

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What the Bible Teaches About

PROVIDENCE

Revised Edition, 2026

GORDON LYONS

ESV Edition

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Bible Truths Explained

Providence

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Providence

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PART 1

Synopsis: Providence of God

The Providence of God is the ordering of all events in the universe according to the sovereign purposes of God's own will, and in fulfilment of his foreordained plan for all creation. By his providence, God sustains the course of the universe; governing and preserving every individual star, planet, and other heavenly body. By his providence, God supplies the needs of all created beings, including both mankind and animals. The life of every living creature is in God's hands, and he upholds and preserves them by his acts of providence. Health, strength, ability, and all other faculties or endowments are gifts of God's providence—as is life itself. The ordering of all affairs in the lives of individuals and nations is in accordance with God's working in providence. God executes temporal judgments upon individuals and nations by specific acts of his providence, such as sword (war or conflict), famine, or plague. God's providential dealings with his own people are accompanied by his infinite wisdom and never-ending love, mercy and compassion.

Note 1: Providence Includes Government and Preservation

God is the God of Creation, Providence, and Redemption. The Providence of God is the outworking of the sovereignty of God. God's sovereign and providential control extends over all creation. Nothing of which God is the author (i.e. nothing except sin and its consequences), can exist unless God creates it. Everything that God creates he thereafter governs and preserves by his sovereign power, operating through his works of providence. Providence, therefore, includes two distinct elements:

1. *Government*; and
2. *Preservation*.

(Ps. 104:1-32; Isa. 45:5-12; John 1:3)

Scripture References (ESV)

Providence Includes Government and Preservation

Psalms 104:1-9

- ¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD my God, you are very great!
You are clothed with splendour and majesty,
- ² covering yourself with light as with a garment,
stretching out the heavens like a tent.
- ³ He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters;
he makes the clouds his chariot;
he rides on the wings of the wind;
- ⁴ he makes his messengers winds,
his ministers a flaming fire.
- ⁵ He set the earth on its foundations,
so that it should never be moved.
- ⁶ You covered it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.
- ⁷ At your rebuke they fled;

at the sound of your thunder they took to flight.

⁸ The mountains rose, the valleys sank down
to the place that you appointed for them.

⁹ You set a boundary that they may not pass,
so that they might not again cover the earth.
(See vv.10-32)

Isaiah 45:5-7

⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other,
besides me there is no God;

I equip you, though you do not know me,

⁶ that people may know, from the rising of the sun
and from the west, that there is none besides me;
I am the LORD, and there is no other.

⁷ I form light and create darkness,
I make well-being and create calamity,
I am the LORD, who does all these things. (See v.8)

Isaiah 45:9

⁹ “Woe to him who strives with him who formed him,
a pot among earthen pots!

Does the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’
or ‘Your work has no handles’? (See vv.10-11)

Isaiah 45:12

¹² I made the earth
and created man on it;
it was my hands that stretched out the heavens,
and I commanded all their host. (See vv.13-14)

John 1:3

³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing
made that was made. (See vv.1-5; see also Col. 1:16-17; cf. Heb. 1:2-3)

Note 2: General, Special, and Extraordinary Providence

For convenience, we may divide divine providence into the three following categories:

1. **General Providence**, which is God’s sovereign control over the entire creation, including mankind generally;
2. **Special Providence**, which is God’s sovereign control over, and preservation of, his own redeemed people in fulfilment of his purposes;

3. Extraordinary Providence, which is God's direct intervention in his creation. Works of extraordinary providence may result in unusual occurrences or phenomena, or they may involve the temporary suspension or overruling of the normally uniform laws of nature. Miracles (providential or absolute) are examples of God's works of extraordinary providence.

(See Note 5 below.)

(Ps. 139:7-16; Matt. 6:25-34; Rom. 8:28-31)

Scripture References (ESV)***General, Special, and Extraordinary Providence*****Psalms 139:7-12**

⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?
⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.
¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night",
¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you. (See vv.1-6)

Psalms 139:13-16

¹³ For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.
¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them. (See vv.17-24)

Matthew 6:25-26

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious 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? ²⁶ 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? (See vv.27-29)

Matthew 6:30

³⁰ 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?

Matthew 6:31-34

³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Romans 8:28-30

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (See v.31)

Note 3: God Provides Health and Food

It is by his providence that God provides for all our everyday needs. Many of the things we take for granted, or attribute to other sources, come to us providentially from the Lord. For instance, the health, strength, and the ability to work and to earn a living are all gifts of God's providence. Favourable climates that nourish the soil and produce much of our daily food, are also gifts of God's providence. God can suspend or withdraw these, or any other gifts of his providence, at his own sovereign will and pleasure. (Deut. 8:17-18; 28:58-67; 1 Chron. 29:12)

Scripture References (ESV)

God Provides Health and Food

Deuteronomy 8:17-18

¹⁷ Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' ¹⁸ You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. (See vv.1-20)

Deuteronomy 28:58-63

⁵⁸ “If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, ⁵⁹ then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting. ⁶⁰ And he will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. ⁶¹ Every sickness also and every affliction that is not recorded in the book of this law, the LORD will bring upon you, until you are destroyed. ⁶² Whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God. ⁶³ And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. (See vv.15-57)

Deuteronomy 28:64-68

⁶⁴ “And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. ⁶⁵ And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting-place for the sole of your foot, but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. ⁶⁶ Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. ⁶⁷ In the morning you shall say, ‘If only it were evening!’ and at evening you shall say, ‘If only it were morning!’ because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see. ⁶⁸ And the LORD will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey that I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.”

1 Chronicles 29:12-14

¹² Both riches and honour come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³ And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

¹⁴ “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. (See v.16)

Note 4: God Controls the Laws of Nature

The Sovereign Lord God has established and set in motion all the laws of nature, and usually God works through the normal operation of those laws. However, none of the laws of nature are independent of the sovereign and providential control of God. All, without exception, are governed and preserved in operation by God's almighty power. The laws of nature cannot continue to operate uniformly, apart from God's immediate and providential control over them. It is a great mistake to believe that the universe governs itself according to the laws of nature alone. God always remains in total control of his creation; and, in Christ Jesus, that creation consists, subsists, and is constantly being upheld. (Job 12:10,15; 26:7-14; 34:13-15; Col. 1:16-17)

Scripture References (ESV)*God Controls the Laws of Nature*

Job 12:10

¹⁰ In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of all mankind. (See vv.7-9)

Job 12:15

¹⁵ If he withholds the waters, they dry up;
if he sends them out, they overwhelm the land. (See vv.13-17)

Job 26:7-8

⁷ He stretches out the north over the void
and hangs the earth on nothing.
⁸ He binds up the waters in his thick clouds,
and the cloud is not split open under them.
(See vv.9-14)

Job 34:13-15

¹³ Who gave him charge over the earth,
and who laid on him the whole world?
¹⁴ If he should set his heart to it
and gather to himself his spirit and his breath,
¹⁵ all flesh would perish together,
and man would return to dust.

