

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 5-24-15 AM NOTES  
"RESTING IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD"  
VARIOUS SCRIPTURES  
(Non-Series Message)

"Providence is that work of God in which He preserves all His creatures, is active in all that happens in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end."  
⌈Louis Berkhof

**Ephesians 1:11b (NKJV)** "...being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will."

**Isaiah 46:9-11 (NKJV)** <sup>9</sup> Remember the former things of old, for I *am* God, and *there is* no other; I *am* God, and *there is* none like Me, <sup>10</sup> declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *things* that are not *yet* done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,' <sup>11</sup> calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken *it*; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed *it*; I will also do it."

"The Hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all this⌈the course of the war."  
⌈George Washington

"It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor."  
⌈George Washington

I. The Managing Providence of God

**Colossians 1:16-17 (HCSB)** <sup>16</sup> because by Him everything was created, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together."

**Matthew 6:25-26 (NKJV)** <sup>25</sup> Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

**Matthew 6:30-33 (NKJV)** <sup>30</sup> Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

**Philippians 4:19 (NKJV)** "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

**Exodus 12:35-36 (NKJV)** <sup>35</sup> Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, and they had asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing. <sup>36</sup> And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them *what they requested*. Thus they plundered the Egyptians."

*Jehovah-Jireh*⌈The LORD will provide

II. The Governing Providence of God

**Job 36:32 (HCSB)** “He covers [His] hands with lightning and commands it to hit its mark.”

**1 Kings 22:34 (NKJV)** “Now a *certain* man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, ‘Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.’”

**Ephesians 4:18 (NKJV)** “having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”

**Proverbs 21:1 (NKJV)** “The king's heart *is* in the hand of the Lord, *like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.”

III. The Harmonizing Providence of God

**Romans 8:28 (NASB)** “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.”

**1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NKJV)** “in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

IV. The Logical Response to the Providence of God

**Matthew 16:4a (NKJV)** “A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign...”

**Daniel 3:17-18 (HCSB)** “<sup>17</sup>If the God we serve exists, then He can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He can rescue us from the power of you, the king. <sup>18</sup>But even if He does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up.”

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“RESTING IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD”  
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The word “Providence” has all but disappeared from the vocabulary of Christians in our day. If you go back in history two or three centuries, you will see it used often. Many times in writings from the 1800’s

“providence” was capitalized and it was used almost as a title or as another name for God. Earlier authors would speak of things being in the “hands of Providence”. The link between the person of God and the activity of God was rooted in the firm belief that all which comes to pass occurs under the plan and rule of the sovereign God. The English word “providence” comes from a compound Latin word. The first part is “pro” which means before and the second part is “videre” which means to see. The word means to see beforehand but providence really means much more than God’s foreknowledge. It means God’s action – the working out of His sovereign plan. In other words, God not only watches the future, He watches **over** the future. Let me give you a definition of providence by theologian Louis Berkhof: “Providence is that work of God in which He preserves all His creatures, is active in all that happens in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end.” [Louis Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine*, page 39]. I would describe God’s providence as the outworking of God’s sovereignty in His preserving, governing, and working through circumstances and man’s decisions to bring about His determined purposes. **Ephesians 1:11b (NKJV)** “...being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will”. That “working all things according to the counsel of His will” is the providence of God.

The skeptic, H. G. Wells said that the world is like a great stage production produced and managed by God. As the curtain goes up, all is lovely to behold. The characters are wonderful. All goes well until the leading man steps on the hem of the leading lady’s dress. She then trips over a chair and knocks over a lamp which pushes over a table into the side wall. This brings down the back scenery, which brings the whole thing crashing down on the head of the actors. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, God, the producer is frantically running to and fro pulling strings and shouting orders, trying desperately to restore order to the chaos. What a blasphemous picture of God. The Biblical picture (the truth) shows God in control even when everything seems chaotic. **Isaiah 46:9-11 (NKJV)** “<sup>9</sup> Remember the former things of old, for I *am* God, and *there is* no other; I *am* God, and *there is* none like Me, <sup>10</sup> declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *things* that are not *yet* done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,' <sup>11</sup> calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken *it*; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed *it*; I will also do it.” When you understand the providence of God you see that He is in control even when it seems that everything is out of control.

Tomorrow, we celebrate Memorial Day and remember those who gave their physical lives for our nation and our freedom. It is hard to think about all of the lives that have been given for our nation and then to see this “One nation, under God” disintegrate before our eyes. The problem is simply that we are abandoning our foundation. We are tearing down what has made our nation great. Much of what is happening today in our nation, our culture, is an insult to those who gave their lives for this land. But when we look at the history of our nation, we clearly see that there was a time when our leaders deeply believed that America was blessed because of the providence of God. For instance, God’s providential working was obvious (except to the spiritually blind) in the saving of the life of George Washington while he was a soldier in the British Army 21 years before he became commander in chief in the Continental Army. In one battle, even though he had four bullet holes in his jacket, bullet fragments in his hair, and had 2 horses shot out from under him, he was not wounded. Washington said this of the Revolutionary War: “The Hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all this – the course of the war”. In explaining the new nation’s first national day of prayer, President Washington said, “It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor.”

