

Subject: *The Soft Pillow of God's Providence, Part 1*

Scripture: *Psalms 145:1-21*

It is always good to know the truth of God's Word, and it is even better to remember the truth just when you need it the most. In times like these, it is so important to know the truth and to use that knowledge as a source of comfort and peace. One of the most comforting truths is to know that God is ultimately in control of what happens in this world. This is referred to as the providence of God. It is the truth that God is working all things together for His glory and the good of His people.

What happens in this world is not left to chance. God is on His throne and He rules and overrules the will and desires of man. Knowing that God is in control of all that happens is a soft pillow to rest on. In spite of the pandemic, in spite of the election, and in spite of all else that takes place God is working all things out the way He wants them to be.

R. C. Sproul: "When people settled this country, they named a Rhode Island city *Providence*. That would not happen in our culture today. The idea of divine providence has all but disappeared from our culture, which is tragic. One way in which the secular mind-set has made inroads into the Christian community is through the worldview that assumes that everything happens according to fixed natural causes, and God, if He is actually there, is above and beyond it all. He is just a spectator in heaven looking down, perhaps cheering us on but exercising no immediate control over what happens on earth. Historically, however, Christians have had an acute sense that this is our Father's world and that the affairs of men and nations, in the final analysis, are in His hands."

1. THE MEANING OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

The word "providence" is not found in the Bible, but it is clearly taught.

- *Providence may be defined as God's work behind the scenes (His unseen hand).*

This is different from God's work in miracles, when He suspends or interrupts the normal order of things. In providence God works in and through the normal order of things to accomplish His plan. When a miracle takes place we say that was the hand of God. But in the normal course of life we should be aware that it is the hand of God at work.

When we think of God's providence we are talking about how God governs and preserves all things. The word "providence" comes from two Latin words meaning "to see before or in advance." The term involves more than God knowing or seeing things in advance and includes the idea of God's provision, protection, preservation, government and care. Here are a few excellent statements on divine providence:

The Westminster Confession of Faith:

"God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy." (published 1647, 5.1)

Wayne Grudem: "God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2)

cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his purposes.”

John MacArthur: “Divine providence is God’s preserving his creation, operating in every event in the world, and directing the things in the universe to his appointed end for them.”

Thomas Watson: “Providence is God’s ordering all issues and events of things, after the counsel of his will, to his own glory.”

2. THE BASIS OF GOD’S PROVIDENCE

Technically, God’s providence is classified as one of His works, like His work of creation or salvation. But providence can also be considered as one of God’s attributes because it is closely related to so many of His attributes. Providence springs from God’s attributes.

- A. God is sovereign – He has all authority. Providence is related to God’s control.
- B. God is omnipotent – He has all power, ability.
- C. God is omniscient – He has all knowledge.
- D. God is omnipresent – He is near and involved.
- E. God is good – He always does what is best. Providence is closely related to His goodness.
- F. God is righteous – He always does what is right.
- G. God is faithful – He can always be trusted.
- H. God is unchangeable – He always stays true to His character.

3. THE SCOPE OF GOD’S PROVIDENCE

Providence covers every possible thing in the universe: in the physical world and in the spiritual world; in nature and animals, in people and nations; in birth and life; in our successes and failures, in things apparently accidental or unimportant; in protection and provision for God’s people; in answering prayer; in saving sinners and punishing evil.

- A. Preserving and maintaining all created things

God preserves and maintains all things as long as He wills for them to exist.

Colossians 1:17 *And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

Hebrews 1:3 *Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

2 Peter 3:7 *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

Psalms 148:8 *Fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling his word.*

Matthew 6:26 *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*

Matthew 10:29 *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.*

- B. **The rise and fall of nations and leaders** – We can see God’s hand in the glove of history. It has been said that history is His story.

Job 12:23 *He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again.*

Proverbs 21:1 *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.*

Daniel 2:20-21 ²⁰ *Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: ²¹ And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.*

Daniel 4:34-35 ³⁴ *And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: ³⁵ And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

Acts 17:26 *And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.*

4. OUR RESPONSE TO GOD’S PROVIDENCE

- A. **Accept God’s providence and submit to it** – He is in control, not us.
- B. **Thank God for His providence** – Give Him credit for working out every detail for His glory and our good.
- C. **Trust God in His providence** – Rest in His wisdom and power to work in every situation. He always does what is right and what is best.
- D. **Don’t worry and fret, but pray about all things**

1 Peter 5:7 *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

Philippians 4:6-7 ⁶ *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*