

Title:     **PREDESTINATION AND PROVIDENCE**  
Text:     Ephesians 1:11  
Date:     Tuesday Evening — July 18, 2006  
Tape #    Z-04b

**Introduction:**

My life is a constant testimony to and verification of the fact that...

“God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform.  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.”

It is therefore my delight to preach to you tonight on the subject of **PREDESTINATION AND PROVIDENCE**. These inseparable twins of grace are set before us in Ephesians 1:11.

(Ephesians 1:11) “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

Divine providence is the daily, constant sovereign rule of our God over all things for the accomplishment of his eternal purpose of grace in predestination, working “*all things together after the counsel of his own will.*”

- **Predestination** is the sovereign, eternal, immutable, unalterable purpose of God almighty, by which ordained and ordered, according to his own will and good pleasure, all things which come to pass in time.
- Divine **providence** is the accomplishment of God’s sovereign will and purpose. Providence is God doing in time what he purposed in eternity. Providence is God sovereignly and absolutely bringing to pass in time what he predestined in eternity.
- **Predestination** is God’s plan. **Providence** is God’s execution of his plan.

**Hear me well. Be sure you understand the doctrine of Holy Scripture with regard to the providence of God.** Nothing in the universe happens by luck, chance, fortune, or accident. Everything which comes to pass in time was purposed by our God in eternity, and is brought to pass by his wise, adorable, good providence. **Nothing comes to pass in time that God did not purpose in eternity, in sovereign predestination. And nothing comes to pass in time except that which God sovereignly brings to pass in his providence.**

**Proposition:**     That which God predestinated in eternity and brings to pass in his providence is for the good of his elect and the glory of his name.

Let’s see if that is truth or heresy. What does the Word of God say? “*Let God be true, and every man a liar!*” (Ps. 76:10; Pro. 16:4,9,33; 21:1; Dan. 4:34,35,37; Isa. 46:9-11; Rom. 11:33-36).

(Psalms 76:10) “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

(Proverbs 16:4) “The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.”

(Proverbs 16:9) “A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.”

(Proverbs 16:33) “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the LORD.”

(Proverbs 21:1) “The king’s heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”

(Isaiah 46:9-11) “Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, (10) Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: (11) Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it.”

(Daniel 4:34-35) “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom *is* from generation to generation: (35) And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”

(Daniel 4:37) “Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works *are* truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”

(Romans 11:33-36) “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? (36) For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.”

Our text is Ephesians 1:11. And the very best commentary I have ever read on Ephesians 1:11 is Romans 8:28. So, tonight, I want us to look at that which the Holy Spirit reveals and teaches in Romans 8:28.

(Romans 8:28) “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.”

If we can learn just that which is taught in these twenty-five words about God's adorable providence, we will leave here rejoicing in God our Savior.

**Divisions:** May God the Holy Spirit, who inspired these words, effectually inscribe them upon our hearts for the glory of Christ, enabling us in all things to believe, worship and give thanks unto our God. I call your attention to just four things in our text...

1. A Delightful Persuasion — “*We know...*”
2. A Divine Providence — “*We know that all things work together for good...*”
3. A Designated People — “*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called...*”
4. A Declared Purpose — “*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*”

### A DELIGHTFUL PERSUASION

*First*, the inspired writer speaks of a delightful persuasion. — “*We know...*” The word “*know*” in this sentence refers to a knowledge beyond speculation, theory, doctrine, or even sound judgment. It is the knowledge of a confident, assured persuasion based upon fact and experience. It is my prayer that God will graciously and thoroughly convince us of these things as he did the Apostle Paul. “*We*” — All true believers — “*know*”. But how do we know? What is the basis of this knowledge? Is this a pipe dream; or a matter of established fact?

We know these things by **the revelation of God's Word.**

(Psalms 84:11) “For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

(Psalms 91) “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. (2) I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. (3) Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence. (4) He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler. (5) Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day; (6) *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday. (7) A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee. (8) Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. (9) Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge, *even* the most High, thy habitation; (10) There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. (11) For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. (12) They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. (13) Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. (14) Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. (15) He shall call upon me,

and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. (16) With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.”

(Proverbs 12:21) “There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.”

(Hosea 2:18) “And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and *with* the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.”

We know these things, and walk in the comfort of God’s providence, because of **the inner witness and anointing of the Holy Spirit**, who teaches us all things, by whom we have the mind of Christ (1 John 2:20; 1 Cor. 2:16).

(1 John 2:20) “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.”

We know the wisdom and goodness of God’s adorable providence because **we have experienced it**. Bro. Rolfe Barnard used to say, “We only believe what we experience.” He was exactly right. Are you persuaded, really persuaded of what Paul teaches us here? If you are, you have a persuasion that will keep your soul in peace. Indeed, this is the only persuasion that will keep your soul in peace...

