



Parameters of Providence

Introduction

God's Providence. The word "providence" is not found in most English translations of the Bible. Yet, the existence God's providence is clearly taught in Scripture from beginning to end.

- A. It is seen in God's provision for Joseph, although sold into slavery. Through this unfortunate event in his life God preserved the life of his family. He tells them, "God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance" (Genesis 45:7).
- B. It is seen in God's provision for Ruth. Although a stranger to Israel, widowed and homeless, God would provide for her needs and raise up through her lineage a royal monarchy. When she first received care from her future husband, Naomi declared - "Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!" (Ruth 2:20).
- C. It is seen in God's provision for Esther. Though orphaned, and forced to do the bidding of a pagan king, God saved the Jews through her. Mordecai, conscious of God's providence, asked her, "...who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

Questions About Providence. It is clear that God provides for His people. It is clear that God delivers His people. What is unclear is exactly how He does this.

- A. Are human beings puppets in some Divine game? If so, there is no freewill, God makes everything happen.
- B. On the other hand, is life in this world like a cosmic machine which God wound up at the beginning, and then left it to itself? If so, how does His care for believers differ from that shown to the ungodly? How can it be said that God does anything now?
- C. Neither one of these views satisfies the teaching of Scripture nor resolves the moral paradox which each position presents.

Parameters of Providence. The Bible has not revealed the complexity of an Omnipotent God's countless provision for His creation. However, Scripture does offer a number of principles which address this provision. These principles, like dots connected together in a child's "dot-to-dot" puzzle, give us some basic boundaries within which we can shape our understanding of the parameters of God's providence.

In this study we will look at 25 key texts which help us establish these parameters. We will divide these into five categories:

I. Who's To Blame? We will look at five texts which address the great struggle we have with understanding why things happen to us in life.

Why Do We Face Temptation?

- "Nor Does He Himself Tempt Anyone"
(James 1:13).

Why Do Bad Things Happen in Life?

- "Time and Chance Happen to All"
(Ecclesiastes 9:11).

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Do We Have Freewill?

- “Choose For Yourselves This Day Whom You Will Serve” (Joshua 24:15).

Is Satan to Blame?

- “Satan Hindered Us” (I Thessalonians 2:18).

How Do The Sins of Others Effect Us?

- “Lest It Become a Snare in Your Midst” (Exodus 34:12).

II. God’s Power Over Creation. We will look at six texts which address God’s power over His creation.

Does God Still Exercise Power Over Creation?

- “Upholding All Things By the Word of His Power” (Hebrews 1:3).
- “In Him All Things Consist” (Colossians 1:17).

What Provision Does He Make For Creation?

- “God Sends His Rain on the Just and on the the Unjust” (Matthew 5:45).
- “God So Clothes the Grass of the Field” (Matthew 6:30).

Does God Control Nations?

- “The Most High Rules in the Kingdom of Men” (Daniel 4:17).
- “He Is God’s Minister, An Avenger to Execute Judgment” (Romans 13:4).

III. What God Allows. We will consider four texts which address things God allows in life but does not cause directly.

Does God Allow Us to Face Hardship?

- “In This World You will have Tribulation” (John 16:33).

Can Trials Be Productive?

- “All Things Work Together For Good” (Romans 8:28).

Could We Face Persecution?

- “All Who would live Godly will Suffer Persecution” (II Timothy 3:12).

Does God Limit Our Trials?

- “With the Temptation Will Also Make the Way of Escape” (I Corinthians 10:13).

IV. What God Determines. We will examine five texts which consider things God determines either directly or indirectly.

Does The Time & Place of Our Birth Matter?

- “Their Preappointed Times and the Boundaries of Their Habitation” (Acts 17:26).

What About Small Things in Life?

- “Its Every Decision is from the Lord” (Proverbs 16:33).
- “Not One of them Falls to the Ground Apart from Your Father’s Will” (Matthew 10:29).

Does God Determine When We Die?

- “If the Lord Wills We Shall Live and Do This or That” (James 4:15).

Has God Set A Final Day?

- “He Has Appointed a Day on Which He Will Judge the World” (Acts 17:31).

V. God’s Promises. We will end our study by looking at five texts which consider promises of God which relate to providence.

Does Prayer Do Any Good?

- “The Prayer of Faith will Save the Sick” (James 5:15).

How Will We Have Life’s Provisions?

- “All These Things Will Be Added to You” (Matthew 6:33).

How Does God Help Us?

- “That We May Be Able to Comfort Others” (II Corinthians 1:4).

Has God Forgotten Us?

- “I Will Never Leave Your Nor Forsake You” (Heb 13:5).

Does God Do Anything For Us?

- “Every Good and Every Perfect Gift is From Above” (James 1:17).