

# —Devine Providence—

Adult Sunday School

October 17, 2021

**“The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”. Psalm 84:11**

## Introduction

Obadiah Sedgwick wrote: “No good man ever lacked anything that was good for him. I may lack a thing which is good, **but not which is good for me.**”

Nothing is more practical than the doctrine of providence, for it engenders both faith and godly fear. When Christ teaches us how to deal with anxiety, He reminds us that God the Father feeds every little bird and clothes every little flower with lovely colors (Matt. 6:25-30). Whether one is willing to admit it or not, everyone constantly lives in the presence of the living God. B.B. Warfield wrote, “everywhere he sees God in his mighty stepping, everywhere he feels the working of His mighty arm, the throbbing of His mighty heart.”

Our God is in control. There are many things for which we do not know the reason, but for everything, we know who has ordained them. Sedgwick; “No one is so fit to govern the world as He who made it. His perfect wisdom, holiness, justice, power, and love will not fail. We may lack good things, but we will not lack **“a thing that is good for us.”**”

## 1. GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY IS THE POWER OF PROVIDENCE

**How does God execute His decrees? God executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence.** **WSC Q&A #8**

- A. The God centered Reformed Christian view establishes our trust that our Father reigns over all things through His Son by the Holy Spirit. The Heidelberg Catechism says in **Q&A #26** That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (who of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that is in them; who likewise upholds and governs the same by his eternal counsel and providence) is for the sake of Christ his Son, my God and Father on whom I rely so entirely, that I have no doubt, but He will make whatever evils he sends upon me, in this valley of tears **turn out to my advantage**; for he is able to do it, being Almighty God, and willing, being a **Faithful Father**.
- B. The word” **Father**” is used in the New Testament around 1250 times, depending upon the translation . About 300 of those times it appears as “Heavenly Father.” Our Lord gives us defining words using the reference **Heavenly Father 25%** of the time, reminding us that we can consider ourselves as family members with Him.

C. We live in a dangerous world. Disease, disaster, and war sweep many people into eternity every day. Unseen to our eyes, Satan and his hosts go about like a roaring lion seeking to devour people and drag them to damnation (1 Peter 5:8). John Flavel writes: “ I will cry out to God most high, unto God that performeth the things which he hath promised. Payment is the performance of promises. Grace makes the promise, and Providence the payment.” What does that mean, “ Providence the payment? “ **What is a good definition of Providence? Anyone? What is the difference between Providence and Sovereignty?** Catechism question 27 and 28 in the Heidelberg Confession is a good source:

D. **Q 27.** What dost thou mean by the providence of God? **A:** The Almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were **by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures;** so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and **all things come , not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.**

**Q28.** What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and **by his providence** does still uphold all things? **A:** That we may be patient in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and father, that nothing shall separate us from his love since **all creatures are so in his hand,** that without **his will** they cannot so much as move.

E. Christians do not need to live fearfully or anxiously but may cling to the promise of **Romans 8:28; “ We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.”** Thomas Watson wrote: “ All the various dealings of God with His children, do by a special providence turn to their good. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant (Ps. 25:10). The grand reason why all things work for good, is the near and dear interest which God has in His people. The Lord has made a covenant with them. **‘They shall be My people and I will be their God (Jer. 32:38).’**”

F. God has a special providence over his living church because we are the apple of His eye, His lambs, His children, and His jewels (Zech. 2:8; Isa.40:11; Mal.3:17). His care for His people is entirely gracious, tender, mysterious, glorious, exact, and often extraordinary.

G. Faith in God’s providence supports the Christians’ service to God. It is our shield against all the attacks of Satan, (Ephesians 6:16 ). Warfield said, “A firm faith in the universal providence of God is the solution of all earthly troubles. Rather than being paralyzed with fear or driven about by anxiety, the strong believer stands on the stable ground of divine providence and advances ahead in firm obedience and submission to **His Master’s Will.**”

## 2. SEEKING GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN PRAYER

**What is prayer? Prayer is an offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to His will.** WSC Q&A#98

A. True Christians who possess faith in God's providence are people of prayer who know and believe that their loving God commands, hears, and answers prayer. They know that **"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"** (James 1:17).

