ultimate good:
  - Seek first the kingdom of God
  - Study and apply what God has revealed
  - Make plans that are subject to the Lord's will
  - In everything give God thanks

# The Right Approach To Providence

- 1Peter 3:10-12 - “For He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”