

THE PRINCIPLES OF PROVIDENCE AS ORDAINED BY GOD FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF HUMANKIND IN THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Rev Nwanchor, Otubo Edwin (PhD)

Department of Religion & Human Relations

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

oe.nwanchor@unizik.edu.ng 08037508681

ABSTRACT

The topic of this paper is “The Principles of Providence as Ordained by God for The Sustainability of Humankind in The Christian Perspective” providence is an old fashioned word and has a strange ring to modern ears. Yet when we break it down into its parts the meaning becomes very clear. It comes from the Latin word video meaning ‘to see’ and pro meaning ‘before’, put together will mean “to see beforehand” in our lives, we plan beforehand but we do not see what is going to happen. God has planned everything for his creation and because he is the sovereign God, everything will come to pass as he purposed. Providence is that marvelous working of God by which all the events and happenings in His universe accomplish the purpose he has in mind. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the divine providence as evidence of God’s sovereignty. It will among other purposes, find out the reason for providence and discover the forms or kinds of providence. The methodology applied in both primary and secondary forms of investigation, findings, that God created, upholds and governs his creation, also providence is different from predestination. Predestination talks about salvation for the elect while providence is general in coverage. In providence God leaves no room for competition between himself and any other being. Recommendation, in Gods providence, there is a role for a man and that of God, for example, man has the responsibility of maintaining Gods providence. We recommend also that mankind must as a matter of necessity develop an appreciative mind towards God for his providence

INTRODUCTION

The providence of God is the working of God’s sovereignty to continually uphold, guide and care for his creation. The work of providence is an aspect of the sovereignty of God with respect to his creation. He has not only created the universe, he upholds and governs it. Theologians in the likes of William Ames (1576-1633), have referred to divine providence as involving a creatio continua, meaning that

creation continues in Gods providence. He draws his conclusion from the fact that, if it is true that new galaxies emerge and that these are natural effects of the ones that already exist, then the work of creation continues.

The providence of God leaves no room for chance or competition between God and another power. God as the primary cause, causes everything, but this does not remove the ability of creatures to cause or act. Rather, God grants to all creatures the power to act as causes in the world.

The providence of God is different from predestination in that the latter focuses particularly on the salvation of the elect, while providence is general. We cannot know all the particularities of Gods providential plans, only God knows how all things will work together.

For Aristotle, the idea of providence is that God exercises a general care over his creation, against which it has been argued that Gods care encompasses the smallest as well as the greatest. The hairs of our head are all numbered, as are the daily occurrences of awaking and falling asleep. Providence is detailed, meticulous and God continually exerts his power to keep his creation in being, without which the created would become nothing.

THE ETYMOLOGICAL HISTORY AND CONCEPT OF PROVIDENCE

The English word, providence is derived from the Latin word, providentia, which primarily means foresight or foreknowledge but also forethought. Providence in the religious sense was captured by a philosopher, Cicero who used the phrase the “providence of the gods” (*Decorum providentia*), the stoic philosophers who thoroughly discussed the significance of the term, providence and some of them wrote treatises on the subject.

The work of providence is an aspect of the sovereignty of God with respect to his creation. He has not only created the universe, but he upholds it and governs it. And, if it is true that new galaxies emerge and that these are not natural effects of ones that already exist, then the work of creation continues. Some theologians, such as the prominent theologian William Ames (1576–1633), have referred to divine providence as involving a *creatio continua*. Those who have articulated the doctrine have done so in the face of various objections from pagan and sub-theistic notions of God’s care. For example, Aristotle’s idea of providence is that God exercises a general care over the creation, against which it has been argued that God’s care encompasses the smallest as well as the greatest. The hairs of our head are all numbered, as are the daily occurrences of awaking and falling asleep. Further, unlike the deists, who think of God’s creation is activated by an inherent impulse of physical motion at the creative moment, the creation is dependent on the immediate

power of God. Providence is detailed, “meticulous,” and God continually exerts his power to keep his creation in being, without which the created would become nothing. So, to distinguish the biblical view from alternatives, as already noted, there is a sense in which God’s preservation through time of his creation involves a continuous creation.

