

HC 27-28 – Providence: Explained and Applied

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The doctrine of God's providence is repulsive 排斥 to modern sensibilities 现代人的判断. It strikes 打击 at man's greatest love... himself. It is difficult for man to accept that ultimately, in spite of all his knowledge, wealth, and power, that God controls all things and man doesn't. No wonder man has diligently tried in this post-modern era to kill God – or at least claim that God is dead.

But the Christian welcomes this doctrine – especially when it is properly explained, understood, and applied. And this doctrine we will study today. Sadly, many Christians because of ignorance or laziness (laziness often causes ignorance) don't know this doctrine or don't believe this doctrine, and so they rob themselves of its blessing. God does not want you to be ignorant. So pay attention to his Word.

Our headings are: **Providence Explained**, and **Providence Applied**.

Our goals are: That upon properly understanding that God rules and controls over every creature and every action, that **you will then stop worrying about what you can't control, that you start worshipping God better, and that you will school your children in this doctrine so they can enjoy its benefits.**

Providence Explained:

27 Q. WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD?

A. Providence is the almighty and ever present power of God by which he upholds 托住, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years 丰收饥荒, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty 富足贫穷 – all things, in fact, come to us not by chance 偶然, but from his fatherly hand.

1. One common dictionary definition of providence is: A manifestation of God's foresightful care 有远见的看顾 for His creatures. That sounds impressive but there is a more accurate definition: The guardianship 守护 and control exercised by a deity. As Christians you will like the 2nd definition but only Christians can fill in who this Deity is – what the dictionary did not do. **Providence is Jehovah's great and ever present power by which he keeps and controls all things and people.** For example: We planned on our trip to the Maritimes (and even that was by God's providence), but we could not control the rain or the cold. We went to the Bay of Fundy (and even that was by God's providence) but we could not control the tides 潮汐. Every single thing in this world is controlled by God the Father.

2. Because God controls all things and all people, nothing spins off into space in some meaningless direction. There is nothing that a man can do that is out of God's control. No one can escape God's eyes and hands. You must not be Deists who believe God made the world and then left it to run on its own. Consider what Jeremiah wrote: Jeremiah 23: 23 "Am I a God near at hand," says the LORD, "And not a God afar off? 24 Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?" says the LORD; "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the LORD.

Even the Prime Minister Harper or President Obama cannot be independent of God's providence, though they may act like they are by many of their actions. When God wishes, he raises up. When God wishes, he brings down. Would that our leaders understood and accepted this!

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

Even when scientists establish a law which seems remarkable to us humans, it is only a discovery of what God had put in place already...and controls. The earth did not start to go around the sun when man discovered it. Uranium and Plutonium did not develop explosive properties when man started making bomb.

3. Even the tiniest things are in Jehovah's control. What a beautiful lie the Devil brings to Muslims by telling them that there are some things their god doesn't control. This simply makes the Muslim feel more important. The Devil makes him believe that man partly controls his destiny. Look at Jesus' words! Jehovah said that he controlled everything! Matthew 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 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. 30 "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

No one can move a finger or a thought without the providential control of your heavenly Father.

Job 1: 12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Job 2: 6 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life."

God controls a drop of rain that falls...and he has a purpose for that drop of rain. He does not simply provide food for you, but there is a purpose behind his provision of food.

4. God rules the world by his providence using various methods. He may use people, he may use things, or he may work by his own miraculous means and avoid human means altogether. Jeremiah again:

Jeremiah 5: 24 They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season." He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

(By the way, this is good reason to read all the books of the Bible – not just the NT books. All books contain important doctrines.) God may use what appears 看似 to be chance...but is not.

Proverbs 16: 33 The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.
Sometimes God just says in the word and it is done. Hebrews 1:1-3. C

5. Consider one of the various ways God works providentially. Some things may be bad and man may recognize that he didn't specifically do something bad to warrant 保证 the trouble he is in. But does this cause man to doubt God's existence? It should not. Jesus explained that there are times when things may appear to be bad but they are simply part of God's plan. They aren't necessarily caused by man's direct sin. (Every trouble is because of sin, but not directly from man.)

John 9: 1 Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."