Colossians 1:16-17

¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and
invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things

were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (See vv.14-19)

Note 5: God May Overrule the Laws of Nature

Usually, God exercises his works of providence through natural laws—but not always. The God who established the laws of nature is perfectly free to exercise his sovereign dominion over them in bypassing or overriding these laws to accomplish his own purposes. By his acts of providence, God opened the Red Sea, thereby providing his people with a way of deliverance from the pursuing Egyptian army. By his providence, God provided sufficient manna to feed his redeemed people—an entire nation—in the desert. By his providence, the Son of God turned water into wine, and fed the five thousand and the four thousand. By his providence, the Lord Jesus healed the sick by a word of command, cast out evil spirits, and raised the dead to life. Again, by his acts of providence, Jesus commanded the winds and the waves to obey him. In all these cases, God by-passed the normally uniform operation of natural laws to achieve his own purposes. When God bypasses or modifies his natural laws in some way, we generally refer to such an event as a ‘miracle’. Miracles (which are merely demonstrations of God’s sovereignty and omnipotence) belong to the category of extraordinary providence. (Exodus 14:13-31; Matt. 8:27; 14:15-21; John 2:1-9)

Scripture References (ESV)

God May Overrule the Laws of Nature

Exodus 14:21-22

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. (See vv.13-31)

Matthew 8:23-27

²³ And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. ²⁴ And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵ And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” ²⁶ And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷ And the men marvelled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?”

Matthew 14:19-21

¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰ And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. ²¹ And those who ate

were about five thousand men, besides women and children. (See vv.15-18)

John 2:7-11

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. ⁹ When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” ¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. (See vv.1-6)

Related Bible Truths

Inseparably linked to the doctrine of divine providence is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Everything that occurs through, or by means of, the providence of God is the outworking of God’s sovereign purposes for the universe and all it contains. This applies both to the animate creation (human and animal) and to the inanimate creation (the non-living material universe). In one way or another, everything in all creation comes under the sovereign control of God in providence. Nothing can happen in the history of the universe—or in our lives—unless, from eternity, God has decreed or ordained these events or occurrences to take place.¹

Summary below

¹ See further on Bible Truths Explained: *Sovereignty of God*.

Part 1 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 1: Synopsis of Divine Providence

Definition

The Providence of God is God's sovereign government, preservation, and ordering of all creation according to His eternal purposes and decrees. Through providence, God sustains the universe, preserves all living creatures, directs the affairs of individuals and nations, provides for daily needs, executes temporal judgments, and accomplishes His perfect will in creation and redemption.

Key Truths

1. **Providence is the outworking of God's sovereignty** — all events occur under God's sovereign rule and according to His eternal plan.
 2. **God governs all creation** — every aspect of the universe is under His authority and control.
 3. **Providence includes preservation** — God continually sustains and upholds everything He has created.
 4. **Nothing exists independently of God** — all created things depend upon Him for their continued existence.
 5. **God controls the affairs of individuals and nations** — history unfolds according to His providential purposes.
 6. **God provides for all living creatures** — human beings and animals alike depend on His care.
 7. **Life itself is God's gift** — health, strength, ability, and every natural faculty come from Him.
 8. **Providence may be general, special, or extraordinary** — God governs creation broadly, cares particularly for His people, and sometimes works through miraculous intervention.
 9. **God's special providence preserves His redeemed people** — all things work together for their ultimate good.
 10. **Miracles are acts of extraordinary providence** — God may overrule or suspend ordinary natural processes to accomplish His purposes.
 11. **The laws of nature operate under God's control** — they are not independent forces but instruments of His governance.
 12. **God may use providence to bless or to judge** — prosperity, hardship, famine, war, and other events remain under His sovereign authority.
 13. **God supplies daily needs through providence** — food, provision, opportunities, and resources come from His hand.
 14. **The universe is upheld by Christ** — all things exist, consist, and continue through Him.
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15. **God's providence is wise and purposeful** — nothing occurs by accident or outside His control.
 16. **God's providential dealings with His people are loving and redemptive** — His wisdom, mercy, and compassion accompany all His works.
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Biblical Foundations

Providence Includes Government and Preservation

1. **Psalms 104:1-32** — God governs and sustains the created order.
2. **Isaiah 45:5-7** — the Lord alone rules over prosperity and calamity.
3. **Isaiah 45:9** — God has absolute authority over His creation.
4. **Isaiah 45:12** — God created the earth and commands the heavens.
5. **John 1:3** — all things were made through Christ.

General, Special, and Extraordinary Providence

6. **Psalms 139:7-16** — God's providential care extends to every detail of human life.
7. **Matthew 6:25-34** — God provides for His creation and for His people.
8. **Romans 8:28-30** — God works all things together for the good of those who love Him.

God Provides Health and Food

9. **Deuteronomy 8:17-18** — God gives the ability to gain wealth and provide for needs.
10. **Deuteronomy 28:58-68** — God may withhold blessings and bring judgment through providential means.
11. **1 Chronicles 29:12-14** — riches, strength, and honour come from God.

God Controls the Laws of Nature

12. **Job 12:10,15** — the life of every creature and the forces of nature are in God's hand.
13. **Job 26:7-14** — God's power sustains the natural world.
14. **Job 34:13-15** — all life depends on God's continuing will.
15. **Colossians 1:16-17** — all things were created by Christ and hold together in Him.