THE CONCEPT OF DARK PROVIDENCE

Having seen that trials or dark providences are part of the Christian way, we must now inquire into their purpose. While it is always wrong to react in rebellion and anger against God’s dealings with us, it is right to consider why they are part of our lot. There is a right and wrong way of asking ‘Why?’ We must reflect on what God is doing. What is the Lord seeking to teach us through these unpleasant experiences? Here are some of the designs that God has in our sufferings:

SUFFERINGS ARE TO TRY US

‘The crook in the lot’, says Boston, ‘is the great engine of providence for making men appear in their true colors’. C.S. Lewis once referred to sufferings as ‘blockades on the road to hell’. The same sun that melts the ice also hardens the clay. Says Andrew Fuller, ‘Afflictions refine some, they consume others’. The test of a person’s Christianity is what happens in the storm, when the house is battered in the winds of affliction.

The faith of the Christian is tried and tested, wrote Simon Peter (*1 Peter 1:3-7*). It is the trial that determines the authenticity of our faith. Peter reminds the Christians to whom he writes of the great hope they have, although for the present, they are grieved by many trials. The reason for this is that God is sitting as a refiner of gold. He wants to bring out the pure gold of naked trust in Himself. When all the dross of self-trust is purged out then faith will be to the praise, honor and glory of Jesus Christ.

Abraham was a man of faith and he endured the trial of faith. God commanded him to leave his comfortable life in Ur and go out on the strength of a promise that he would give him a land and a seed. But the promise never seemed to be fulfilled. There was no sign of an heir. In the impatience of unbelief, Abraham tried to do it his way. Hagar’s son Ishmael was the result, but God will have none of it. Ishmael must go. But Isaac must be laid on the altar. Until God had Isaac, he did not have all of Abraham that there was. God speaks as if he newly discovered the faith of Abraham: ‘Now I know that you fear God’ (Genesis 22:12). Abraham had come through the test. His faith was pure gold.

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie, my grace all-sufficient shall be thy

Supply; the flame shall not hurt thee; I only design Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

SUFFERINGS ARE TO BUILD CHARACTER

Whatever else we may have, if we do not have character, we have nothing. It is character that determines destiny. The only failure that matters in the end is the failure to build character. In ordinary life character is formed by overcoming difficulties. The state of our society today militates against character building. Even in the church, young people are not exposed to the influences that will build character. No wonder so many remain spiritual babes.

We see a renowned athlete winning a gold medal. He may make it look easy on the day, but victory could not have been achieved without painstaking training and meeting increasingly tough opposition. The process by which God builds character is outlined in romans 5:1-5. Paul says that ‘We glory in tribulation’. The Greek word translated ‘tribulation’ means ‘to press’. The word is used to describe the crushing of the grapes and the olives. The figure suggests the heavy pressure of outward trouble or inward anguish. Tribulation produces ‘patient endurance- the ability to stay with it and not fall apart. This brave endurance in turn produces what the authorized (king James) version translates as experience but which is more accurately translated as ‘character’ – the character which results from a process of trial.

We might be tempted to ask whether God can build character without suffering. That is a hypothetical question. He has not chosen to do so. Young Joseph gave every indication that he was spoiled. He was not fit to be a leader. It took the pit and the prison and twenty-two years of preparation before he was ready to do the work God intended him to do. In the prison, he was laid in irons (psalm 105:18). Variant readings are ‘the iron entered his soul’ and ‘his soul entered the iron’. It was more than Joseph’s flesh that felt the iron.

God prepares us as if there were no one else to prepare. A sculptor working at a piece of marble when asked: ‘What are you doing?’ replied, ‘I am chipping away everything that does not look like a horse’.