B. John Calvin put it this way: "It will not suffice simply to hold that there is one whom all are to honor and adore, unless we are also persuaded that **He is the fountain of every good**, and that we must seek nothing elsewhere than in Him...No drop will be found either of wisdom and light, or of righteousness or power or rectitude, or of genuine truth, which does not flow from Him, and of which He is not the cause."

C. Prayer is the cry of childlike faith. When we pray, "Our Father which art in heaven... give us this day our daily bread, as our Lord taught us in Matthew 6:9, 11, we acknowledge God "to be the only fountain of all good, and that neither our care nor industry " can get us what we need and desire without his blessing, and therefore, we **"withdraw our trust from all creatures in place it alone in Him"** (HC 125).

D. The Lord teaches us to go to Him with every need, with all our frailty, with all our cares. Knowing that He is our provider, we should seek from Him our food and drink, health, clothing, good relationships in our families, success in all our efforts, the Holy Spirit's power in our churches, and peace for our nation. We should cast "all our care upon Him for He cares for us "(Peter 5:7).

E. Knowing God's providence fosters humility, which is vital for prayer. The holy Scriptures remind us that no matter how hard we work, we cannot get anything unless we **receive it from His hand** (Psalm 104:28; John 3:27).

F. Therefore, we must trust in God alone and seek all good things from Him. Some are lost in their false pride." My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth" (Deut. 8:17). Their prayerlessness is the nail that seals the coffin of their spiritual deadness. But the child of God has the blessing of the Spirit in adoption: **"And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'** So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God" (Gal. 4:6,7).

**G.** Samuel Lee states: “Thy will be done! When our wills are sacrificed in the flames of holy prayer, we many times receive the choicer things than we asked for expressly. It was a good saying: God many times grants not what we desire in the present prayer, that He may bestow what we would rather have. He may answer our prayer more graciously than we petition! The Holy Spirit secretly corrects our wills and prayers according to His! (Romans 8:26). **At the foot of every prayer subscribe, Thy Will Be Done!, and you shall enjoy preventing -mercies, to change all for the best!” Discussion?**

### **3. PATIENCE IN PROVIDENTIAL ADVERSITY**

**by His Providence does still uphold all things..we can be patient in adversity HC Q&A#28**

**A.** The Heidelberg Catechism highlights three benefits of knowing God’s providence: “That we may be patient in adversity; thankful in prosperity; and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from His love; since **all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as a move.**(Q and A 28).

David said,” I am mute; I do not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it. “.Ps. 39:9) In Job 42 the theology is similar. After all the suffering that Job had encountered he had arrived at a point where he had inner quietness and trust of God’s providence; “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted... I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes... and the Lord accepted Job’s prayer.”

**B.** Christian patience in adversity or a long-suffering, is a supernatural fruit of The Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Unbelievers may grimly resign themselves to circumstances they cannot change; believers: however: persevere in faith (Col.1:1). **By the Spirit, Christ’s disciples are willing cross bearers (Luke 9:23).**

**C.** Those who believe in Providence, rest in God’s purposes for their afflictions. They understand and approve of God’s intention to train up his children to mature holiness by their sorrows in trials (Prov. 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:5–11). Christians live in union and communion with Christ and rejoice to suffer with him, knowing that one day they shall reign with Him in glory.