God May Overrule the Laws of Nature

16. **Exodus 14:21-22** — God divided the Red Sea.
 17. **Matthew 8:23-27** — Christ calmed the storm.
 18. **Matthew 14:19-21** — Christ fed the five thousand.
 19. **John 2:7-11** — Christ turned water into wine.
-

Practical Implications

1. **Trust God's sovereign control** — nothing happens outside His providential plan.
 2. **Recognize your dependence on God** — health, strength, and provision come from Him.
 3. **Give thanks for daily blessings** — ordinary provisions are gifts of divine providence.
 4. **Do not be anxious about the future** — God cares for His people and knows their needs.
 5. **Rest in God's purposes during trials** — He works all things together for good.
 6. **Humble yourself before God's sovereignty** — the Creator has authority over all creation.
 7. **Acknowledge Christ's sustaining power** — every moment of life depends upon Him.
 8. **Remember that miracles reveal God's lordship over creation** — natural laws remain subject to His command.
 9. **Trust God's wisdom when His providence is difficult to understand** — His purposes remain perfect even when hidden.
 10. **Live with confidence in God's care** — He governs both the grand events of history and the smallest details of life.
-

Summary Sentence

The providence of God is His sovereign government and preservation of all creation, whereby He sustains the universe, provides for every living creature, directs the affairs of individuals and nations, controls the laws of nature, accomplishes His eternal purposes, and lovingly works all things according to His wisdom, power, and grace.

PART 2

Doctrine of Divine Providence: Elements of Providence

God is the God of Creation, Providence, and Redemption. God's works of providence are his most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing of all his creatures, and all their actions. Providence, therefore, includes two distinct, but closely related, elements: *Preservation* and *Government*.²

Preservation

By *preservation* is meant that all created things owe the continuance of their existence, with all their properties, faculties or powers, to the will of God. For instance, man is said to live, move, and have his being, in God—or according to the will of God; i.e. man's life and breath is in God's hands. Just as man's life and breath is in God's hands, so also are all the properties, faculties, and powers of man's body and soul. All these are properties or faculties that God has bestowed upon man as a gift. God has bestowed these gifts according to his workings in common grace (i.e. grace that is common to all mankind). Thus, God's Word says:

Job 34:14-15

¹⁴ If he should set his heart to it
and gather to himself his spirit and his breath,
¹⁵ all flesh would perish together,
and man would return to dust. (See vv.1-13)

Psalms 31:15a

^{15a} My times are in your hand...

Acts 17:25

²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. (See vv.22-24)

Acts 17:28

²⁸ for
“‘In him we live and move and have our being’; ³

² Based on C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 [Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1977 reprint], p.575.

³ [Acts 17:28](#) Probably from Epimenides of Crete. (ESV footnote)

as even some of your own poets have said,

“For we are indeed his offspring.”⁴ (See vv.26-31)

For the preservation of his life, mankind is wholly dependent upon his Creator. Similarly, for the preservation of all his properties or faculties, such as health, strength, ability, intelligence—together with all his emotional capabilities—mankind is totally dependent upon the will of the living God.

What is true of mankind, is true of the entire creation—living creation, and non-living creation (such as the physical universe). All alike are preserved in existence by the will of the Almighty and Sovereign God. This is clearly the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. The passages relating to this subject are very numerous, and they are of different kinds. Some of these passages assert in general terms that God sustains all things by the word of his power. For instance, the Scripture says:

Colossians 1:16-17

¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (See vv.14-19)

Hebrews 1:3

³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (See vv.1-4)

Extent of Preservation

Many passages of Scripture refer to God’s preservation being effected through the normal or uniform operation of the laws of nature. These are laws that God himself has established, and by which he continues to sustain and govern the entire created universe. (See, for example, Psalms 104 and 147) These and other related passages clearly teach:

1. That, as a whole, the universe does not continue in existence by itself. It would cease to exist if it were not supported by God’s almighty power. Alternatively, it would resolve itself into chaos if God did not continually preserve it by his providential control, operating through or above the laws of nature.
2. That all living things, whether cells, plants, or animals, in their several genera, species, and individuals, are continued in existence—not merely because of their

⁴ [Acts 17:28](#) From Aratus's poem “Phainomena”. (ESV footnote)

inherent principle of life and regeneration—but by the will of God who sustains all things by his almighty power.

3. That this preservation extends not only to the substance, but also to the shape or form. In other words, God is not only their Creator and Preserver—he is also their Designer. God assigns a specific shape or form to each individual member of his natural creation in such a way as to enhance and enrich its intrinsic beauty—to the praise and glory of God’s name. Preservation also extends to all the qualities, properties or faculties, and powers, of every created thing.

Government

Concerning God’s providential government, the Scriptures teach: ⁵

1. That God’s providential government is **universal**. It includes all creatures of God in all spheres of creation, and it governs all their actions. God’s providence not only governs the living creation such as mankind and animals, it also governs the inanimate creation. The stars, planets, and every other form of non-living creation in heaven and earth is governed by God’s providence. Everything that exists is under the intelligent and universal control of the infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God.
2. That God’s providential government is **all-powerful**. It is the sovereign and universal sway of the omnipotent or Almighty God which renders absolutely certain the accomplishment of all his designed plans. Nothing in all creation can thwart or hinder the fulfilment of any of God’s foreordained purposes. All that God has decreed from eternity will certainly come to pass at the time that God has set, and in the precise manner that he has planned.
3. That God’s providential government is **wise**. God governs the material world according to fixed laws—the laws of nature—which he himself has established, and by which he continues to sustain his creation. In his wisdom, God’s natural laws govern irrational animals through their instincts. In this way, animals are provided for, and reproduce after their kind. In a similar manner, rational creatures such as mankind act in accordance with their nature: i.e. the instincts which God has given them, and which—in the case of mankind—is itself governed by their moral and spiritual nature. Unlike the animal creation, mankind has been made in the image and likeness of God. For this reason, instinct alone must never be allowed to govern or control man’s actions.
4. That God’s providential government is **holy**. There is nothing in any of the means which God uses to govern the universe which is inconsistent with his infinite holiness. In all the exercises of his providence, God stands totally apart from the sin attaching to fallen mankind, and from the corresponding curse attaching to the earth.

⁵ Based on C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 [Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1977 reprint], p.582.

Summary below

Part 2 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 2: Elements of Divine Providence

Definition

Divine Providence is God's most holy, wise, and powerful work of preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions. Providence consists of two inseparable elements: **Preservation**, by which God sustains all things in existence, and **Government**, by which He directs all creation and every event according to His sovereign will and eternal purposes.

