

# The Sovereignty and Providence of God

## Sovereignty

Absolute authority and control

- of every detail
- of every single event
- over every created thing
- both living and inanimate
- both big and small
- at all times
- for all eternity

It includes the fact that,

- being God,
- He is not only able to do as He wants
- in every situation
- because He has the power to
- but He also has the right
- and authority to do so

### Ps 135:5–6

For I know that the LORD is great,  
and that our Lord is above all gods.

- <sup>6</sup> Whatever the LORD pleases, he does,  
in heaven and on earth,  
in the seas and all deeps.

He is not obligated to anyone or anything but does exactly as He pleases

- He is fully, truly and legitimately autonomous
- He is almighty – has all power and authority
- It is in the nature of who He is
- He is God

He is supreme

- in position,
- in power
- and in prerogative

- Everything is either caused or allowed by Him

He rules absolutely

- But He rules in kindness and benevolence

### **Ps 103:19**

The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,  
and his kingdom rules over all.

### **Da 4:17**

<sup>17</sup>The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.'

## **Providence**

God acting in accordance with His will in everything

God acting in accordance with His nature in everything

### **John Piper**

“The word “providence” is striking. It comes from the word “provide” which has two parts: “*pro*” (Latin: “forward,” “on behalf of”) and “*vide*” (Latin: “to see”). So you might think that “provide” would mean: “to see forward” or “to foresee.” But it doesn’t. It means “to supply what is needed; to give sustenance or support.” And so the noun “providence” has come to mean the act of “providing for or sustaining and governing the universe by God.”

“Seeing to” something is acting on behalf of something. It is “providing.” Thus, providence is the act of God’s “seeing to” the universe. He’ll see to that.

Remember the story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac his son. Before they went up the mountain, Isaac said to his father, “Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” ([Genesis 22:7](#)). Abraham answered, “God *will provide* for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And when God had shown Abraham a ram caught in the thorns, [Genesis 22:14](#) says, “Abraham called the name of that place *The Lord Will Provide*.”

Whenever it says “provide” in Genesis 22 the Hebrew word is, “see.” Very simply Abraham said to Isaac, “God *will see* for himself the lamb.”

God never simply *sees* without *acting*. He is God. He is not a passive participant in a world that exists without his sustaining it. Wherever God is looking, God is acting. His *seeing* is always with a view to *doing*.”

### **Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary**

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/providence-of-god.html>

“The word “providence” comes from the Latin *providentia* (Gk. *pronoia* [[provnoia](#)]) and means essentially foresight or making provision beforehand. On the human plane it may be used positively, as when Tertullus praised Felix by saying, “Your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation” ( [Acts 24:2](#) ), or negatively, as when Paul admonishes us to “make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” ( [Rom 13:14](#),; RSV ).

When applied to God the idea takes on a vastly larger dimension because God not only looks ahead and attempts to make provision for his goals, but infallibly accomplishes what he sets out to do.

And because it is God's governance that is in view, it encompasses everything in the universe, from the creation of the world to its consummation, inclusive of every aspect of human existence and destiny.

Providence, then, is the sovereign, divine superintendence of all things, guiding them toward their divinely predetermined end in a way that is consistent with their created nature, all to the glory and praise of God.

This divine, sovereign, and benevolent control of all things by God is the underlying premise of everything that is taught in the Scriptures.”

Mt 17:24-27 – Shekel in the mouth of the fish that Peter caught

## The Heidelberg Catechism

The almighty and everywhere present power of God, whereby, as it were, by his hand, he still upholds heaven and earth, with all creatures, and so governs them that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, all things come not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.

God's providence

- has to do with the fact that he acts to accomplish His will in everything
- but it also has to do with the way He acts
- He rules in benevolence and kindness
- He works everything for the good of those who love Him

### Error:

Everything happens by **chance**,

- which we may or may not have influence over
- We either have good luck or bad luck

**Fatalism** – resignation in every circumstance that it is the 'will of God'

- leads to passivity in one respect
- we are not active participants in the outworking of God's will
- It is simply done to us
- often leads to legalism as well
- a fear based attempt to earn favour

### Superstition

- We believe that we are at the mercy of some hypersensitive power / being
- who we can influence by doing or not doing certain things
- Usually a fear based relationship

**God is absent** – not actively involved in daily events in the world

- This is a deistic view

**God is finite** in some way

- He does not know everything we will do

### **God is waiting for us to do / say / the right things**

- the right way
- and He will then act in accordance with our 'faith'

### **Kingdom:**

How do we understand Kingdom in the light of God's sovereignty and providence?

His kingdom has always been established

- His rule is perfect rule in Heaven

His rule is also established on earth

- But it is not yet fully come again
- It is coming
- day, by day, moment by moment
- on earth

Mt 12:28, Lk 11:20 – Jesus said the kingdom of God comes when He cast out demons by the Spirit / finger of God

Whenever we act

- in accordance with His will,
- under His authority,
- the Kingdom comes

The Kingdom has not yet fully come on earth

- but it is coming
- every day
- We see flashes of the Kingdom every time we see a miracle

The Kingdom will only be fully come once Jesus comes again

### **Ps 110:1–3**

<sup>1</sup>The LORD says to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand,  
until I make your enemies your footstool.”

- <sup>2</sup> The LORD sends forth from Zion  
your mighty scepter.  
Rule in the midst of your enemies!
- <sup>3</sup> Your people will offer themselves freely  
on the day of your power,  
in holy garments;  
from the womb of the morning,  
the dew of your youth will be yours.

He is on the throne

- There is nothing missing in His rule
- There are no other thrones

He is extending (stretching forth) His sceptre, His rule,

- From Zion,
- from heaven
- Where His rule is perfect
- He is continually applying His rule

He rules in the midst of His enemies

- Until they are made a footstool for His feet
- There is only one possible outcome
- The fact that there are still enemies does not in any way diminish the fact that He is absolutely sovereign
- Or hinder the outworking of His providence
- that results in His Kingdom coming on earth,
- as it is in heaven

His people are willing participants

- in the extending of His sceptre
- in His Kingdom coming
- He accomplishes what He wants to do on earth through us...

## **Promises**

- Are given because of who He is,
- They are backed up by who He is

That is the reason we can have persistent (enduring and active) faith

## **Response:**

Faith

- in the whole of life
- in every circumstance...

Faith is active

- never passive
- seeks to respond to what we see God doing
- to what we hear Him saying

We are able to see the fatherly hand of God in everything

- In our lives
- In world events

Devotion / worship

- Ps 110:3 – your people are willing
- Obedient and willing participation in His work,
- His battles
- Only the redeemed can give this willingly
- In worship

Believing in the providential sovereignty of God

- Shows up in the way we live in the world
- In our behaviour,
- In our speech...

## **Prayer**

A true

- genuine, accurate and active belief

- in the providential sovereignty of God
- will make us a praying people

### **Mt 6:8–13**

<sup>9</sup> Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.

<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread,

<sup>12</sup> and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

<sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

#### **Perspective** in prayer

- He is established in heaven
- He is our Father
- His rule / authority is over everything
- Including us

#### **Position** in prayer

- He is our Father
- so we have free and legitimate access

#### **Posture** in prayer

- Under authority
- Worship
- Hallowed be your name
- Faith that is based on who He is

#### **Practice** in prayer

- Prayer is asking
- Firstly for His will and His Kingdom to come
- On earth as it is in heaven
- Then for our daily provision and protection in the world

Believing in the providence of God