*“When sorrows like sea billows roll.”*

## **A DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

*Second*, the Holy Spirit here reveals a divine providence by which all things are ordered, ruled, and disposed of in time. — “*We know that all things work together for good...*”

Providence is God’s government of the universe. This is a subject of deepest importance. If we have a proper view of God’s providence, we will see the hand of God and the heart of God in everything, in all the experiences of our lives. Let us never talk like the unbelieving Philistines who said, “*it was a chance that happened to us*” (1 Sam. 6:9). Believers talk like...

- Job (1:21).

(Job 1:21) “And said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

- Eli (1 Sam. 3:18).

(1 Samuel 3:18) “And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, *It is the LORD*: let him do what seemeth him good.”

- David (2 Sam. 16:11-12).

(2 Samuel 16:11-12) “And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now *may this Benjaminite do it?* let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. (12) It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.”

God is not idle. He is the one Person who is always on the job. He never needs to rest, recuperate, or regroup! God almighty, our God and heavenly Father, is always at work, governing the world.

You may sometimes think, “God is not doing a very good job of running this world.” I have often heard fools say, “If God is running everything, then this or that would not happen.” You might, in your great depth of wisdom, propose a lot of changes. **Could not the Almighty easily put an end to...**

- Sickness, Poverty and War?
- Sin, Crime and Disease?
- Famine, Earthquakes and Death?

Indeed, he could. But God almighty will not be dictated to by us! Who are we to dare set ourselves up as instructors to the all-wise God? *He “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”* Let remind you of three things about God’s providence.

1. **God’s providence is mysterious** (Rom. 11:33-36).

(Romans 11:33-36) “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? (36) For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.”

His judgments are a great deep. His ways are past finding out. But **I know this...**

- God always has his way.
- His ways are not our ways.
- His way is always right and best.

2. **God’s providence is minute** (Matt. 10:30).

(Matthew 10:30) “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

3. **Divine providence is all inclusive!** God rules everything, great and small, everywhere, and always! — “*The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; his kingdom ruleth over all!*”

- **God is in control of all inanimate matter.** — The Creation — The Red Sea — The Jordan River — The Crowd that Followed Korah — The Fiery Furnace — The Whirlwind
- **Our great God is in total control of all irrational creatures.** — The Flies, Frogs and Locusts in Egypt — The Whale that Swallowed Jonah — The Cock that Crew for Peter
- **Our God and heavenly Father controls, (absolutely and totally) all rational creatures too.** — He controls all men and women everywhere, good and bad, in the good they do and in the evil they perform. All angels, all demons and Satan himself are under the total control of our God.

(Psalms 76:10) “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

(Isaiah 14:24-27) “The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, *so* shall it stand: (25) That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. (26) This *is* the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this *is* the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. (27) For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul *it*? and his hand *is* stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”

We have no trouble believing that God controls good things and good people; but those are not the things that bother me. It’s the bad stuff that disturbs me. I want to know who is in control of wickedness and evil. That is the One I will worship.

Many have a lot of trouble with this. They do not understand that God truly is God, as fully in control of hell as he is in heaven, as totally in control of wickedness as of righteousness.

**What about sin?** What about the fall? **C. D. Cole** wrote, “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.”

#### **Illustration: Irrigation Canals**

(Proverbs 16:4) “The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.”

(Proverbs 16:33) “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the LORD.”

(Proverbs 21:1) “The king’s heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”

(Acts 2:23) “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:”

(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, (28) For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”

In a word, as **William Plumer** wrote, God our Savior,...

“Jesus Christ upholds, preserves, and governs the worlds which he has made! Thus all creatures, from the smallest insect which is seen by the microscope; up to the archangel which worships before the eternal throne; all events, from the falling of a hair of the head to the destruction of nations by famine, pestilence, and war; all rule and authority, from that of a petty official, to that of thrones and principalities in heaven; the material universe, from the least particle which floats in the sunbeam to the grandest system of worlds which roll in immensity — all hang dependent on his powerful providence! And if one link in the chain of that dependence were broken, they would all rush headlong to destruction! Jesus always has governed this world; and he shall ever hold the scepter over it, until his last foe shall be vanquished, and his last hidden one made victorious!”