When we look at the history of our nation, we constantly see the providential hand of God in blessing and the withholding of blessing. But as important as the providence of God is in our nation, I want to focus on the providence of God in our daily lives. When you see this biblical doctrine, you will be comforted and understand why the most often quoted command in Scripture is “fear not”.

## I. The Managing Providence of God

God not only created everything, He preserves, watches over, and manages all that He has created. **Colossians 1:16-17 (HCSB)** <sup>16</sup> “because by Him everything was created, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together.” At God’s creation all things were brought into existence, but it is the providence of God that keeps them and moves them toward God’s intended purpose. God micromanages His creation. Let’s narrow it down from creation to God’s new creations – His children. A part of the providence of God is His caring for His children. **Matthew 6:25-26 (NKJV)** <sup>25</sup> “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” The God who created the birds providentially cares for and watches over the birds. **Matthew 6:30-33 (NKJV)** <sup>30</sup> “Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” This adding all the things we need is the managing providence of God. In **Philippians 4:19 (NKJV)** “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” The providence of God is seen in His managing and providing for what He has created. He isn’t limited in how He carries out this managing providence. Some ravens brought Elijah food to provide for him. As the Israelites left the captivity of Egypt, God worked miraculously in the heart of the Egyptians to give the Israelites favor and provide even the jewels and other supplies they would need in the building of the tabernacle. **Exodus 12:35-36 (NKJV)** <sup>35</sup> “Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, and they had asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing. <sup>36</sup> And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them *what they requested*. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.” Let me show you another example of this managing aspect of the providence of God that many overlook. When the Israelites went into the Promised Land, they were surrounded by enemies who would love to have driven them out and take the land back. But God manifested his provident care for His people in their protection while the men were gone to worship in Jerusalem. Three times a year every able bodied man left his home open to the Hittites, the Canaanites, and the Amorites while he went to Jerusalem, but God providentially hindered the enemies from coming in during those times the people were obeying Him. One of God’s Hebrew names was Jehovah – Jireh which means “The LORD will provide”. When you are God’s child and are walking in obedience to Him the managing providence of God allows us to rest in Him without anxiety or fear. One category of God’s Providence is the managing providence of God.

## II. The Governing Providence of God

To accomplish His sovereign purposes, God governs circumstances and even the decisions of man. Let me give you several Scriptural examples. God even controls where lightning strikes. **Job 36:32 (HCSB)** “He covers [His] hands with lightning and commands it to hit its mark.” When it was God’s sovereign timing to end the wicked king, Ahab’s life, He controlled where a random arrow struck. **1 Kings 22:34 (NKJV)** “Now a *certain* man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, ‘Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.’” In verse 37 we are told that the wicked king died. Our sovereign God governs circumstances and even the “free choices” of men to accomplish his sovereign will. This is the aspect of God’s sovereignty that causes men the most problems. How can man have a “free will” and yet God control their decisions. Mankind apart from Christ only has a free will in a limited sense. An unsaved person is free to do what he pleases, but he is not free to do what he ought. He is in bondage to a power called sin and has a nature that is like unto Adam’s that is incapable of pleasing and obeying God. Let’s analyze that phrase “free will”. Our will is not an independent entity in our personality. Our will is a part of our soul which

includes also our mind and emotions. The will never acts independently from or contrary to the mind and emotions. The will without exception does what the mind and emotions tell it to. Before coming to Christ, our minds were darkened. **Ephesians 4:18 (NKJV)** “having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart”. When the Bible talks about the freedom we have in Christ, it is not just a freedom to do what we want; primarily, it is a freedom to do what we ought. Apart from Christ, our will is in bondage. Certainly there are things that we can choose, but we are primarily choosing based on information coming from a sin darkened mind. Only those in Christ truly have a free will and also the grace of God and the indwelling Spirit of God to enable us to do what we ought and what our new nature desires. When God providentially accomplishes His sovereign will through the decisions of others, He simply moves in their mind and emotions and the mind and emotions direct the will. He can do that in a lost or in a saved person. Do you see how the governing providence of God works? Take for example a leader of a nation or a ruler of any kind. **Proverbs 21:1 (NKJV)** “The king's heart *is* in the hand of the Lord, *like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.” He does that by moving in the “king’s” mind and emotions so that the king makes his own choice, but God’s sovereignty is being worked out through His governing providence.