THERE IS ALWAYS A PURPOSE OF LOVE BEHIND DARK PROVIDENCES

One of the most difficult things to do when the road is rough or when the billows are passing over us, is to feel that God still loves us. It is the last thing we can accept. But we are not called to feel; we are called to believe. In this book, in all their afflictions, Murdoch Campbell tells of a minister in the north of Scotland who

suddenly lost his spiritually minded wife. As he prayed that night in the presence of friends he said, 'if an angel from heaven told me that this would work for my good I would not believe him but because thy word says it I must believe it.

We are to measure God's love not by his providence but by his promise. 'When we cannot trace Gods hand, we can trust Gods heart', says C. H. Spurgeon. When providences are dark, it is difficult to read them. It is the word of God that tells us how to view them.

*Judge not the lord by feeble sense
But trust him for his grace
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face*

By faith, we have to trace it all to the hand of our father. The 'crook in the lot' is all of Gods making. We are prone to stop at second causes. We may look at doctors who may have been negligent. We may think of drivers who have been careless. We may feel bitterness over 'what might have been'.

Joseph after suffering the greatest indignities at the hand of his brothers, traced it all to the hand of God: 'But as for you, you meant evil against me but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save people alive' (Genesis 15:20).

PRINCIPLES OF PROVIDENCE

Our faith should be strengthened as we consider God's providence—how our loving father carefully governs our lives. As you study providence, there are five principles that you should keep in mind:

1. The doctrine of providence reminds us that God is the sovereign Lord of history. It is important to remember that God is the creator and judge of the world, moving it toward an ultimate goal that we cannot fully grasp. For this reason, we must remember not to align our faith with any particular political movement or institution.
2. We often see the pattern of providence only in retrospect. We are often so overcome by grief or anger about our circumstances that we struggle to see how these experiences fit into God's plan for us. Remember the story of Joseph? Surely Joseph wondered about the goodness of a God who allowed all of those things to happen to him. And yet through those trials, God raised up Joseph and saved the entire nation of Israel.
3. God uses suffering and tragedy as occasions to display his glory. It is easy to doubt God's love during times of tragedy. But behind the suffering, we are able to experience the love of a wise father who has promised never to leave or forsake us.

4. God's grace is sufficient when the answer is no. When we are denied requests or experience afflictions, like Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, we come to know more deeply the sufficiency of God's grace.

5. The cross is the place where grace and providence embrace. No other place can confirm the truth of Romans 8:28 like the cross of Jesus. Tortured and abandoned, Jesus experienced the ultimate betrayal and sacrifice. Yet we look back on the event as a triumph, for God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ that day. We can be sure that he will also take the broken pieces of our lives and piece them together into a beautiful, whole mosaic.

ASPECTS OF PROVIDENCE

Nothing is more practical than the doctrine of providence, for it engenders both faith and godly fear. When Christ teaches us how to deal with anxiety, He reminds us that God the Father feeds every little bird and clothes every flower with its lovely colors (Matt. 6:25–30). How much more, then, should we trust Him to care for His own beloved children? Whether one is willing to admit it or not, everyone constantly lives in the presence of the living God. The more the believer is conscious of God's providence, the more it can be said of him, as B.B. Warfield wrote, "Everywhere he sees God in His mighty stepping, everywhere he feels the working of His mighty arm, the throbbing of His mighty heart."

Our God is in control. While we cannot fully plumb the depths of God's ways, we can still affirm that "... of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever" (Rom. 11:36, KJV throughout). There are many things for which we do not know the reason, but for everything we know who has ordained them. Obadiah Sedgwick wrote, "No one is so fit to govern the world as He who made it." His perfect wisdom, holiness, justice, power, love, and goodness will not fail.

Consequently, we can be like the child on board a ship who remained peaceful while wind and waves raged around him. When asked how he kept calm in such a violent storm, he replied, "My father is the captain." How much more can the church sing: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Ps. 46:1–2). God's providence benefits believers in many ways. Let's consider five of them.

