

Providence of God

I. What is providence?

In theology, providence is not simply foreknowledge. It is not limited to God's ability to see into the future. Providence refers specifically to God's care of the world and his ultimate **supervision** and **provision** of it.

Bruce Ware's definition:

God continually oversees and directs all things pertaining to the created order in such a way that 1) he preserves in existence and provides for the creation he has brought into being, and 2) he governs and reigns supremely over the entirety of the whole of creation in order to fulfill all of his intended purposes in it and through it.

II. Reformed / Calvinistic View

1) Providence: God decrees and is in control of every action. He is providential over everything which includes the salvation of individuals and evil.

Psalm 135:5-6 For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. ⁶ **Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth**, in the seas and all deeps.

1 Samuel 2:6-7 The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. ⁷ The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts.

Proverbs 16:33 ³³ The lot is cast into the lap, but **its every decision is from the LORD**.

Matthew 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And **not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father**.

Daniel 4:35 all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and **he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth**; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God **all things** work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

2) Foreknowledge: God knows ALL that will happen because he has decreed and pre-determined it to happen.

Psalm 139:4 ⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

Psalm 139:16 ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.

3) Human free will: No libertarian freedom. Human free will has been corrupted and men cannot choose God.

a) Sin has corrupted the human nature in all aspects of body, mind, will, etc. Humans have free will but they will never choose good. They will choose sin every single time unless God regenerates them.

Romans 3:10-12 ¹⁰ as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; **no one seeks for God**. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

Romans 8:7-8 ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh **is hostile to God**, for it **does not submit** to God's law; **indeed, it cannot**. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh **cannot please God**.

1 Corinthians 2:14 ¹⁴ **The natural person does not accept** the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and **he is not able to understand them** because they are spiritually discerned.

b) Predestines and elects people because he has pre-determined and chosen people from before creation out of his own good pleasure. **Those who are elect will choose God.**

Ephesians 1:4-5 ⁴ even as **he chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he **predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ**, according to the purpose of his will,

John 6:44 ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless **the Father who sent me draws him**. And I will raise him up on the last day

4) Predestination: God has elected certain people to be saved.

Matthew 22:14 ⁴ For many are called, but **few are chosen**.

Ephesians 1:11 ¹¹ 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**,

Romans 9:15-16 ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶ So **then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God**, who has mercy.

5) Evil: God is in control of evil. God ordains evil.

Isaiah 45:7 ⁷ **I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity**, I am the LORD, who does all these things.

Deuteronomy 32:39 ³⁹ "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; **I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal**; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

Genesis 50:20 As for you, **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.

Romans 9:20-23 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use? ²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory-

BUT God is neither evil nor responsible for evil.

Genesis 1:31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, **it was very good**. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," **for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one**.

James 1:17 ¹⁷ Every **good gift and every perfect gift is from above**, coming down from the Father of lights with whom **there is no variation or shadow due to change**.

1 John 1:5 ⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and **in him is no darkness at all**.

Psalms 5:4 ⁴ For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; **evil may not dwell with you**.

6) Dangers of this view: Fatalism, hyper-Calvinism, passivity of believers - less urgency and passion for missions and evangelism.

III. Other views

A. Open Theist

Open Theists hold this view because they see God in Scripture express disappointment, surprise, frustration, regret. God risks, asks questions about the future, test people to know their character, changes his mind and action towards certain situations.

- 1) Providence: God sovereignly sets the nature of things to be open. The future is partly determined and mostly open. God purposely chooses to self-limit himself from pre-determining and controlling the future. God is a God of risk and possibilities.
- 2) Foreknowledge: God determines some but not all of the future. God is omniscient and fully knows the present which allows him to predict patterns and likely possible outcomes. However, people can deviate and make all their decisions completely free apart from God's influence.
- 3) Human free will: Libertarian freedom. Man is completely free to choose evil or good apart from God working in them.
- 4) Predestination: God has predestined certain things to happen in a general manner.
- 5) Evil: caused by human free will
- 6) Dangers of this view: God might be seen as a weak God. Seems like he is neither omniscient nor omnipotent.

B. Arminian

- 1) Providence: God sovereignly sets the nature of humans to have free will and self limits his power of foreordination and predetermination for the sake of human free will. explains predestination and election by saying that God foreknew man would choose.
- 2) Foreknowledge: God knows the entirety of time past, present, future, and all things that come to pass are part of God's eternal decree and counsel. He knows what people will choose and what will happen, but he has not pre-determined anything.
- 3) Free will: People are free to choose good or evil. **Those who choose God are elect.**
- 4) Predestination: Those who choose God are predestined.
- 5) Evil: Evil was not the will of God. Evil is caused by men.
- 6) Dangers of this view: Faith can become man-centered rather than God-centered.

IV. Why is this important to know?

- A) Our theology affects how we view God.
- B) Our theology affects how we view life.
- C) Our theology affects how we pray.