**D.** God’s word demonstrates to us time and time again the necessity for trials to make us stronger and challenge our faith and above all to force us to draw nearer to God. There are times as we all know, that the world can feel oppressive but these things are allowed to happen to us so that we will develop a consistency in our **reach out to our Lord and remember as we pray to Him that trials are part of His holy plan; truly they are part of the providence of God.**

E. One of the greatest trials a believer may endure is that of spiritual darkness. Westminster confession of faith 18.4 notes, "True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted," sometimes "by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in the darkness and to have no light" (Isa.50:10). The saint walking in darkness may or may not be able to discern its spiritual benefit, he can rest in the knowing that his sovereign God always works for his glory and the good of his elect. **William Gurnall said, "The Christian must trust in a withdrawing God."**

F. As the Puritans often do in their writing, let's turn the tables around a bit and reverse the logic; imagine for a moment, to prove a point, that everything in life always went our own way. Imagine that we are never afflicted. We never faced adversity. **What would you be like?**

**Discussion?**

G. I think that we would all agree that we would be spoiled, immature, self-centered, proud sinner who only believed in ourselves. Though our flesh does not always want to admit it, I know deep within that I would need every affliction that my heavenly father has ever sent my way to deliver me from myself and to conform me increasingly to His Son. Without adversity, I would never be a sin-hater, a Christ-lover, and a holiness-pursuer. **Do we agree on that?**

H. In all our afflictions, but especially after we have come out of afflictions, we shall find that the bitterness of our sorrows is far outweighed by the sweetness of God's good purpose. Our loving Father will not waste one tear of His dear children (Ps. 56:8). Samuel Rutherford said; **"When I am in the cellar of affliction I look for the Lords' choicest wines."**

#### **4. THANKFULNESS IN PROVIDENTIAL PROSPERITY**

**by His Providence does still uphold all things... we may be thankful in prosperity**

**HC Q&A#28**

A. A fourth benefit of providence, which can be as difficult to exercise as patience in adversity, is thankfulness in prosperity. Although adversity is real, frequent, and sometimes overwhelming, we are also immersed in God's good creation, which is to be "received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim 4:4). **Thankful readiness is gratitude.**

B. Gratitude is essential to godliness. Without Thanksgiving, we cannot obey God's will: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1Thess.5-18). Calvin said, "I call piety that reverence joined with love for God which the knowledge of His benefits induces. For until men recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his fatherly care, that **He is the Author of their every good**, that they should seek nothing beyond Him— they will never yield Him willing service."

C. Both adversity and prosperity have their dangers. **Proverbs 30:8,9 sums this up: “Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, ‘Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.”**

D. At the heart of thankfulness is the faith to look past God’s good gifts to appreciate the goodness of God himself. The Christian loves God more than His gifts and is grateful for daily mercies, counts the Lord as His portion (Lam. 3:32).

E. We may all agree that in times of great prosperity it may be more difficult, than in times of tough adversity, to follow the command of God in **Colossians 3:2; “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”** When we are used of Him we are most close to Him and when we are close to Him we feel most fulfilled as His creation. We are living in the hope and the joy of the assurance of a glorious salvation for eternity! Thank you, Lord, for the narrow gate into paradise! (Matt. 7:14)

**5. EARTHLY PROVIDENCE ENDS IN ETERNAL SALVATION**  
**God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life..to bring them into an estate of salvation WSC Q&A#20**

A. **“He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His Will” Ephesians 1:5** Since God rules over all things, we can rejoice now that we will one day arrive safely at our everlasting inheritance.  
**Paul says: “If God be for us, who can be against us? “(Romans 8:31)**

B. Let’s once again as the Puritans do, reverse the logic: The doctrine of Providence also implies that the opposite is true. If God is against you, who can help you? By his providence, the Lord is gathering people to Himself out of this wicked world. The most extraordinary providence of God is His sending his Son to redeem sinners (Galatians 4:4–5). **When evil men crucified Jesus Christ they fulfilled the sovereign purpose of God that His Son die as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45; Acts 4:27–28). God raised Christ from the dead by his power and now Christ sits at God’s right hand as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16).**

**Prayer and Summary:** Empower us to maintain a heavenly frame of mind, even the Mind Of Christ. Thank you for letting us be a part of your miraculous, perfect, providential plan for redeeming Your world. **Amen**