

Providence

David Feddes

What is providence?

Providence is the almighty and ever present power of God by which he upholds, 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, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty—all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but from his fatherly hand. (*Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 27*)

Trusting Your Luck

- Lotteries, casinos, and other gambling
- Good luck charms
- Lucky numbers and lucky days
- Random universe, governed by chance
- Is existence just a lottery?

Not by chance but from His fatherly hand

Luck

- Vague
- Impersonal
- Heartless
- Mindless

Providence

- Definite
- Personal
- Loving
- Wise

Providence in Jonah's life

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah...
The Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea... The Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah... The Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land... the Lord God appointed a plant... God appointed a worm... God appointed a scorching east wind.

Providence

- **Preserves:** God upholds all things.
- **Plans:** God directs all things.
- **Provides:** God cares for our needs.

Preserves: upholds all things

He **upholds** the universe by the word of his power. (Hebrews 1:3)

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and **in him all things hold together.**

(Colossians 1:16-17)

Plans: directs all things

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who **works all things according to the counsel of his will.**

(Ephesians 1:11)

And we know that **in all things God works** for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

(Romans 8:28)

Provides: cares for our needs.

26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ... Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? (Matthew 6:26-30)

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Providence in Joseph's life

- Dreamed of God's plan for him
- Favored by his father; hated by his brothers
- Sold into slavery
- Excelled as a slave for Potiphar
- Framed for attempted rape
- Excelled as model prisoner and explained dreams to his fellow prisoner
- Forgotten by his fellow prisoner
- Promoted to govern Egypt and save many

God meant it for good

And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life... God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. (Genesis 45:5-8)

You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. (Genesis 50:20)

Nothing too great or deadly for God to govern.

He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him, “What have you done?” (Daniel 4:35).

Behold, I have created the smith who blows the fire of coals and produces a weapon for its purpose. I have also created the ravager to destroy; no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed. (Isaiah 54:16-17)

Nothing too small for God to notice

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6-7).

"If Cleopatra's nose had been shorter, the face of the world would have been changed." (Pascal)

God's plan includes human and demonic sins

- Job was devastated by Satan only after the Lord allowed it. (Job 1-2)
- Saul was tormented “by a harmful spirit from the Lord.” (1 Sam 16:14, 19:9)
- David’s census was prompted by Satan and by the Lord. (1 Chron 21:1; 2 Sam 24:1)
- Ahab died after lying spirits guided prophets in God’s plan to kill Ahab. (1 Kings 22)
- Judas was possessed by Satan, as God planned to sacrifice Jesus. (Luke 22:3)

Ultimate sin, ultimate plan

This Jesus, delivered up **according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God**, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. (Acts 2:23)

For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, **to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.** (Acts 4:27-28)

Creator and Almighty Father

The eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by his eternal counsel and providence, is my God and Father because of Christ his Son. I trust him so much that I do not doubt he will provide whatever I need for body and soul, and he will turn to my good whatever adversity he sends me in this sad world. He is able to do this because he is almighty God; he desires to do this because he is a faithful Father. (*Heidelberg Catechism A. 26*)

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How does the knowledge of God's creation and providence help us?

We can be patient when things go against us, 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.

(Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 28)