TRUST IN GOD'S FATHERLY SOVEREIGNTY

First, the God-centered Christian worldview establishes our trust that our Father reigns over all things through His Son by the Holy Spirit. The Heidelberg Catechism says:

The eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (who of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that is in them; who likewise upholds and governs the same by His eternal counsel and providence) is for the sake of Christ His Son, my God and my Father; on whom I rely so entirely, that I have no doubt but He will provide me with all things necessary for soul and body; and further, that He will make whatever evils He sends upon me, in this valley of tears, turn out to my advantage; for He is able to do it, being Almighty God, and willing, being a faithful Father. (Q&A 26)

The doctrines of providence and adoption link arms to undergird God's children with a wonderful confidence. The sovereign God is their loving Father in Jesus Christ, so that in all of life they "... are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him as by a Father; yet never cast off," as the Westminster Confession of Faith says (12.1). John Cotton exclaimed, "Is it a light matter for the God of heaven and earth to be called your Father, since you are but men?" As our Father, God will surely give "... provision for a son here and provision for an heir hereafter," for "God nurtures us" and "hath given us an inheritance."

We live in a dangerous world. Disease, disaster, and war sweep many people into eternity every day. Evil men oppress and abuse the godly and the innocent. Unseen to our eyes, Satan and his host go about like roaring lions seeking to devour people and drag them to damnation (1 Peter 5:8). The deceptions and passions of sin rage in our hearts, so that we are never safe from ourselves. Realism demands that we live wisely and prudently in such a perilous place.

However, Christians need not live fearfully or anxiously but may cling to the promise of Romans 8:28: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Thomas Watson wrote: "All the various dealings of God with his children do by a special providence turn to their good. 'All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant' (Ps. 25:10)." He concluded, "The grand reason why all things work for good, is the near and dear interest which God has in His people. The Lord has made a covenant with them. 'They shall be my people, and I will be their God' (Jer. 32:38)."

God's providence comforts His covenant people. Sedgwick said:

No good man ever lacked anything that was good for him. I may lack a thing which is good, but not which is good for me: "The LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. 84:11).

God has a special providence over His living church because we are the apple of His eye, His lambs, His children, and His jewels (Zech. 2:8; Isa. 40:11; 49:15; Mal. 3:17). His care for His people is entirely gracious, tender, mysterious, glorious, exact, and often extraordinary.

The God-centered Christian worldview establishes our trust that our Father reigns over all things through His Son by the Holy Spirit.

Faith in God's providence supports the Christian's service to God. It is his shield against all the attacks of Satan (Eph. 6:16). Warfield said, "A firm faith in the universal providence of God is the solution of all earthly troubles." Rather than being paralyzed with fear or driven about by anxiety, the strong believer stands on the stable ground of divine providence and advances ahead in firm obedience and submission to his Master's will.

CHILDLIKE FAITH IN PRAYER

Second, people who believe in God's providence are people of prayer who know and believe that their providing God commands, hears, and answers prayer. They know that "... every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

John Calvin said:

It will not suffice simply to hold that there is One whom all ought to honor and adore, unless we are also persuaded that he is the fountain of every good, and that we must seek nothing elsewhere than in him. . . . No drop will be found either of wisdom and light, or of righteousness or power or rectitude, or of genuine truth, which does not flow from him, and of which he is not the cause.

Prayer is the cry of childlike faith. When we pray, "Our Father which art in heaven . . . Give us this day our daily bread," as our Lord taught us (Matt. 6:9, 11), we acknowledge God "to be the only fountain of all good, and that neither our care nor industry" can get us what we need and desire without His blessing, and therefore, we "withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it alone" in Him (HC 125).

The Lord teaches us to go to Him with every need, with all our frailty, with all our cares. Knowing that He is our provider, we should seek from Him our food and drink, health, clothing, good relationships in our families, success in our callings, the Spirit's power in our churches, and peace for our nation. We should cast "all [our] care upon him; for he careth for [us]" (1 Peter 5:7).