Key Truths

1. **Providence consists of preservation and government** — God both sustains creation and rules over it.
 2. **All created things depend on God for continued existence** — nothing can continue apart from His preserving power.
 3. **Life and breath come from God** — every human being lives by His will and providential care.
 4. **All human abilities are gifts of God's providence** — health, strength, intelligence, talents, and emotions are sustained by Him.
 5. **The entire universe is preserved by God** — both living and non-living creation depend upon His sustaining power.
 6. **Christ upholds all things** — the universe continues to exist through His preserving word.
 7. **The universe is not self-sustaining** — without God's continual preservation, creation would cease to exist or descend into chaos.
 8. **Preservation extends to every creature** — every plant, animal, and human life is maintained by God's will.
 9. **God preserves not only existence but also form and function** — He sustains the properties, powers, and characteristics of all creation.
 10. **God's providential government is universal** — every part of creation falls under His rule.
 11. **God's providential government is omnipotent** — nothing can frustrate or prevent His purposes.
 12. **God governs with perfect wisdom** — natural laws, instincts, and human responsibilities operate according to His wise design.
 13. **Human beings are morally accountable** — unlike animals, people are created in God's image and must act according to moral and spiritual truth.
 14. **God's providential government is holy** — His rule is entirely consistent with His perfect character.
-

15. **All events ultimately serve God's purposes** — His decrees will certainly come to pass.
 16. **Providence displays God's sovereignty, wisdom, and holiness together** — every aspect of divine rule reflects His perfect nature.
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Biblical Foundations

Preservation

1. **Job 34:14-15** — if God withdrew His spirit and His breath, all life would perish.
2. **Psalms 31:15** — our times are in God's hand.
3. **Acts 17:25** — God gives life, breath, and everything to mankind.
4. **Acts 17:28** — in God we live, move, and have our being.
5. **Colossians 1:16-17** — all things were created through Christ and hold together in Him.
6. **Hebrews 1:3** — Christ upholds the universe by the word of His power.

Preservation of Creation

7. **Psalms 104** (referenced) — God sustains and provides for His creation.
8. **Psalms 147** (referenced) — God's care extends throughout the natural world.

Providential Government

9. **Isaiah 45:5-12** (previously referenced) — God rules over creation and history.
 10. **Acts 17:26-31** — God oversees the lives, boundaries, and destinies of nations.
 11. **Colossians 1:16-17** — all creation exists for Christ and under His authority.
 12. **Hebrews 1:3** — Christ sustains and governs all things.
-

Practical Implications

1. **Acknowledge your dependence on God** — every moment of life comes from His preserving hand.
 2. **Trust God's care in every circumstance** — your life and times remain under His control.
 3. **Give thanks for your abilities and blessings** — they are gifts of providence, not merely personal achievements.
 4. **Recognize Christ's sustaining power** — He continually upholds both your life and the universe.
 5. **Rest in God's sovereignty** — nothing occurs outside His providential government.
 6. **Submit to God's wisdom** — His plans are wiser than human understanding.
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7. **Live responsibly before God** — as moral creatures made in His image, we are accountable to Him.
 8. **Take comfort in God's control over history** — nations and events remain under His authority.
 9. **Worship God's holiness** — His providential rule is always righteous and pure.
 10. **Trust that God's purposes cannot fail** — what He has decreed from eternity will certainly come to pass.
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Summary Sentence

Divine providence consists of God's continual preservation and sovereign government of all creation, whereby He sustains every creature, upholds the universe through Christ, wisely directs all events according to His eternal purposes, and exercises His rule with perfect power, wisdom, and holiness.

PART 3

God Governs All Events in the Universe

We have seen that God's providence includes both preservation and government. Government includes the ideas of design and control. God governs the universe toward the attainment of some great end (or design). To render certain the accomplishment of his designed plan, God controls or governs the sequence of all events throughout the universe.

God Controls Mankind

Regarding God's total control over all events relating to mankind, the Scripture says:

Psalms 22:28

²⁸ For kingship belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations. (see vv.27-31)

And

Psalms 103:19

¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all. (See vv.20-22)

God's dominion or sovereignty is *absolute*. God is the Supreme Ruler. All other rulers—in heaven and on earth—are subject to God (i.e. YHWH), and to his sovereign control over them.

The Lord Jesus Christ possesses the title, *King of kings and Lord of lords*. (Rev. 17:14; 19:16.) This is the title of sovereign dominion: a title which—as we can see from 1 Timothy 6:15—pertains to God Almighty (i.e. YHWH). Since the Father has invested his Son with this title, this in itself demonstrates the full deity of Jesus, the Son of God.

God Controls Nature

Regarding God's total control over all events relating to the natural elements, the Scripture says:

Psalms 135:6-7

⁶ Whatever the LORD pleases, he does,
in heaven and on earth,
in the seas and all deeps.
⁷ He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth,
who makes lightnings for the rain
and brings forth the wind from his storehouses. (See vv.1-13)

The physical laws controlling the natural elements (such as produce heat, wind, and rain), always remain under God's sovereign control.

God Controls An Individual's Personal Circumstances

Again, both personal circumstances, and personal or natural disasters, are subject to God's absolute control. Thus, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 45:6-7

⁶ that people may know, from the rising of the sun
and from the west, that there is none besides me;
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
⁷ I form light and create darkness,
I make well-being and create calamity,
I am the LORD, who does all these things. (See vv.1-13)

Again, concerning God's absolute control over the movements of Cyrus, King of Persia, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 46:9-11

⁹ remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose',
¹¹ calling a bird of prey from the east,
the man of my counsel from a far country.
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;
I have purposed, and I will do it.
(See vv.3-13; cf. Dan. 4:25,32,34-35)

God, therefore, is not only the Creator of all that is, he is also the Governor or Controller of everything that happens throughout the length and breadth of his creation.

Time and Chance

Frequently, people say or believe that time and chance happens to us all. Thus, the Scripture says:

Ecclesiastes 9:11

¹¹ Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle
to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor
favour to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.
(See vv.7-12)

From a human perspective, it may appear that God does not exercise direct control over the affairs of men. This, however, would be to imply that God is powerless to intervene (i.e. that he is not omnipotent). Alternatively, it could imply that God has no desire to intervene (i.e. that he shows no concern for the destiny of men and nations). Yet again, it could imply that God does not exist, and

therefore cannot intervene. Such is the folly of human reasoning. This kind of reasoning fails to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. It fails to acknowledge the Lord's absolute right, power, and ability to exercise sovereign dominion or government over everything he has created.

From the divine perspective, however, matters are entirely different. God *does* exist; and he *is* omnipotent. He is the Sovereign Ruler or Governor of all creation. Again, God remains deeply concerned for mankind—even although mankind has rebelled stubbornly and persistently against him. Had God not been concerned for individual members of fallen mankind, he would not have provided a means of redemption and reconciliation for sinners through faith in Christ.

