

The Providence of God

Providence is made up of two words: Pro + Video. "Video" means "to See", and "Pro" means "Before".

PROVIDENCE

(1828 edition of Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language)

PROVIDENCE, n. [L. providentia.]

1. The act of providing or preparing for future use or application.

Providence for war is the best prevention of it. [Now little used.]

2. Foresight; timely care; particularly, active foresight, or foresight accompanied with the procurement of what is necessary for future use, or with suitable preparation. How many of the troubles and perplexities of life proceed from want of providence!

3. In theology, the care and superintendence which God exercises over his creatures. He that acknowledges a creation and denies a providence, involves himself in a palpable contradiction; for the same power which caused a thing to exist is necessary to continue its existence. Some persons admit a general providence, but deny a particular providence, not considering that a general providence consists of particulars. A belief in divine providence, is a source of great consolation to good men. By divine providence is often understood God himself.

4. Prudence in the management of one's concerns or in private economy.

PROVIDENCE (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

The continuous activity of God in His creation by which He preserves and governs. The doctrine of providence affirms God's absolute lordship over His creation and confirms the dependence of all creation on the Creator. It is the denial of the idea that the universe is governed by chance or fate.

Through His providence God controls the universe <Ps. 103:19>; the physical world <Matt. 5:45>; the affairs of nations <Ps. 66:7>; man's birth and destiny <Gal. 1:15>; man's successes and failures <Luke 1:52>; and the protection of His people <Ps. 4:8>.

God preserves all things through His providence <1 Sam. 2:9; Acts 17:28>. Without His continual care and activity the world would not exist. God also preserves His people through His providence <Gen. 28:15; Luke 21:18; 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Pet. 3:12>.

Divine government is the continued activity of God by which He directs all things to the ends He has chosen in His eternal plan. God is King of the universe who has given Christ all power and authority to reign <Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:36; Eph. 1:20-23>. He governs insignificant things <Matt. 10:29-31>, apparent accidents <Prov. 16:33>, as well as man's good <Phil. 2:13> and evil deeds <Acts 14:16>.

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God acts in accordance with the laws and principles that He has established in the world. The laws of nature are nothing more than man's description of how we perceive God at work in the world. They neither have inherent power nor do they work by themselves.

Man is not free to choose and act independently from God's will and plan; he chooses and acts in accordance with them. In His sovereignty, God controls man's choices and actions <Gen. 45:5; Deut. 8:18; Prov. 21:1>. God's actions, however, do not violate the reality of human choice or negate man's responsibility as a moral being.

God permits sinful acts to occur, but He does not cause man to sin <Gen. 45:5; Rom. 9:22>. He often overrules evil for good <Gen. 50:20; Acts 3:13>.
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PROVIDENCE (New Unger's Bible Dictionary)

PROVIDENCE (Lat. providentia, "foreseeing"). A term that in theology designates the continual care that God exercises over the universe He has created. This includes the two facts of preservation and government.

The doctrine of providence is closely connected with that of creation. That God could create the world and then forsake it is inconceivable in view of the perfection of God. Accordingly, in the power and wisdom and goodness of the Creator declared in the Scriptures, we have the pledge of constant divine care over all parts of His creation. That idea finds expression in various places in both the OT and NT (e.g., <Ps. 33:13,15; Isa. 45:7; Acts 17:24-28>). Thus there is sufficient explanation of the absence of any mention of providence in the Apostles' Creed. The great truth is implied in the declaration of faith "in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." The faith of believers in revealed religion in all ages has been of the same character; and however often expressed it is still more frequently implied.

Belief in providence, although agreeable with and supported by reason, has its strongest ground in the truth of special divine revelation. It is not surprising that enlightened pagans, such as Cicero and Seneca, argued in its behalf. Even among the opponents of Christianity there have been those who have adhered to a belief in providence. For the idea of providence is not exclusively Christian but is a necessary feature of religion in general. Human history as a whole and the spectacle of the universe in particular furnish abundant illustrations, for broad observation and right reason preclude the idea of a government of the world by chance or blind force; rather, they sustain the belief that "there is a power in the world that makes for righteousness." In addition, the deep necessities of human nature and life are perpetually crying out "for the living God." That facts apparently opposed to faith at this point exist is what should be expected. For universal and perfect providence implies infinite knowledge; and "we know" only "in part." Every mind less than the infinite providence must have its mysteries. Our faith at this point, as at others, must therefore find its chief support and guidance from the Word of God.

