

**Are You More Valuable Than a Sparrow?**  
**Daniel 4:28-37; Matthew 10:26-33**  
**April 27, 2008**

- I. Creation and Providence
  - A. What is creation?
    - 1. the what – God’s making all things of nothing
    - 2. the how – by the word of his power
    - 3. Did God really make all things?
  - B. What is providence?
    - 1. relationship to creation – executes his decrees by the works of creation and providence
    - 2. upholds all things by the word of his power (Heb. 1:3)
    - 3. Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*: “God’s decree ordains things that shall fall out, God’s providence order them.” 119  
*Proverbs 16:33* <sup>33</sup> *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.*
- II. Providence as Preservation
  - A. What is meant by preservation?
    - 1. maintaining the existence and the order of creation
    - 2. just as the creation depends on God the Creator for the beginning of life, so also the creation depends on God the Sustainer for the continuation and preservation of life
    - 3. Intelligent design not enough – God is the Creator and Sustainer – in him all things consist (Col. 1:17)
  - B. An Important Apologetic Argument
    - 1. Paul roots his argument to the Athenians on the position of God as the Creator and Sustainer of all things  
*Acts 17:25,28* <sup>25</sup> *nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*  
<sup>28</sup> *for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."*
    - 2. the sailors were greatly impacted by Jonah’s confession: “*I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.*”
    - 3. A reason to worship and glorify God (see Psalm 29 or 104)
- III. Providence as Government
  - A. What is meant by government?
    - 1. Westminster Confession 5.1 “[to] direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things” → to order things in a way that will fulfill the decrees of God
    - 2. powerfully displayed in the book of Daniel
      - a. repeated theme: “*His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation*” (4:3; see also 2:44; 4:34; 7:14, 27)
      - b. God reveals his governing power over all nations through the reign of kings, and especially by raising up and bringing down kings
    - 3. and God reveals his governing providence in the humiliation of the great Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:28-37)
      - a. Nebuchadnezzar’s pride – v. 30
      - b. God’s answer – vv. 31-33, esp. v. 32c

- c. Nebuchadnezzar's response – vv. 34-35, 37
- B. The Lord government extends to all things (Matt. 10:26-33)
  - 1. consider the context – sending out the apostles
    - a. sent out with no possessions (vv. 9-10)
    - b. sent into persecution (vv. 16-18)
    - c. Jesus say, “Have no fear” – how is that possible?
      - i. the Lord will provide physical needs (vv. 11-14)
      - ii. the Lord will provide words (vv. 19-20)
  - 2. Jesus speaks hard words to the apostles – persecution was more than a possibility, it was a certainty
  - 3. What comfort does he provide?
    - a. your Father is greater than your persecutor (v. 28) – echoes of Daniel 3, 6
    - b. the extent of God's providence – even the hairs of your head (v. 30)
    - c. the loving providence of your heavenly Father (vv. 29, 31)  
*Matthew 6:26, 30* <sup>26</sup> *Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?* <sup>30</sup> *But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*

#### IV. Application

##### A. The Problem of Sin

- 1. If God is perfectly sovereign and perfectly good, how can there be sin in the world?
- 2. God has ordained all things – not even the Fall or the crucifixion of Jesus stands outside of his governing providence  
*Acts 2:23* <sup>23</sup> *this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*
- 3. Yet God never causes sin or approves it
- 4. Somehow, in God's wisdom, both the freedom of men and women and the sovereignty of God fit together in perfect harmony (Gen. 50:20; Phil. 2:13)

##### B. Comfort for believers

- 1. What are God's works of providence? God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions (SC 11)
- 2. this is the crux of the doctrine – the apostles should not fear because God ordains everything from beginning to end
- 3. not only that, but God exercises a special providence toward the church
  - a. WCF 5.7 As the providence of God doth, in general, reach to all creatures; so after a most special manner, it taketh care of his church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof.
  - b. *Exodus 1:12* <sup>12</sup> *But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.*
- 4. This promise to the church takes on greater meaning and power in the work of the Son  
*Ephesians 1:22-23* <sup>22</sup> *And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,* <sup>23</sup> *which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*