

# *Bryan Station Baptist Church*

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## **Divine Providence**

By the late: C. D. COLE

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

In this passage of scripture, we are told that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. This text suggests the doctrine of Divine Providence and raises the question as to who is running this world. Providence may be defined as God's government of His creation. The government of God in the affairs of this world is a subject of deep importance to the Christian, for by proper views of Providence the believer will learn to look for and be able to see the hand of God and the heart of God in all his experiences. He will not talk like the uncircumcised Philistines when they said, "...it was a chance that happened to us" (I Sam. 6:9). The believer will rather talk like Job when he said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1: 21).

God is not idle. The Saviour said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." God is the one person who is always on the job. He is not like the football squad that must take time out to rest and plan the next play. He is not like the tired farmer who must sleep and eat to recuperate strength for another day's work. God is not like the prize fighter who must go to his corner

between rounds to be worked over and patched up. Our God knows nothing of weariness and emergencies. He is the one and only person qualified to govern this world.

There are those who may think that God is doing a bad job in running the world. Men might propose a lot of changes. They might wonder why God does not kill the devil, and put wicked dictators and war lords out of the way and replace them with peace-loving rulers. If God is the Almighty, He could easily do any or all of these things. But He will not be dictated to; for He worketh all things after His own will.

If God is not running the world, it must be either because He is not able to or does not wish to. The thinking man will have to admit that God is running the world; otherwise He has either lost interest in it or control over it. And no Christian believes either alternative.

We must remember that Divine Providence is mysterious. And this is because God Himself is incomprehensible to finite minds. As we look at the world we see conflict everywhere and there seems to be no plan or order. The world appears to be one vast battle field of conflicting wills and opposing forces. There seems to be no order or plan in the movement of bees in and out of the hive, but examine the honey and you see plan and arrangement and order. So men plan and work, and yet are overruled by the infinite wisdom of God to His own praise and glory.

God tells us in His word that we will not understand His dealings with us. The Psalmist says that the judgments of God are a great deep. And Paul declares that His judgments are unsearchable and that His ways are past finding out. We must walk by faith in His word and believe that He is too wise to err and too good to afflict His children without a reason.

### PROVIDENCE IS MINUTE

It covers all things—little things as well as great things. Providence has been defined as God's attention concentrated everywhere. Man is finite and has such limitations that he can only concentrate his attention on one thing at a time and in one place; God is infinite in space and power and wisdom and can concentrate on everything in every place. His providence is both microscopic and telescopic. God is even interested in the hairs of our head and in the fall of a sparrow. A preacher once remarked to his congregation, that the Bible says the hairs of their heads were numbered, but he was afraid that some of them did not even think their heads were numbered.

God is in control of inanimate matter. Scriptures abound in illustration of this. God said, "Let there be light and there was light." He said, "Let the waters be gathered together in one place and let the dry land appear," and it was so. At God's word the waters of the Red Sea were divided and stood up in walls; at His word they came together again. At God's word the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up Korah and his company (Num. 16:32). At His word, the fires of Babylon's furnace were rendered harmless to His faithful servants. The very elements are under His control. He sends rain. He calls for a famine.

God has control over irrational creatures. At His bidding swarms of flies invaded the homes of the Egyptians, while none came into the homes of the Israelites. At His will Egypt was plagued with frogs and locusts. Daniel was cast into the lion's den, but God locked their jaws and Daniel was not devoured. God opened the mouth of the ass to rebuke Baalam. Jonah did not want to be a foreign missionary, so he took a ship to Tarshish; God sent a great wind that rocked the boat, and when the sailors threw Jonah overboard, God had a big fish ready for Jonah. He caused the fish to vomit up Jonah just as it reached the shore. At God's will the cock crewed three times just when the Lord told Peter it would. Truly, "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Ps. 103:19).

God's control extends to men—all men both good and bad. We have no trouble in seeing that God is in control of good men; the diffi-

culty with many is to see that God reigns everywhere; that He is in control over the wicked as well as the good. God allows sin because He is able to overrule it for His own glory. God is not the Author of sin, but He is the Controller and Director of sin. God is not the Causative force, but the directing agent in the sins of men. Men are rebellious, but they have not pushed God off His throne; they are not out from under His control.

Divine Providence is a practical and comforting doctrine. It is a joy to know that God, our Heavenly Father can and does make all things that happens to us work together for our good. A poet puts it like this: "The world is wide in time and tide, and God is guide; Then do not hurry. The man is blest who does His best, and leaves the rest; Then do not worry."

Why even the devil is under God's control. He had to get permission from God before he could afflict Job or sift Peter.

Consider an illustration of Divine Providence that I worked out several years ago while living in Florida. Here is a farmer who has an artesian well on his farm—a huge stream of water that will ruin everything if left alone to spread itself over the farm. But the well can be made an asset if the water can be controlled. And so he decides to cap the well and make a channel for the water. He will make that well serve him, which if left alone would ruin him. And so he runs a pipe line from the well to his house and with the turn of a faucet, he gets water for cooking and drinking and bath. He runs another line to the barn and with the turn of a spigot, waters hundreds of cattle and hogs. He runs another line to his grove and keeps it in excellent condition in time of drought. Wherever he needs water, he runs a line to it from that well.

Now, the human heart is an artesian well of sin. If God did not control it, it would destroy His purpose and overthrow His government. So, He makes the sin that comes from the human heart run through the channels of His purpose. And that which does not turn to His glory, He holds back. The Psalmist says, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Ps. 76:10).

One pipe line from the well of sin ran to Calvary. Human sin is seen at its worst when wicked men nailed the Lord of glory to the tree of the cross. And yet the purpose of God was fulfilled. The death of the sinless Son of God required a terrible amount of sin, but the carnal mind that hates God was equal to it. And so God turned human hatred in that direction. He fixed all the details about the death of Christ. He was to be crucified between two wicked men—His garments were to be divided among the soldiers—His vesture was to be the prize in gambling—He was to be given vinegar mingled with gall to

drink—His bones were not to be broken—and it all came to pass just as it had been divinely planned and predicted. And so Peter says in Acts 4: 27,28: “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” What a motley crowd! And yet all they could do was what God had predestinated to be done.

Yes, dear child of God, born-again believer in Jesus Christ, your Father rules. Our times are in His hand, so that we can say with the poet:

“Yes, leave it with Him;

The lilies all do,

And they grow—

They grow in the rain,

And they grow in the dew—

Yes, they grow;

They grow in the darkness, all hid in the night—

They grow in the sunshine, revealed by the light—  
Still, they grow.”

“Yes, leave it with Him,

‘Tis more dear to his heart,

You will know,

Than the lilies that bloom,

Or the flowers that start

‘Neath the snow:

Whatever you need, if you seek it in prayer,

You can leave it with Him—for you are His care,

You, you know.”

No wonder that Peter says, “Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.” And may all who have burdens be given grace to do so!



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