The Scriptures bearing upon this subject are numerous and of great variety and force. Space does not admit here the attempt at reference. But aside from the large number of particular passages, the historical parts of the Bible are throughout illustrative of the great reality.

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Five principles are of particular note in any discussion of the providence of God as it appears in the Scriptures. First, God's providence is unlimited. It includes all things and all creatures; it has respect to all that takes place in the universe (see e.g., <Ps. 145:9-17>). The distinction between great things and small, often unreasonable in view of the dependence of the great upon the small, is rightly regarded by the care of the infinite God. Things seemingly of only slight importance or accidental are under His overruling power (see, for example, <1 Kin. 22:34; Esther 6:1; Matt. 6:26; 27:19; Luke 12:6-7; Acts 23:16>).

Second, the exercise of God's providence nevertheless has respect to the nature of different objects. All objects cannot be alike precious in His sight. Thus there is ground in Scripture, as in reason, for the distinction between general and particular and special providence. Mankind holds a peculiar relation to God among all the works of His creation; and among mankind, the people of God, the faithful servants of His kingdom, are the objects of His special love and care (see <Matt. 6:25-32; cf. Pss. 91:11-12; 147:19-20; Acts 14:16-17; Rom. 8:28-39>). Thus Scripture clearly reveals God's special love and care of nationally elect Israel in the OT <Mal. 1:2-3> and of the church, the Body of Christ, in the NT <Eph. 1:3-23>. Moreover, God's unbroken love to Israel is declared in Israel's future restoration after the period of Gentile visitation <Acts 15:14-16; Rom. 11:1-31>. God's providential ways with Jew, Gentile, and the church of God <1 Cor. 10:32> must always be clearly differentiated.

Third, the constant and final aim of God's providence is the fulfillment of His purpose in creation. How broad and wonderful this is may defy our comprehension; but it is declared to be nothing less than the complete establishment of an all-embracing kingdom of God, under the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ (see <Eph. 1:9-11; Col. 1:19-20>).

Fourth, the particular steps in this divine process are often unintelligible to us, but the purpose of God is independent and eternal and is certain of its realization (see <Ps. 97:2; Rom. 11:33-35; Eph. 1:4-5>; etc.).

Fifth, belief in the providence of God, according to the whole purport of Scripture, is of the highest importance because of its connection with a life of trust and gratitude and patience and hope.

Upon the various philosophical speculations as to the methods of God in providence, and His relation to natural causes and to the free agency of man, we cannot here enter. For this we must refer the reader to the works mentioned below.

bibliography: A. S. Peake, *The Problem of Pain in the Old Testament* (1904); G. C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God* (1952); K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (1960), 3:3:3-288; W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (1979), 1:527-33.
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This all seems pretty deep so what does it mean to me? Well if you think of God's providence, it can be simply broken down into three things:
God has a plan, God's plan is good, and God's plan includes you.

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God has a Plan

Isaiah 46:9-10 (KJV)

- 9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,
10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Ephesians 1:3-10 (KJV)

- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:
4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:
5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,
6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.
7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;
8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;
9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:
10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

“Before the foundation of the world” is where we find Christ who is the source of the believer’s eternal position (1 Tim 2:5). Christ was there securing the way of salvation with his blood (1 Pet 1:18-20; John 17:24). It is now revealed that we were chosen in Him at that time. WOW! Everything since or from the foundation of the world pertains to Israel and their calling.

1 Peter 1:19-20 (KJV)

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

John 17:24 (KJV)

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

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Today, we have a separate calling and inheritance that was hidden in God before the foundation of the world. This body of truth Paul calls “The Mystery” was given to be revealed after the close of Acts and is what is being brought to our attention in the “but now” in Col. 1:25-26 and “before the foundation of the world” in Eph 1:3-14.

Ephesians 3:9-11 (KJV)

- 9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:
- 10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,
- 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

Colossians 1:25-29 (KJV)

- 25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;
- 26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:
- 27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:
- 28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:
- 29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

God's Plan is Good

Genesis 18:25 (KJV)

- 5 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee:
Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Romans 8:28 (KJV)

- 28 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.

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God's Plan includes You

Ephesians 2:10 (KJV)

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 (KJV)

- 17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;
- 18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;
- 19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Philippians 1:6 (KJV)

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Philippians 2:12-13(KJV)

- 12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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 which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

2 Timothy 2:1-2 (KJV)

- 1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
- 2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.