### III. The Harmonizing Providence of God

The theologians call this aspect of the providence of God “confluence” or “concurrence”. This aspect of God’s providence refers to how He works through seemingly random or chance occurrences to bring about His sovereign will. Adam Smith called it “The invisible Hand of God”. It is really this aspect of providence that Romans 8:28 refers to. I like the New American Standard translation of **Romans 8:28 (NASB)** “And we know that **God causes** all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” It’s not so much that “things work together” as it is that our sovereign God **causes** them to work together for good. Oh how comforting this is. Oh how this enables us to rest in the Lord and His providential working. Here is what I want you to get this morning. “All things” mean **ALL THINGS!** God causes painful things, pleasant things, uplifting things, depressing things, holy things and even sinful things to work together in His providential plan to conform us to the image of Christ and accomplish His sovereign purposes. The Christian life is not an easy, comfortable life. It has many pains, hardships, perplexities, and sorrows. Every pain, every sorrow, every hardship, every perplexing situation we can’t figure out has a definite purpose. Sometimes we can see that purpose clearly immediately. Sometimes it is years later that we see God’s purpose. Sometimes we never figure it out here on this earth. That’s a real life of faith. It is a life of trusting God and His sovereignty and His providential working to accomplish all His will even when we can’t figure it out! God is not limited in what He can use as a “second cause” in accomplishing His sovereign will. He uses people – even evil people. He uses animals. He used ravens with Elijah, a donkey with Balaam, and dogs with ridding Israel of the wicked Queen Jezebel. He uses the weather and even what we call accidents. Let me relate a true story to you that I read a few years ago from some IMB reports (I think). SBC missionary Rob Moor and Tanzanian Pastor Sostenes Karoli were involved in a head on crash. The other vehicle had five people in it. Though the missionary and Pastor were not seriously hurt, all five people in the other vehicle were injured. The Tanzanian Pastor and the missionary began ministering to the injured and praying for them. Soon a crowd gathered and so the two men began passing out tracts and sharing their faith. The Tanzanian Pastor had to wait two days to get a ride back to his home. During that 48 hours, he was joined by 2 Christian men as they witnessed to the people and 14 Tanzanians were saved. A new church was started within 2 weeks of that crash. The name of the church in Swahili was “Kanisa la Ajali” which means “Accident Baptist Church” (Story from “The Best of ‘In Other Words’” by Raymond McHenry Page 12). The providence of God is behind those seemingly random circumstances, the painful circumstances, and the perplexing circumstances in your life. God never causes sinful things, but for them to happen, He had to allow them. You can rest in Him even in times of pain and perplexity. This is how we can obey **1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NKJV)** “in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for

you.” We can even give thanks in the midst of painful, heart breaking things because we understand the providence of God – that He is harmonizing, putting together “all things” to work together for our good which is defined in Romans 8:29 as being made like the Christ who indwells and empowers us.

#### IV. The Logical Response to the Providence of God

Given the glorious truth in Scripture of the managing, governing, harmonizing providence of God, how do we respond? We respond in faith that God is sovereign and that those circumstances beyond our control are a part of His providential working in us to break us of our self life and conform us to the likeness of Christ. Sometimes, asking God for a miracle might be a lack of faith. Jesus said to a group who wanted to see a miraculous sign in **Matthew 16:4a (NKJV)** “A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign...” Immature people ask God to do the spectacular in every tough situation. We come to the place that we prefer the miracle over the miracle worker. The greatest act of faith is to see the providential hand of God in our circumstances and cooperate with Him and draw on His supernatural grace to grow spiritually and be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might instead of in our own fleshly strength. I think a good example was Daniel’s three friends who refused to worship a false god and were threatened with being thrown into a fiery furnace. **Daniel 3:17-18 (HCSB)** “<sup>17</sup> If the God we serve exists, then He can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He can rescue us from the power of you, the king. <sup>18</sup> But even if He does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up.” Even if God did not perform a miracle, they would obey in faith. That is the kind of faith God honors. As a Pastor, I have had the privilege for almost four decades to walk with people who are going through tough times. Some have not recognized the providential hand of God and have turned bitter and dropped out of church and basically lived miserable lives and usually make those around them miserable also. But I have seen others who responded in faith to the providential working of God in their circumstances and by faith surrendered to Him and rested in Him. Those are the people who grow and give glory to God and impact the lives of countless others. I think of one young woman in Columbus, Ohio that I counseled with after her evil husband left her and their young son for another woman. She agonized and struggled but believed God and oh how she grew. One day a year or so after it happened she said these words to me, “Pastor, I wouldn’t wish what I’ve been through on anyone but I wouldn’t take anything for what God has done in my life.” Those are the words of a Christian who understands the providence of God in His causings and allowings.

#### CONCLUSION

You can rest in the sovereign providence of God. Einstein said, “God doesn’t roll dice”. He was right. God is a God of purpose. He has a plan, a sovereign plan that He will accomplish. He is providentially working out that plan in His managing providence, His governing providence, and His harmonizing providence. You can trust Him; you can rest in His providence. He loves you, and He knows what He is doing.