Furthermore, God specifically directs the course of events and the affairs of the world for the ultimate good of his own people—those whom Christ has redeemed with his precious blood. The believer is most certainly not at the mercy of ‘time and chance’. The Almighty God who exercises sovereign dominion over his entire creation is the God who exercises that same dominion over the everyday lives of his own children. God does this to govern and preserve them until they reach their heavenly dwelling.

Summary below

Part 3 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 3: God Governs All Events in the Universe

Definition

Divine Providence includes God's sovereign government of all events, persons, nations, and natural forces. God not only preserves creation, but actively directs and controls all things according to His eternal design and purpose. Nothing occurs outside His sovereign rule, and all events ultimately serve the accomplishment of His wise and holy will.

Key Truths

1. **Providence includes both design and control** — God governs all events toward the fulfilment of His eternal purposes.
2. **God rules universally over mankind** — every individual, ruler, nation, and kingdom is subject to His authority.
3. **God's sovereignty is absolute** — there is no higher authority than God.
4. **Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords** — all earthly and heavenly powers are subject to Him.
5. **God controls the natural world** — weather, seasons, and natural forces remain under His command.
6. **Natural laws operate under divine authority** — they are instruments of God's providential government.
7. **Personal circumstances are governed by God** — prosperity, adversity, and life events occur under His sovereign rule.
8. **God directs the actions of rulers and nations** — even powerful kings unknowingly fulfil His purposes.
9. **God declares the end from the beginning** — His plans are certain and cannot fail.
10. **Nothing can frustrate God's counsel** — every divine purpose will be accomplished.
11. **Human beings often mistake providence for chance** — from a limited earthly perspective, events may appear random.
12. **There is no such thing as blind chance before God** — what appears accidental to humans remains under divine control.
13. **God remains deeply concerned for mankind** — His providential care is demonstrated supremely in redemption through Christ.

14. **God especially governs the lives of His people** — believers are not abandoned to fate or circumstance.
 15. **All events ultimately work for the welfare of God's children** — His providence preserves and guides them toward their eternal destination.
 16. **The believer's life is secure in God's hands** — God's sovereign government extends to every detail of life.
-

Biblical Foundations

God Controls Mankind

1. **Psalms 22:28** — kingship belongs to the Lord, and He rules over the nations.
2. **Psalms 103:19** — God's kingdom rules over all.
3. **Revelation 17:14** (referenced) — Christ is Lord of lords and King of kings.
4. **Revelation 19:16** (referenced) — Christ possesses supreme authority.
5. **1 Timothy 6:15** (referenced) — supreme dominion belongs to God.

God Controls Nature

6. **Psalms 135:6-7** — God directs the clouds, rain, lightning, and wind.

God Controls Personal Circumstances

7. **Isaiah 45:6-7** — God governs both well-being and calamity.
8. **Isaiah 46:9-11** — God accomplishes all His purposes and directs the affairs of rulers.
9. **Daniel 4:25, 32, 34-35** (referenced) — God's dominion extends over all kingdoms.

Time and Chance

10. **Ecclesiastes 9:11** — events appear subject to time and chance from a human perspective.

God's Care for His People

11. **Romans 8:28** (theme from earlier sections) — God works all things together for good for those who love Him.
 12. **John 3:16** (implied through redemption) — God's concern for mankind is demonstrated through His saving purposes.
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 Practical Implications

1. **Trust God's control over your circumstances** — no event falls outside His providential government.
 2. **Do not fear uncertain events** — God governs both ordinary and extraordinary occurrences.
 3. **Recognise God's hand in daily life** — personal successes and trials take place under His sovereign rule.
 4. **Reject the idea that life is governed by luck or chance** — God's providence directs all things.
 5. **Take comfort during adversity** — difficult circumstances remain under God's authority.
 6. **Pray with confidence** — the God who hears prayer rules over every event.
 7. **Rest in God's purposes when life is confusing** — what appears random is not random to Him.
 8. **Acknowledge Christ's universal lordship** — all powers and authorities answer to Him.
 9. **Live with hope rather than anxiety** — God's providence secures the future of His people.
 10. **Remember that God is guiding you toward glory** — His providential care preserves believers until they reach their heavenly home.
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 Summary Sentence

Divine providence means that God sovereignly governs every event in creation, directing nations, rulers, natural forces, and personal circumstances according to His eternal purposes, so that nothing occurs by mere chance and His redeemed people are lovingly preserved and guided by His all-wise and all-powerful hand.

PART 4

God Plans Our Circumstances

The circumstances of life do not come about by time and chance. God expressly ordains or permits them according to his will, and in fulfilment of his purposes from all eternity. At the right time and place, God effects these purposes through 'circumstances'. Such circumstances do not occur fortuitously or at random. Rather, God arranges them, or brings them about, according to his manifold works of providence.

For instance, it is by the providence of God that we are born at one particular period of the world's history, and not at another. It is by the providence of God that we are born in one particular nation, and not in another. It is by the providence of God that we grow up under favourable or unfavourable circumstances. It is by the providence of God that we find love and companionship, or are prevented from finding it. Thus, God's Word says:

Acts 17:26

²⁶And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, (See vv.22-28; see esp. v.28a)

Examples of God's Providence in Our Lives

It is by the providence of God that we experience comfort or hardship; wealth or poverty; success or failure (in the eyes of the world). It is by the providence of God that we are highly gifted in natural talents or abilities, or are less well gifted in these endowments. It is by the providence of God that we become well known, or remain in relative obscurity. Thus, the Scripture says:

1 Samuel 2:6-9

⁶ The LORD kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

⁷ The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low and he exalts.

⁸ He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honour.

For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,
and on them he has set the world.

⁹ "He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,
for not by might shall a man prevail. (See vv.1-11)

1 Chronicles 29:11-12

¹¹Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹²Both riches and honour come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. (See vv.10-19)

Again, it is by the providence of God that we enjoy good health, or suffer from poor health; that we are granted long life, or are taken in early life. The *Lord* gives, and the *Lord* takes away. In times of deepest grief, sorrow and distress, we must humbly yield to God's hand of providence, saying, *...Blessed be the name of the LORD.* (Job 1:21b) Yet, for the believer, departure from this life is arrival in his Father's eternal home: a home where there is no more sorrow, suffering, trials, pain or tears—for all these things have passed away.