So there is not a definite predictability about how God may work. His ways often appear predictable, but not always. For instance, if you are lazy and don't fix the hole in your roof, you will get snow on your bed. God may providentially cause it not to snow, but that is not his usual way of operating. Jesus' life gave another testimony of how you may be tempted to use God's providence carelessly when he was tempted by the Devil to jump off the temple. Could God save someone who falls off of the temple? Yes. Does he normally do that? No. The baby in Halifax that fell 30ft on his head and had no injuries is not normal. So don't leave your balcony 阳台 door open for your babies to roam around and fall off. And don't use God's providence and sovereignty as an excuse to sin.

Providence Applied:

28 Q. HOW DOES THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S CREATION AND PROVIDENCE HELP US?

A. We can be **patient when things go against us 在逆境中忍耐**, **thankful when things go well**, and for the future we can **have good confidence in our faithful God** and Father that nothing will separate us from his love. All creatures are so completely in his hand that without his will they can neither move nor be moved.

1. Because God, your heavenly Father, providentially rules over every creature and every action, you can be patient when things don't go the way you might expect them to go. You are his child and he will do what is best for you. This is why Job was able to say what he did...though he experienced great hardships in his life.

Job 1: 21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD." 22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

Later on James explained that you who are God's children through Jesus Christ could even look forward to troubles, knowing that God will bless you for patiently enduring troubles. So if you lose your job, or if your computer crashes, or if you lose your cell phone, or if you fail a grade in school, or if someone scratches your car and didn't leave a note, or if your plants die because of hot weather, or any other trouble you may experience...remember James:

James 1: 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

2. Because God, your heavenly Father, providentially rules over every creature and every action, you can be thankful when things go well. You should not try to take the credit but to give the credit. This was very specifically explained to the Israelites before they entered into the Promised Land. Learning to be thankful for God's blessings in part for the course. This must be part of your daily lifestyle.

Deuteronomy 8: 10 "When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you."

Everything you have received is from God, so thank him early and often.

3. Because God, your heavenly Father – your heavenly Father through Jesus Christ your Mediator - providentially rules over every creature and every action, you can have confidence in God that he will keep you safe forever.

Psalm 55: 22 Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

What amazing confidence you are able to have in your Father. No one is able to move the righteous. You have a place in God's family and your name is registered in heaven. No one can take it out. It is irrevocable.

Romans 5: 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations 以患难为荣 knowing that tribulation produces perseverance 忍耐 4 and perseverance, character 毅力 and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

God's Word and God's Spirit reassures 在保証 you that God your Father will not leave you alone. Jesus did not die for you to leave you. So you work, you live, you eat, you marry, you have and raise kids...because God rules.

Romans 8: 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities 掌权的 nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

4. And in a general way you can sum this up by saying: Since God's rules the world by his providence, and since you can be patient in trial, and since you can be thankful in prosperity, and since you can be confident in the future, **you then have nothing to fear.** Yes, you are to work (and providence does not take away responsibility), but you are not to fear. Learn to rest on God's providence and his promises to you.

Acts 14:14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out 15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, 16 "who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. 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."

5. Because this doctrine is so dear and useful, the Apostle Paul used the doctrine of God's providence as an evangelistic tool.

He reminded the Athenians that Jehovah God was the Creator and the Keeper of all things and persons. So this is not a doctrine to hide, but to expose it to the world. The world needs to put their trust in the one who sustains the world and the one who would hold them accountable if they didn't.

Acts 17: 24 "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings 定了他们的期限和居住的疆界

Conclusion:

What a beautiful doctrine "providence" is! God the Father – God, *your Father* – rules everything – every creature – every action – and nothing happens out of his will. This doctrine causes you to be patient when you have trouble. This doctrine reminds you of the one who did good things for you so you are thankful to the right person. This doctrine reminds you have nothing to fear in this world and in next.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: Don't worry. Know who your Father is and what he promised to do for you. Don't put unreasonable pressure on yourself trying to control things that you can't. (If you get cancer, you either will get better or you will die – but you are still God's child. If you lose your phone, either you find it back, buy a new one, or learn to live without. But you have a permanent phone line to heaven...and it is pre-paid. If you miss the bus you might be fired from your job, but God never terminates your citizenship in heaven. Instead of worrying, let this doctrine cause you to worship God better. He is the one who truly cares for you. And remember to teach this doctrine to your children. They are facing many pressures in today's world. Remind them that God controls all things. They have their responsibility to study hard, but they don't need to be worried. God will provide for them.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, you have reason to be worried. You don't have God's promises to do what is best for you. But you can fix that if you ask God to make you his son on account of Christ's satisfying his wrath on you. Christ died for this sins of all those who truly call upon God and are saved!