



Sunday, January 3, 2021  
Pastor Doug Phillips

## **Intro to the Doctrine of Providence**

The doctrine of providence is one of the most well-attested doctrines in the Bible. It is clear from the beginning, where God speaks the universe into existence. It is clear in the end, where God brings all things to their completion in Christ. This is why during the Reformation people thought it was so important to teach children this basic doctrine in the catechism. These are the two questions Pastor Doug referenced from the Heidelberg Catechism in his sermon:

**Q27: What do you understand by the providence of God?**

**A:** Providence is the almighty and ever present power of God by which He upholds, as with His hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty—all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but from His fatherly hand.

**Q28: How does the knowledge of God’s creation and providence help us?**

**A:** We can be patient when things go against us, thankful when things go well, and for the future we can have good confidence in our faithful God and Father that nothing will separate us from His love. All creatures are so completely in His hand that without His will they can neither move nor be moved.

What a powerful truth to know that all things that we have enjoyed in this life, and indeed, all things that we have grieved in this life, have come from His fatherly hand. What a great comfort to know nothing happens by random chance, nothing is simply “blowing in the wind.” There is certainty. God is on His throne and is orchestrating the events of history for His glory and our good.

**Read and Reflect** (Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)

Read Romans 8:28; Proverbs 16:33; Ephesians 1:11

“Living with Hope in the New Year”

Key Ideas

- 1) In addition to knowing God as King and Savior, we must also know Him as Shepherd.
- 2) John Calvin, “Ignorance of Providence is the greatest of all miseries, and the knowledge of it the highest happiness.” (*Institutes*, 1, 17, 11)
- 3) The key to a happy life is to submit to God’s word and to trust His providence.
- 4) Charles Spurgeon, “Remember this: if any other condition had been better for you than the one you are in, divine love would have put you there. (*Evening by Evening*, Nov. 11)
- 5) God’s providence is aimed at our growth; the “good” of Romans 8:28 is our being “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29).
- 6) Holiness is being devoted to the right things, having rightly ordered loves.
- 7) Misinterpreting our hardships can destroy our love for God and confidence in His love for us.
- 8) Hardships are evidence that we are loved by God (Heb. 12:5ff.)
- 9) There are going to be many times we cannot see the good that God is working, but we can trust that He is working for our good.

## Discuss

- 1) How conscious are you, day-to-day that God's providence is behind everything that happens?
- 2) What, for you, is the most difficult part of accepting that God's providence is behind everything that happens?
- 3) Read Hebrews 12:5-11. How does this passage help us understand God's providence in light of the hardships we face?
- 4) Read Acts 2:22-24 and Acts 4:24-28. What do these passages teach us about the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
- 5) How does understanding God's providence in these ways impact your understanding of your present circumstances?