Knowing God's providence fosters humility, which is vital for prayer. The Holy Scriptures remind us that no matter how hard we work; we cannot get anything unless we receive it from His hand (Ps. 104:28; John 3:27). Indeed, we cannot move a finger, blink an eye, or think a thought without His enablement. We may have the greatest skills and the most impressive list of experiences and references, but "it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:18). Even with strength and skill,

we might toil all day and fail to attain our goals. “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Ps. 127:1).

Therefore, we must trust in God alone and seek all good things from Him. Oh, to have a true sense of our constant dependence on Him! So often people go to work day after day, buy groceries, take medicine, pay bills, and enjoy pleasures—but do not give a thought to Him and the fact that all depends on His will. Their hearts are lifted up in pride, they forget the Lord, and they say, “My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth” (Deut. 8:17). Their prayerlessness is the nail that seals the coffin of their spiritual deadness. But the child of God has the Spirit of adoption crying in his heart, “Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). He knows by a Spirit-infused instinct that all deliverance from evil and enjoyment of good comes from his Father. And therefore, he prays. And you? Do you pray? Are your prayers a sincere seeking after Him who is the fountain of all good? Do you really believe in the God of providence?

PATIENCE IN ADVERSITY

The Heidelberg Catechism highlights three more benefits of knowing God’s providence:

That we may be patient in adversity; thankful in prosperity; and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from His love; since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move. (Q & A 28)

A third benefit, therefore, is patience in adversity. We naturally respond to adversity by sinking into self-centered bitterness or falling into despondency. However, even when our circumstances are turbulent or painful, the Christian should cultivate inner quietness by exercising faith in God’s providence. David said, “I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it” (Ps. 39:9). Godly quietness under sorrow comes not from hardening our hearts and shutting down our emotions but from clinging to God in the midst of the storm.

Christian patience in adversity (“longsuffering”) is a supernatural fruit of God’s Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Unbelievers may grimly resign themselves to circumstances they cannot change; believers, however, persevere in faith, believing that the greatest evils will be turned to their profit, and will work for their good, in the hands of a loving, faithful God. By God’s grace and in answer to prayer, we can be “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering” (Col. 1:11). By the Spirit, Christ’s disciples are willing cross bearers (Luke 9:23).

Those who believe in providence rest in God's purposes for their afflictions. They understand and approve of God's intention to train up His children to mature holiness by their sorrows and trials (Prov. 3:11–12; Heb. 12:5–11). They say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. . . . It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Ps. 119:67, 71). Though they often cannot see how, they trust that God is glorifying Himself through their struggles, not least by showing that He is worthy of their faith and godly fear even when He does not give them happiness here and now (Job 1:1, 8–11, 20–21). They live in union and communion with Christ and rejoice to suffer with Him, knowing that one day they shall reign with Him in glory (Rom. 8:17). They resolve to "... run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:1–2).

The Christian's hope in God's purposes depends on faith that He really does control all things. Jōhannes Vander Kemp said, "If no universal Ruler directed whatsoever comes to pass, how should good men be able to quiet and comfort themselves in all their tribulations? Would not their condition be worse than that of the wicked?"

One of the greatest trials a believer may endure is that of spiritual darkness. Westminster Confession of Faith 18.4 notes, "True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted," sometimes "by God's withdrawing the light of His countenance, and suffering even such as fear Him to walk in darkness and to have no light" (see Isa. 50:10). Anthony Burgess explained that God may temporarily withdraw a believer's joy and assurance of His love so that His beloved child may taste the bitterness of sin and learn to hate it more, grow in humility, treasure joy and peace and not take them for granted, glorify Him by obedience, and increase in compassion to comfort others.

Whether or not the saint walking in darkness can discern its spiritual benefit, he can rest in knowing that his sovereign God always works for His glory and the good of His elect. William Gurnall said, "The Christian must trust in a withdrawing God."

