

The Providence Of God

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Believers rightly take great comfort in the providence of God. In an uncertain world trusting God's providence calms our hearts for the present, and gives us confidence for the future.

Yet by itself providence is not a word frequently used in our Bibles. It is used, I think, only once in the whole of scripture. However, the sense of it is found in all God's dealings with His elect, particularly with respect to the tender loving care of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the everlasting faithfulness and grace of the Father, and the comforting ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Providence literally means foresight or to see ahead. It means God knows and provides for His people's needs even before we know them ourselves. He supplies all we require, according to His goodness and wisdom, at the time it is needed.

Providence also bears the sense of God's upholding, preserving and governing all things by means of 'second causes', while working all things together for His people's good, according to His will and purpose, through the events and circumstances of our lives in the world.

In both of these senses it is important to always trace back God's goodness and mercy to the Lord Himself, the First Cause. Recently, I was having a meal with friends. Before we started eating I said, "Will we give thanks?" Quick as a flash one of the little ones at the table looked at his mother and said, "Thank you, Mummy". That was very appropriate, it is good to thank those who prepare our food, but let us not neglect to thank God for providing it.

Let us always remember to say thank you to the Lord first, and then to those whom the Lord uses to bless us in accordance with His will. It is good to say thank you to the preacher after the service if we have enjoyed or been helped by the message. But let our souls be quick first of all to thank the Lord who speaks to our hearts and souls through the preaching of the gospel; who is Himself the source of every good and perfect gift, and the first cause of every blessing.

The greatest evidence of God's goodness and grace to you and me is the giving of God's Son, Jesus Christ, as a ransom to redeem us from our sins. Seeing beforehand the need of His beloved people He established a covenant of peace whose terms provided for the free supply of every

needful grace to forgive, cleanse, and justify His elect people. The Lord is the first cause of our salvation.

There may have been many second causes in our experience of grace and personal conversion; the place and time, the circumstances and company, the preacher and the message preached. Yet the giving of Christ for the salvation of our souls is the one great and everlasting act of grace and mercy whereby we are redeemed and for which our hearts shall be eternally grateful.

Whatever else happens to us in this life, our gracious and loving God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the first cause of our salvation, which is the greatest good of God's providence. From this first cause comes every stage of the outworking of God's sovereign purpose in the redemption and salvation of His elect. Having Christ we have every confidence and every good hope for everything else.

Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

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