

## #28 THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE

### 30 PRACTICAL DOCTRINES YOU NEED TO KNOW | DR. RANDY WHITE

#### WHAT IS PROVIDENCE AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Providence is a theological doctrine that refers to the activity of God in the governance of human and natural affairs.
- At issue: how much does God direct, control, or guide the happenings of our everyday lives and the world around us?
- The doctrine of Providence is important because it is a fundamental part of a believer's worldview.
  - Do we view the world with a fatalist point of view: *God has determined all things and therefore my activity and choices are predetermined?*
  - Do we view the world with a self-determined point of view: *God has set the world in order and I am responsible to align with His order?*

#### THE PURITAN VIEW OF PROVIDENCE HAS LARGELY CONTROLLED AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT

- Providence is the government of God, the activity in which God, “doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least...” (Westminster Confession, Chapter IV, Paragraph I).
  - It is done, “by His most wise and holy providence” and “according to His infallible fore-knowledge.”
  - This is all done by, “the free and immutable counsel of His own will” and God is “the first Cause” and “all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly.” All of this clearly says that God is responsible for all that happens.
  - Amazingly, Reformed theology still says that God is not guilty for being the “Cause” of everything that takes place, because, “by the same providence, He ordereth them [the things that happen through His providence] to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”
    - That is, God isn't responsible because He doesn't make things happen with primary actions, but with secondary actions.
    - This is an unconscionable position, in my opinion.
    - As to “the sinfulness thereof” (i.e.: of the actions that come by God's providence), they, “proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is, nor can be, the author or approver of sin.” (Chapter IV, Paragraph IV).
- The Belgic Confession has the same theology: “nothing happens in this world without His appointment; nevertheless, God neither is the Author of nor can be charged with the sins which are committed. For His power and

goodness are so great and incomprehensible that He orders and executes His work in the most excellent and just manner” (Article XIII).

- The Providence doctrine that God causes all things but is not responsible for any thing is, “surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire into farther...” (Article XIII).
  - I believe that NO CREED and NO DOCTRINE whatsoever is “off limits” to our curious inquiry.
- Because of this doctrine, “nothing can befall us by chance” (Belgic, Article XIII).

#### PROVIDENCE IN EVERYDAY LIVING

- The standard view of providence is that *there is no such thing as luck*.
  - “*What appears to us as random chance is in fact overseen by a sovereign God*” <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-coincidence.html>
- The standard view teaches of God's *active* will and God's *passive* will in which some things He *actively* causes and others He allows to happen.
- Is the standard teaching (which is essentially the Puritan / Reformed Theology view) Biblical?

#### A FEW PASSAGES THAT UPHOLD THE STANDARD VIEW

- Proverbs 16:33 – the common reading fails to allow the Biblical definition and dispensational understanding of *lots* as a tool through which God once spoke. Proverbs 18:18 is similar.
- Matthew 10:29-30 – the knowledge of God is not the same as the cause of God.

#### A FEW PASSAGES THAT DENY THE STANDARD VIEW

- Deuteronomy 22:6, 1 Samuel 6:9, 2 Samuel 1:6, Ecc. 9:11, Luke 10:31 – all use the word *chance* in the KJV.

#### A DIFFERENT VIEW OF PROVIDENCE

- From the beginning, God has given man a free-will that is mutually exclusive with the Puritan doctrine of Providence.
- God can interject Himself into the free-will of man at any time in order to fulfill His will. He did so with the Saul on the road to Damascus.
- Examples of God's interjection cannot prove His Providence of all things.
- A worldview in which God has set certain laws of nature, revealed His will, and allows mankind to make responsible choices is perfectly Biblical.
- Because this world is also under the curse, sometimes random natural occurrences harm those we love.
- Prayer is our means of seeking the hand of God in protecting us from natural occurrences.
- Biblical insight and wise choices are our means of creating sustainable and happy circumstances.