

Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

Topic 2 - The Doctrine of God

Lesson 41 - God's Attributes: Sovereignty

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Divine Providence

- “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.” - Grudem, pg. 315
- Second London Baptist Confession: [Chapter 5 - Divine Providence](#)
- God created, preserves, and governs everything in the universe.
- God is directing everything to His appointed end for them. - MacArthur, pg. 218
- General Providence = God’s control of the whole universe (all creation).
- Special Providence = God’s control of the details of the universe, including the details of history and the details in the lives of individual people.

Divine Providence

- God's providence encompasses the following:
- The universe - [Psa. 103:19; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:11](#)
- The physical realm - [Job 37:1-13; Psa. 104:14; 135:6; Matt. 5:45](#)
- The animals - [Psa. 104:21, 28; Matt. 6:26; 10:29](#)
- The nations - [Job 12:23; Psa. 22:28; 66:7; Acts 17:26](#)
- Man's birth, life, and death - [1 Sam. 1:19-20; Psa. 139:16; Isa. 45:5; Gal. 1:15-16](#)
- Man's success and failures - [Psa. 75:6-7; Luke 1:52](#)
- Things that appear accidental or unimportant - [Prov. 16:33; Matt. 10:30](#)
- The protection of His people - [Psa. 4:8; 5:12; 63:8; 121:3; Rom. 8:28](#)
- Provision for His people - [Gen. 22:8, 14; Deut. 8:3; Phil. 4:19](#)
- Answering prayers - [1 Sam. 1:9-19; 2 Chron 33:13; Psa. 65:2; Matt. 7:7; Luke 18:7-8](#)
- Judging the Wicked - [Psa. 7:12-13; 11:6](#)

Divine Providence

- Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Divine Providence

- Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

God Preserves the Universe

- God keeps all created things existing and maintaining the properties with which He created them. He does not create new atoms, molecules, and energy - He preserves what He created, in the dynamics of nature in relative stability and predictability.
- God the Son created all things that were created ([Col. 1:16-17](#)).
- He upholds the universe by the Word of His power ([Heb. 1:3](#)) and in Him all things consist ([Col. 1:17](#)).
- In God, we live and move and have our being ([Acts 17:28](#)) and our life is hidden with Christ in God ([Col. 3:3](#)).
- He gives all creatures breath.
- Job 34:14 If He should set His heart on it, if He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, 15 All flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.
- Psa. 104:29 You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.
- God retains the right to suspend or end the normal processes of nature.

Divine Concurrence

- God causes created things, whether acting directly or ordaining them through secondary means, through their properties, to act. - MacArthur, pg. 220
- God cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do. - Grudem, pg. 317
- God “accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11).
- Examples:
 - Joseph said that God, not his brothers, sent him to Egypt ([Gen. 45:5-8](#)).
 - The Lord said that He would be with Moses and enable him to speak for God ([Exodus 4:11-12](#)).
 - God promised to deliver the enemies of Joshua and the people of Israel, but the Israelites still had to attack, but the Lord gave them the victory ([Josh. 11:6](#)).

Divine Concurrence

- Examples:
- God turns leaders hearts to do as He wills ([Prov. 21:1](#)).
- God works in believers both to will and to do His good pleasure ([Phil. 2:13](#)).
- God has ordered evil acts, such as when He moved Shimei to curse David ([2 Sam. 16:11](#)) and using Assyria to chasten His people ([Isa. 10:5](#)).
- God put a lying spirit in the mouths of Ahab's prophets ([1 Kings 22:23](#)).

Divine Concurrence

- Divine concurrence does not implicate God in sin.
- Men sin according to God's predetermination in His decree by secondary causes, so God does not directly and effectively cause the acts of sin (Gen. 45:5-8; 50:19-20; Exodus 10:1, 20; 2 Sam. 16:10-11; Isa. 10:5-7; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28).
- God does often restrain sin (Job 1:12; 2:6).
- God is able to turn an evil act so that it has good effects (Gen. 50:20; Psa. 76:10; Acts 3:13).
- The dynamics of nature do not function by themselves, but God provides their energy in every act, directing the action through secondary causes to His intended end.

Divine Concurrence

- This is not cooperative synergism, where there is partial participation by God and by man. Both are entirely engaged in causing the action. God's will is ultimately behind the act, and He provides the energy for it to be accomplished.
- Man as the second cause initiates the action in time, in response to God's direct causation, or in response to man's own desires as stimulated by the circumstances.
- God's concurrence is logically prior to human action and predetermines everything outside of Himself.
- Man never works independently of God in anything. Yet God's will does not coerce man's will.
- "This divine activity accompanies the action of man at every point, but without robbing man in any way of his freedom. The action remains the free act of man, an act for which he is held responsible." - Berkhof, pg. 173

Divine Governance

- This governance involves God's continual active rule over all things so that, through them, He will accomplish His ultimate purpose to glorify Himself. - MacArthur, pg. 221
- God governs as King of the Universe, and the Bible's main theme is the glorious reign of the Triune God over creation.
- God ever retains and exercises sovereign rule in and over all matters in the universe.
- He ordinarily governs the physical realm by the laws of nature.
- God governs humans in their moral choices by moral influences such as circumstances, motives, instruction, persuasion, and by direct, divine operation of the Holy Spirit in the inner man.

Compatibilistic Theodicy

- When properly defined, human will and divine determinism are complementary ideas, that is, it is possible to accept both without being logically inconsistent. - MacArthur, pg. 225
- Any being's will is free within the limits of its nature.
- Since depraved human nature cannot obey God, fallen humans are free only to sin. (Whatever is not of faith is sin. [Rom. 14:23](#))
- Man sins freely without coercion.

Compatibilistic Theodicy

- God predetermines all events - [Eph. 1:11](#)
- The fall resulted in physical difficulties and catastrophes - [Isa. 45:7; Rom. 8:20-22](#)
- God predetermines sin but makes man accountable for their sin - [Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; 14:16](#)
- God allows sinners to sin and also at times hardens sinners in their sin - [Rom. 9:18](#)
- God never tempts people to sin - [James 1:13](#)
- God is never blamed in Scripture for sin or portrayed as enjoying the sin He permits - [Psa. 5:4](#)

Compatibilistic Theodicy

- God never coerces man to sin, but ordains that man sin freely and thus must be culpable - James 1:14-15
- God controls people's sin, working mysteriously through secondary causes - 2 Sam. 24:1, 10; 1 Chron. 21:1
- God is glorified in His justice when He causes calamities and judges sin - Isa. 45:5-7; Ezek. 28:22; John 9:2-5
- God has graciously provided salvation from sin for those who believe in Christ - Romans 3:24-26