Perhaps most significantly of all, it is by the grace and providence of God that we, and not others, are brought to believe in Christ. It is by the grace and providence of God that we, and not others, have been granted the gifts of repentance and faith. It is by the grace and providence of God that we, and not others, have been delivered from the wrath to come, and have been adopted into the family of God as children and heirs. To this end, God's Word says:

John 6:37

³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. (See vv.35-40)

John 6:44-45

⁴⁴No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' {*Isaiah 54:13*} Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— (See vv.41-51; see also v.65)

Romans 9:15-16

¹⁵For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." {*Exodus 33:19*}

¹⁶So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. (See vv.6-18)

God Plans the Meeting with a Stranger

The Lord plans all our ways. To illustrate this principle by example: when circumstances cause a 'chance' meeting with someone who will later influence our lives for the good, this is the outworking of God's sovereignty and providence. There was nothing co-incidental or unplanned about this encounter. God had purposed to bring it about in his own way, and at the right time, so that he could further his plans for our lives. The meeting with a stranger can be the meeting of God's appointing.

In the counsels of God, there is no such thing as unforeseen circumstances or unplanned co-incidences. There is nothing unforeseen or co-incidental to God. Everything that occurs is happening in line with God's providence and in fulfilment of God's eternal plan: a plan that he decreed in Christ Jesus from before the creation of the world. To this end, God's Word says:

Ephesians 1:11

¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, (See vv.4-12)

Ephesians 3:11

¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, (See vv.1-12)

Romans 8:28

²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (See vv.29-30)

Everything that God has planned, he will fulfil. It is absolutely certain of accomplishment. Nothing in all creation can ever hinder or thwart God's intentions, or prevent the execution of God's decrees. Concerning the infallibility of God's purposes, the Scripture says regarding Cyrus:

Isaiah 46:8-11

⁸ "Remember this and stand firm,
recall it to mind, you transgressors,
⁹ remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose',
¹¹ calling a bird of prey from the east,
the man of my counsel from a far country.
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;
I have purposed, and I will do it. (See vv.1-13)

Minor Details are of Concern to God

The providence of God is not linked to those matters in our lives that we deem to be of greater importance. It extends to those matters that we may consider are insignificant, and therefore of little or no concern to God. As examples of God's concern for minor details, we need only consider the following Scriptures:

Matthew 6:26

²⁶ 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? (See vv.24-34)

Note what the Scripture says:

...your heavenly Father feeds them. (v.26)

If *our* heavenly Father provides for the birds of the air, how much more will he provide for his own children?

Again, God's Word says:

Matthew 10:29

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? ⁶ And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. (See vv.24-31)

Not a single sparrow can fall to the ground apart from the will of our Father in heaven. How much more, therefore, will that same Father preserve and protect his own children?

The Scripture further says:

Matthew 10:30

³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

The Scriptures not only tell us that God has numbered every hair of our head, but also that the Lord has planned every step of our way. (Prov. 19:21; 20:24.)

God's Word tells us also that every breath that we take is in his hands. (Job 12:10; 34:14-15.)

Again, his Word says that in him we live, and move, and have our being. (Acts 17:28.)

These are clear indications that God concerns himself with even the most minute details of our everyday lives. If this were not so, then he could not justly be called our heavenly Father: for a true father cares about every detail of his children's lives—not just about the more important issues.

Summary below

⁶ penny: [Matthew 10:29](#) Greek *assarion*, Roman copper coin (Latin *quadrans*) worth about 1/16 of a *denarius* (which was a day's wage for a labourer) (ESV footnote)

Part 4 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 4: God Plans Our Circumstances

Definition

Divine Providence means that God sovereignly ordains, permits, and directs all the circumstances of life according to His eternal purposes. Nothing occurs by accident, random chance, or blind fate. Every event, relationship, opportunity, hardship, blessing, and detail of life unfolds under God's wise and loving providential government.

Key Truths

1. **God plans the circumstances of life** — every event occurs according to His sovereign purpose.
 2. **Nothing happens by mere chance** — circumstances are ordained or permitted by God in fulfillment of His eternal plan.
 3. **God determines the times and places of human existence** — He appoints when and where people live.
 4. **Personal circumstances are governed by providence** — success, failure, comfort, hardship, wealth, and poverty all fall under God's control.
 5. **Natural abilities and opportunities are gifts of providence** — talents, intelligence, influence, and positions in life come from God.
 6. **God governs health and lifespan** — life, death, strength, and weakness remain in His hands.
 7. **Believers should submit humbly to God's providence** — even in sorrow and loss they can trust His wisdom.
 8. **Salvation itself comes through God's gracious providence** — repentance and faith are gifts granted according to His mercy.
 9. **God draws people to Christ** — no one comes to Christ apart from the Father's gracious work.
 10. **God works through ordinary events** — meetings, relationships, and opportunities often serve His hidden purposes.
 11. **There are no accidental encounters in God's plan** — seemingly chance meetings may be providential appointments.
 12. **God works all things according to His will** — every event contributes to the accomplishment of His purposes.
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13. **God's purposes cannot fail** — what He has decreed will certainly come to pass.
 14. **Providence extends to small details** — God is concerned with matters that people often regard as insignificant.
 15. **God cares for His creation continually** — His provision extends even to birds and other creatures.
 16. **God cares intimately for His children** — He knows every detail of their lives and faithfully watches over them.
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Biblical Foundations

God Plans Our Circumstances

1. **Acts 17:26** — God determines the times and boundaries of nations and peoples.

Examples of God's Providence in Our Lives

2. **1 Samuel 2:6-9** — God gives life, takes life, makes rich, makes poor, exalts, and humbles.
3. **1 Chronicles 29:11-12** — power, honour, riches, and strength come from God.
4. **Job 1:21** (referenced) — the Lord gives and the Lord takes away.

God's Providential Work in Salvation

5. **John 6:37** — all whom the Father gives to Christ will come to Him.
6. **John 6:44-45** — no one comes to Christ unless drawn by the Father.
7. **Romans 9:15-16** — salvation depends on God's mercy and not human effort.

God Plans Every Event

8. **Ephesians 1:11** — God works all things according to the counsel of His will.
9. **Ephesians 3:11** — God's purposes are eternal and accomplished in Christ.
10. **Romans 8:28** — God works all things together for good for those who love Him.
11. **Isaiah 46:8-11** — God's counsel stands and He accomplishes all His purposes.