Dear believer, imagine for a moment that everything in life always went "your way." You were never afflicted. You never faced adversity. What would you be like? I know what I would be like: I'd be a spoiled, immature, self-centered, proud sinner who only believed in myself. Though my flesh does not always want to admit it, I know deep within that I've needed every affliction that my heavenly Father has ever sent my way to deliver me from myself and to conform me increasingly to His Son. Without adversity, I never would be a sin-hater, a Christ-lover, and a holiness-pursuer. I would not be the Christian that I am. I suspect you are no different from me.

In all our afflictions, but especially after we have come out of afflictions (Heb. 12:11), we shall find that the bitterness of our sorrows is far outweighed by the sweetness of God's good purpose. Our loving Father will not waste one tear of His dear children (Ps. 56:8). Samuel Rutherford said, "When I am in the cellar of affliction, I look for the Lord's choicest wines."

THANKFULNESS IN PROSPERITY

A fourth benefit of providence, which can be as difficult to exercise as patience in adversity, is thankfulness in prosperity. Although adversity is real, frequent, and sometimes overwhelming, we are also immersed in God's good creation, which is to be "received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. 4:4). God "giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (6:17). We never lack good gifts, and therefore, never lack reasons to praise the God of providence (Eph. 5:20). Wilhelmus à Brakel said, "The proper use of God's providence will render you an exceptional measure of gratitude and will teach you to end in the Lord as the only Giver of all the good which you may receive for soul and body." Gratitude is essential to godliness. Without thanksgiving, we cannot obey God's will: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18). Calvin said,

I call "piety" that reverence joined with love for God which the knowledge of his benefits induces. For until men recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his fatherly care, that he is the Author of their every good, that they should seek nothing beyond him—they will never yield him willing service.

Both adversity and prosperity have their dangers. "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, 'Who is the LORD? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain'" (Prov. 30:8–9). Both adversity and prosperity have accompanying duties: "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms" (James 5:13).

Knowing God's providence fosters humility, which is vital for prayer.

At the heart of thankfulness is the faith to look past God's good gifts to appreciate the goodness of God Himself. The Christian loves God more than His gifts and, while grateful for daily mercies, counts the Lord as his portion (Lam. 3:22–24). He sings, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation" (Ps. 68:19).

People rarely appreciate the good things they receive, for they delude themselves into thinking they deserve them. Few have learned the lesson of Jacob: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth faithfulness, which thou

hast shewed unto thy servant” (Gen. 32:10). The fact is that we deserve to be tormented in the flames of God’s wrath and to be denied even a drop of water (Luke 16:24–25).

When I visited my father after his open-heart surgery, I found him crying with thankfulness. When I asked why he was so grateful, he said: “A nurse just came in and moistened my lips with an ice cube, and I couldn’t help but think of the rich man in hell who had not one drop of water to cool his tongue. I deserve his portion.”

Have you ever been truly thankful for an ice cube? May God help you and me to be truly grateful for the smallest kindnesses shown to us by Him and by each other.

A GOOD EXPECTATION FOR AN UNKNOWN FUTURE

Finally, providence grants us as Christians an assured trust in God for the unknown future. Therefore, Christians should be eternal optimists. Heidelberg Catechism 28 says that the doctrine of providence encourages us to “place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father.” Literally, the Dutch reads, “have a good expectation.” Child of God, do you have a good expectation for your future? The hand of our Father rules the world, and no one can stop His purposes from being fulfilled (Dan. 4:35). “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9). You are in the hand of the Father and the Son, and there is no safer place in the world (John 10:28–29).

Since God rules over all things, we can rejoice now that we will one day arrive safely at our everlasting inheritance. Paul says: “If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:31–32). Paul glories in the certain outcome of providence:

I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Vv. 38–39)

The doctrine of providence also implies that the opposite is true. If God is against you, who can help you? Nothing in all creation can shield you from the wrath of God if you continue in your sins and refuse to receive His Son with a broken-hearted faith. If you are an unrepentant sinner, consider that you are an enemy of the God of providence. You do not trust His fatherly sovereignty but deeply resent Him and prefer to worship gods of your own imagination. You proudly rely on yourself rather than seeking His grace in prayer. You do not have a thankful heart, though every day

you breathe God's air and drink His water. If you do not repent, then He will take all good away from you and use His sovereign power to punish you forever.