4. God’s providence is mysterious, minute and all-inclusive. But be sure you get this third thing. **God’s providence is good!** — “*All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*”
  - **No event in history is isolated from any other event.** — “*All things work together!*”
  - **What does Paul mean when he says that “*all things work together for good*”?** — Not Necessarily Immediate Good. — Not necessarily Temporal Good. — But Spiritual Good. — Eternal Good. — Collective Good.
  - **Actually, that which is truly good for me is very often the exact opposite of that which is presently good.**

#### **Illustrations:**

Tom DeJarnette — “If I had not been in prison for murder, I would never have learned the gospel.”

Paul on the Damascus Road

The Prodigal Son  
Onesimus

- **It is good for me to know Christ and be found in him.** If God has to cripple me, or cripple my child to get my attention and then turn my eyes and my heart to Christ, that is good! **It is good for me...**
  - To fellowship with God and walk humbly before him.
  - To be a blessing to others.
  - To be weaned from this world.
  - To be a better preacher.
  - To continue in the faith.
  - To finish my course with joy.
  - To die in the faith.
  - To rise in glory and be like Christ!

Whatever God sees fit to use to accomplish these things for us and in us is good! Read Psalm 107 again. Here we are given a detailed view of God's providence. — "*All things work together for good.*"

(Psalms 107) "O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. (2) Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; (3) And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. (4) They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.

(5) Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. (6) Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he delivered them out of their distresses. (7) And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. (8) Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men! (9) For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

(10) Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *being* bound in affliction and iron; (11) Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: (12) Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and *there was* none to help. (13) Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saved them out of their distresses. (14) He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. (15) Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men! (16) For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

(17) Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. (18) Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. (19) Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saveth them out of their distresses. (20) He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered *them* from their destructions. (21) Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men! (22) And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.



(23) They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; (24) These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. (25) For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. (26) They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. (27) They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. (28) Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. (29) He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. (30) Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. (31) Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men! (32) Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

(33) He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; (34) A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. (35) He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings. (36) And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation; (37) And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. (38) He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. (39) Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. (40) He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is* no way. (41) Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh *him* families like a flock.

(42) The righteous shall see *it*, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. (43) Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.”

### **Illustration:** A Pharmacist Mixing Medicine

- Too much joy would intoxicate me.
- Too much misery would drive me into despair.
- Too much sorrow would crush me.
- Too much suffering would break my spirit.
- Too much pleasure would ruin me.
- Too much defeat would discourage me.
- Too much success would puff me up.
- Too much failure would keep me from doing anything.
- Too much criticism would harden me.
- Too much praise would exalt me.

My God knows exactly what I need. His providence is wisely designed and sovereignly sent for my good! Let him therefore send and do what he will. By his grace, I will...

- Face it.
- Bow to it.
- Accept it.

- Give thanks for it.

“I welcome all His sovereign will,  
For all His will is love.  
And when I know not what He does,  
I’ll wait for light above.”

## A DESIGNATED PEOPLE

*Third*, Paul speaks of a designated people — “*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called...*”

This promise of God is not for and is not given to everyone. It is a special promise, made to a special people. It is God’s promise...

- “*To them that love God.*”
- “*To them who are the called.*”

## A DECLARED PURPOSE

*Fourth*, here is a declared purpose, according to which God almighty rules, governs and disposes of all things. — “*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*”

Let tell you something that happened nearly sixty years ago.

**Illustration:** *Rolfe Barnard at Ashland – 1949*

Whenever you read, or quote, or even think of Romans 8:28, be sure you do not leave out those last four words. You will never understand anything in this Book, you will never understand anything God does, you will never understand the mystery and wonder of Divine Providence until you understand that God does everything “*according to his purpose*”.

When I read those last four words of Romans 8:28, the first thing that comes to my mind, the first thing I want to know is — “**What is his purpose?**”

You may think, “Bro. Don, It is impossible for us to know the purpose of God.” In a sense that is certainly true. It is written, “*Secret things belong unto the Lord*” (Deut. 29:29). We must never attempt to pry into the future. What God has purposed for us is God’s business. Our business is to trust him.

However, the very next line of that text reads, “*Secret things belong unto the Lord: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.*” Tonight, I want to show you that which is plainly revealed in Holy Scripture about the purpose of our God.

The reason why these things are revealed is, according to Deuteronomy 29:29, “*that we may do all the words of this law;*” that is to say, **That we may learn to trust the Lord our God.**

Here is a golden chain of grace. It has five unbreakable links: — foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. This is like the ladder Jacob saw, reaching up to heaven, upon which the angels of God ascend and descend as ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation. Each rung of the ladder was fixed by our great God in his eternal purpose of grace, before time began.

God’s goal for his elect is absolute, full, eternal glorification in Christ and with Christ. Nothing less will satisfy his purpose or honor his name.

(Romans 8:28-31) “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. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (31) What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?”

(Ephesians 1:3-12) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (8) Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: (10) That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: (11) In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (12) That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”

Amen.