

Systematic Theology session 12  
The Doctrine of God, "I Am Who I Am," Part 6

- God's divine activity of providence.
  - Divine providence: God's preserving and governing of His creation.
  - If providence were an attribute instead of a divine activity, it would be an incommunicable attribute of God's goodness.
  - God preserves His creation. He actively and continuously upholds and preserves all things. He doesn't give His creation up to fortune or chance.
  - God is present with His creation, to govern and direct His creation.
  - Since God directs all things toward an appointed end, this means that God has a purpose for creation.
  - Since God has a purpose for creation, God has a plan to carry out His purpose.
  - God's preserving work:
    - God continuously upholds all things.
    - This is part of God's "general providence," so called because all of creation benefits from this providence. General providence does not provide salvation.
    - God's general providence strips the unsaved of excuses for rejecting the gospel.
    - One of the benefits of general providence, God's upholding of all things, is that as evil as mankind is, mankind does not act as evil as they possibly could.
  - God's governing work:
    - God governs not just to maintain the status quo, but He is directing all things to a particular end.
    - God has a plan, and He is directing all things to complete that plan.
    - The divine decree: the plan of God that He determined in eternity past. In His decree, God ordained all things that come to pass, both small and great, to the end of history. It includes all causes and all effects.
    - The error of deism, that God created all things but is not involved in governing the creation.
    - The error of Open Theism, that the future free will decisions of man are unknowable, even by God.
  - What providence is not:
    - Providence does not mean that everything is a miracle.
    - Providence does not deny God's use of second causes. God normally uses second causes (human decisions and natural laws) to work His providential plan.
    - Providence does not make God the author of sin.
      - People, from their own standpoint, make real decisions. God's ordaining of all things does not violate the will of creatures. We are not puppets on strings.
      - Divine concurrence: the doctrine of the simultaneous working of God and men, whether those men do good or evil, to bring about God's holy purposes. God does this in a way that men are responsible for their evil, and God is not the author of evil.
      - We can articulate the doctrine, but we cannot fully understand how this can be; it is a mystery.