By His providence, the Lord is gathering a people to Himself out of this wicked world. The most extraordinary providence of God is His sending His Son to redeem sinners (Gal. 4:4–5). When evil men crucified Jesus Christ, they fulfilled the sovereign purpose of God that His Son die as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45; Acts 4:27–28). God raised Christ from the dead by His power, and now Christ sits at God's right hand as the King of kings and Lord of lords (Ps. 2:6; 110:1).

Today, God is working through the gospel so that everyone who turns from sin, trusts in Christ, and calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Rom. 10:13). Could it be that God's providence arranged for you to come across this article so that you would be converted and follow Christ? If you are not yet saved from your sin, then recognize that you are not reading these words by accident. God is speaking to you. By God's grace, turn away from what you have formerly relied on and put your hope in the living God. And then rejoice, for God causes all things to work together for the good of those converted by His call, those who love Him (Rom. 8:28). In all their afflictions on the way to glory, they can say, "We are more than conquerors" (v. 37).

Dr. Joel R. Beeke is president and professor of systematic theology and homiletics at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, a pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, Mich., and editorial director of Reformation Heritage Books. He is author of numerous books, including *Living for God's Glory: An Introduction to Calvinism and Reformed Systematic theology*

FACT'S ABOUT PROVIDENCE

God is writing a Story—the Story of redemption. It is grander and greater than anything we can imagine. Here are some important things we need to remind ourselves often about His Story and how it relates to the story He is writing in and through each of our lives:

Our individual stories are part of a much bigger Story.

At times, we will experience heartache, loss, disappointment, and unfulfilled longings. But He is weaving all of that into a Story that will have us lost in wonder and worship when we get to the end.

Ultimately, this Story is not about us, but about Him.

We are but players in His Story. We are not the stars. He is!

Perspective makes all the difference.

God sees the beginning and the end and everything in between; we only see this present moment. In storytelling language, His is an omniscient point of view, whereas ours is limited to what we can perceive from our earthly vantage point. He has a wide-angle lens and sees the whole mural He is painting in all of history. We see only the little speck of time and space we occupy at this moment.

God works in unexpected, unexplainable ways to accomplish His purposes.

We should not expect Him to write our story the way we would write it.

God sovereignly and purposefully ordains and orchestrates the circumstances of our lives.

There is no such thing as happenstance or accident. Nothing catches Him off guard. There is no plot twist in your story or ours of which He is unaware or that He can't overcome.

What we see now is not the whole story.

If we could see what God sees and know what He knows, our hearts would be at peace.

We can trust Him to write the story of those we love.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't help or support them. But we don't want to rescue them from circumstances that may be a chapter of the story He is writing in their lives.

The challenges we face may be a part of God writing someone else's story.

God wants to use our story to be a means of His grace and intervention in the lives of others—even those who may have “wrecked” our story.

Those who trust in Him will never be disappointed.

Not every chapter in this life has a “happy” ending. But every true child of God will live “happily ever after.” We can be sure of that.

You can trust God to write your story...

And you can be sure that in the end, He will right your story!

CONCLUSION

Providence is God's loving kindness and cares for mankind. This is manifest in His provisions, sustainability and control over nature and mankind. Do we believe that everything in the world and in our own lives down to the minutest details is ordered by the providence of God? Do we ever take time to observe and meditate on the

workings of providence? It should be a delight and pleasure to us to discern how God works all things in the world for His own glory and His people's good. But it should be an even greater pleasure to observe the particular designs of providence in our own lives. With profound wisdom, infinite tenderness and incessant vigilance He has managed all that concerns us from first to last. What a great God of great providence, who shows kindness and care to the entire creation and humanity.

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