

Subject: *The Soft Pillow of God's Providence, Part 2*

Scripture: *Matthew 10:16-38*

God's providence is usually seen best and appreciated most after we've had time to look back in hindsight. But as we grow in our faith and understanding of God's Word we are confident that God is always at work behind the scenes even when we don't know exactly how things will turn out.

1. THE MEANING OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Providence is God's management of all things in the universe for His glory and our good. God is more than a spectator of human events. He is always personally involved and working behind the scenes. His invisible hand is always at work in the world. J. Vernon McGee defines God's providence as "the means by which God directs all things, both animate and inanimate, seen and unseen, good and evil, toward a worthy purpose, which means His will must finally prevail."

2. THE BASIS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

God's providence is based on His perfect attributes: His sovereignty, power, wisdom, presence, goodness, grace, and faithfulness. He does what He does because of who He is.

3. THE SCOPE OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Providence is how God governs the universe and all things in it. The main theme of the Bible is that God rules over all creation. There is no maverick molecule in God's universe. He is the sovereign ruler of all. He usually governs the physical world by His laws of nature. He governs people in their moral choices by moral influences such as circumstances, motives, instruction, persuasion, and example, and through the direct operation of the Holy Spirit.

- A. Preserving and maintaining all created things
- B. The rise and fall of nations and leaders – We see God's hand in the glove of history. History is His story.
- C. Salvation – God provides everything from beginning to end. Salvation is not the result of chance or accident, but the good providence of God at work in our lives.

Romans 8:28-30²⁸ *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* ²⁹ *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.* ³⁰ *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

- D. All things and events (big and small)

Proverbs 16:33 *The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.*

- E. All details of our lives

This would include when we are born and when we die, our parents, our physical features, mental ability, where we live, go to school, and work.

Psalms 139:16 *Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.*

Proverbs 16:9 *A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.*

4. THE WORKING OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

God works in and through the actions of things, events, and people to accomplish His will. This is referred to as concurrence or God causing things to work out according to His plan even though many factors and secondary causes are involved.

Acts 17:28 *For in him we live, and move, and have our being...*

Philippians 2:13 *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Man never works independently of God in anything.

Berkhof: "This divine activity accompanies the action of man at every point, but without robbing man in any way of his freedom. The action remains the free act of man, and act for which he is held responsible."

5. EXAMPLES OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

God causes all things to work out for His glory and the ultimate good of His people. The Bible gives us several clear examples of this outworking of providence.

A. The story of Joseph

Genesis 50:20 *But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

B. The drama of Esther

There is no detail too small for God to notice; there is no situation too hard for God to handle; there is no enemy too powerful to defeat; and no need too hard for God to meet.

C. The tragedy of Job

Job 1:20-21 ²⁰ *Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,* ²¹ *And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*

D. The crucifixion of Christ

Acts 2:22-23 ²² *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: ²³ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain...*

Acts 3:13-15 ¹³ *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. ¹⁴ But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; ¹⁵ And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.*

Acts 4:27-28 ²⁷ *For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, ²⁸ For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*

There is a reason we call the day of His crucifixion “Good Friday” and not Bad Friday.

E. The salvation of the dying thief

God’s providence brought him to the right place at the right time so that he would die on that hill next to Christ and be saved at the last hour. The thief said, “Don’t you fear God? We are condemned and we deserve our punishment, but this man (Christ) has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And Jesus assured him, “Today, you will be with me in Paradise.”

We all have evidence of God’s providence in our lives, especially at key points in life: how He led us to the right mate, the right job, the right church, and all at the right time. Best of all is how He led us to Christ and guides our lives every step of the way. “Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.”

God Moves In a Mysterious Way

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

God of mercy, God of grace
Give us eyes to see;
Eyes to see your smiling face
Within the mystery.