God's Concern for Minor Details

12. **Matthew 6:26** — God feeds the birds of the air.
 13. **Matthew 10:29** — not even a sparrow falls apart from the Father's will.
 14. **Matthew 10:30** — God has numbered the hairs of our heads.
 15. **Proverbs 19:21** (referenced) — God's purposes prevail over human plans.
 16. **Proverbs 20:24** (referenced) — a person's steps are directed by the Lord.
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17. **Job 12:10; 34:14-15** (referenced) — life and breath are in God's hands.
 18. **Acts 17:28** (referenced) — in Him we live, move, and have our being.
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Practical Implications

1. **Trust God with your circumstances** — He is working through every season of life.
 2. **Reject the belief in random chance** — God governs events according to His purposes.
 3. **Be grateful for your opportunities and blessings** — they come from God's providential care.
 4. **Submit to God during hardship** — even difficult circumstances serve His wise purposes.
 5. **Recognise God's hand in relationships and opportunities** — He often works through ordinary encounters.
 6. **Take comfort in God's care during loss and grief** — nothing occurs outside His loving oversight.
 7. **Rest in God's sovereignty regarding salvation** — His mercy and grace are the basis of redemption.
 8. **Trust that God's plans cannot fail** — His purposes will always be fulfilled.
 9. **Bring even small concerns to God** — no detail is insignificant to Him.
 10. **Live confidently as God's child** — your heavenly Father watches over every aspect of your life.
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Summary Sentence

Divine providence means that God sovereignly plans and governs every circumstance of life, from birth to death and from major life events to the smallest details, directing all things according to His eternal purposes and lovingly caring for His people so that everything ultimately serves His glory and their good.

PART 5

Seeking God's Guidance

By his special providence, and according to his purposes, God governs and preserves the lives of every individual believer. A person is free to exercise his God-given faculties such as reason and common sense, so long as he does so responsibly, and according to God's will for his life. However, if a person endeavours to apply reason and common sense to a situation that would be contrary to God's will and purposes, then the Lord may override his choice and thwart his intentions. God may do this by closing a particular door of opportunity against that person. Alternatively, he may do it by means of some other circumstances in that person's life that effectively prevents him from following his intended course. (Prov. 16:9; 19:21; 21:30)

At certain times, a believer may seek to know God's will about a particular matter (e.g. in regard to his vocation, or to employment). If he has committed the outcome to the Lord, then the Lord will certainly make known his will. At the right time, and in the right place, the Lord will open the appropriate door of opportunity for that believer—and will close all other doors against him. When a believer wholeheartedly seeks to honour the Lord and seek his guidance in this way, God will not fail to make known his will. (Ps. 32:8; 37:4-7; Prov. 3:5-6)

Ask, Seek, Knock

In conjunction with prayerfully seeking God's will, it is the believer's duty and responsibility to act. He must ask, seek, and knock at every door of opportunity that he believes could be in line with God's purposes for him. For example, in relation to employment, the believer must exercise reason and common sense in seeking any suitable work. He should attend interviews, and do all that is necessary to discover God's intentions. However, although it is the believer's responsibility to do all these things, the Lord will determine the actual outcome. Thus, the Scripture says:

Proverbs 16:3

³ Commit your work to the LORD,
and your plans will be established.

Proverbs 16:9

⁹ The heart of man plans his way,
but the LORD establishes his steps.

Proverbs 19:21

²¹ Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.

Proverbs 20:24

²⁴ A man's steps are from the LORD;
how then can man understand his way?
(See also Prov. 21:30)

Only by seeking to know God's will, and by applying himself to finding out God's will, will the believer know that he is in the right place, at the right time. Only by doing these things, will the believer find himself acting in line with the Lord's express will and purposes for his life. Guidance, therefore, is a positive application of God's providence to a believer's life and circumstances. God will never fail to guide those who acknowledge and honour him in all their ways and who earnestly seek to know his will. (1 Sam. 2:30)

God, however, will bring disappointment and frustration of mind to those who fail to acknowledge his absolute right to govern their lives, and to direct their lives according to his own eternal purposes. The Sovereign Lord must be free to exercise total dominion over his purchased possession: and we are the purchased possession—the redeemed and holy people—of the Lord. (1 Chron. 28:9-10,20)

God Provides by Ordinary Means

Normally, God accomplishes his works of providence by operating through ordinary everyday means or agencies. God's providence, however, is by no means confined to the use of these agencies. The Lord may by-pass or override ordinary means at any time, as seems good and appropriate to him. The daily provision of manna and quail for an entire nation, and of food and drink for a prophet in a drought-stricken area, demonstrate God's works of providence through everyday means. Again the provision of sufficient food from a few loaves and fish to satisfy a multitude, is an example of the Lord's sovereign control over the laws of nature. It demonstrates, too, the Lord's power or ability to set aside those laws at any time to accomplish his own purposes.

As a rule, however, God works through—or by means of—the laws of nature that he himself has established. For example, God has established those laws that ensure regular seasons of the year: different seasons that are suitable for sowing, growing, reaping, and respite. In his providence, God also provides the necessary climatic and soil conditions, including sunlight, rainfall, and fertile ground to nourish the crops and cause them to grow. These are just a few instances of the ways in which God governs the course of nature to provide us with food.

Concerning the fact that the laws of nature do not operate independently of God's sovereign control, the Scripture says:

Psalms 104:10-14

¹⁰ You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills;
¹¹ they give drink to every beast of the field;
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.
¹² Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell;
they sing among the branches.
¹³ From your lofty abode you water the mountains;

the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.
¹⁴ You cause the grass to grow for the livestock
and plants for man to cultivate,
that he may bring forth food from the earth.
(See vv.1-30; see esp. v.19)

God, however, can alter the favourable climates, soil conditions, and seasons, to produce a situation resulting in drought, famine or plague. Such disasters may be caused by man himself (due, for example, to poor land management). Or they may be inflicted upon a country or nation as a divine judgment. Thus, the Scripture says:

Psalms 107:33-34

³³ He turns rivers into a desert,
springs of water into thirsty ground,
³⁴ a fruitful land into a salty waste,
because of the evil of its inhabitants.
(See vv.35-38)

Isaiah 42:15

¹⁵ I will lay waste mountains and hills,
and dry up all their vegetation;
I will turn the rivers into islands,
and dry up the pools. (See vv.14-17)

Isaiah 50:2

² Why, when I came, was there no man;
why, when I called, was there no one to answer?
Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem?
Or have I no power to deliver?
Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea,
I make the rivers a desert;
their fish stink for lack of water
and die of thirst. (See vv.1-4)

This form of judgment usually follows God's frequently repeated—but neglected—warnings of a lesser magnitude. God, however, is not mocked. For those who refuse to respond to the lesser warnings, God eventually will inflict a greater. Hence, by their persistent and stubborn rebellion against God, or by their wilful refusal to acknowledge that the Most High God is Sovereign in the kingdoms of men, God may impose greater judgments. These judgments may take the form of 'sword' (i.e. armed conflict), drought, famine, pestilence or plague (epidemics or pandemics). For example, God may direct the course of events in nature specifically to bring judgment upon a people or nation. Thus, concerning his own people, the Scripture says:

2 Chronicles 7:13-14

¹³When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, ¹⁴if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (See vv.8-18)

God promised his blessing on both king and people, so long as they remained faithful to him and to his covenant with them. However, the LORD warned them that he would judge them if they forsook his law and his ways. Thus, God's Word says:

2 Chronicles 7:19-22

¹⁹"But if you turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, ²⁰then I will pluck you up from my land that I have given you, and this house that I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. ²¹And at this house, which was exalted, everyone passing by will be astonished and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' ²²Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshipped them and served them. Therefore he has brought all this disaster on them.'"

Concerning God's providential judgment on King Zedekiah and the people of Judah, the LORD says:

Jeremiah 21:5-6

⁵I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm, in anger and in fury and in great wrath. ⁶And I will strike down the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast. They shall die of a great pestilence. (See vv.1-7)

Jeremiah 21:10

¹⁰For I have set my face against this city for harm and not for good, declares the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.' (See vv.8-14; see esp. v.14)

Through the prophet Jeremiah, and other faithful prophets, God had warned his people repeatedly of coming judgment on their sinful and idolatrous way of life. With these warnings of judgment, however, the LORD had given the people many opportunities to repent. Thus, God's Word says:

Jeremiah 26:13

¹³Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you. (See vv.1-15; see esp. v.3)

Ultimately, however, the people had refused to repent, and God had allowed the city of Jerusalem to fall to the army of the Babylonian king.

Later, when the commander of the imperial guard found Jeremiah bound in chains, he reminded the prophet why God had permitted the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of his people to Babylon:

Jeremiah 40:2-3

²The captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him, “The LORD your God pronounced this disaster against this place. ³The LORD has brought it about, and has done as he said. Because you sinned against the LORD and did not obey his voice, this thing has come upon you. (See vv.1-6)

Again, by man’s continued abuse or misuse of the favourable conditions provided by God, it is possible to turn rich fertile ground into a desert wasteland.

Summary below

Part 5 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 5: Seeking God's Guidance

Definition

Divine Providence and Guidance refers to God's special providential care over the lives of His people, whereby He directs, governs, and orders their circumstances according to His eternal purposes. While believers are responsible to exercise wisdom, prayer, and obedience, God ultimately directs their paths, opens and closes opportunities, provides for their needs, and guides them in the fulfilment of His will.

Key Truths

1. **God guides believers through His special providence** — He governs and preserves their lives according to His purposes.
2. **Believers should use reason and common sense responsibly** — God normally guides through the proper use of faculties He has given.
3. **God may close doors that are contrary to His will** — He can frustrate plans that do not align with His purposes.
4. **God reveals His will to those who sincerely seek Him** — guidance comes through prayerful dependence upon the Lord.
5. **Believers must actively seek opportunities** — guidance involves both trusting God and taking responsible action.
6. **God determines the final outcome of human plans** — people make plans, but God establishes their steps.
7. **Providential guidance is a practical expression of God's care** — He leads His people into the paths He has chosen for them.
8. **God honours those who acknowledge Him** — He faithfully directs those who seek to glorify Him.
9. **God may permit disappointment to redirect His people** — closed doors often serve His wiser purposes.
10. **God ordinarily works through everyday means** — providence usually operates through natural processes and ordinary circumstances.
11. **God is not limited to ordinary means** — He may intervene directly and extraordinarily whenever He chooses.

12. **Natural processes operate under God's control** — seasons, rainfall, growth, and provision are governed by His providence.
 13. **God provides daily necessities through His providential care** — food, resources, and opportunities come from His hand.
 14. **God may use providence to judge as well as bless** — drought, famine, pestilence, and hardship may serve His purposes.
 15. **God's judgments often follow repeated warnings** — He patiently calls people to repentance before greater discipline comes.
 16. **Repentance brings mercy and restoration** — God responds graciously when people humble themselves and seek Him.
-

Biblical Foundations

Seeking God's Guidance

1. **Proverbs 16:3** — commit your work to the Lord and He will establish your plans.
2. **Proverbs 16:9** — people plan their way, but the Lord directs their steps.
3. **Proverbs 19:21** — God's purpose ultimately prevails over human plans.
4. **Proverbs 20:24** — a person's steps are from the Lord.
5. **Psalms 32:8** (referenced) — God promises instruction and guidance.
6. **Psalms 37:4-7** (referenced) — believers are to delight themselves in the Lord and trust Him.
7. **Proverbs 3:5-6** (referenced) — God directs the paths of those who trust Him.
8. **1 Samuel 2:30** (referenced) — God honours those who honour Him.

God Provides by Ordinary Means

9. **Psalms 104:10-14** — God provides water, vegetation, and food for His creation.
10. **Psalms 104:19** (referenced) — God governs the cycles of nature.

God's Providential Judgments

11. **Psalms 107:33-34** — God can turn fertile land into wasteland because of wickedness.
12. **Isaiah 42:15** — God can alter natural conditions according to His purposes.
13. **Isaiah 50:2** — God has power over seas, rivers, and the natural order.

Repentance and Restoration

14. **2 Chronicles 7:13-14** — God promises forgiveness and healing when His people repent.
15. **2 Chronicles 7:19-22** — persistent rebellion results in judgment.
16. **Jeremiah 21:5-10** — God may use national calamities as instruments of judgment.

17. **Jeremiah 26:13** — repentance can avert threatened judgment.
 18. **Jeremiah 40:2-3** — Judah's disaster came because of continued disobedience.
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Practical Implications

1. **Seek God's guidance through prayer** — commit decisions and plans to the Lord.
 2. **Take responsible action while trusting God** — guidance involves both faith and effort.
 3. **Accept closed doors as part of God's providence** — disappointment may be divine redirection.
 4. **Trust God's outcome rather than your own plans** — He understands what is best.
 5. **Use wisdom and common sense** — these are instruments God often uses to direct believers.
 6. **Recognise God's hand in everyday provision** — ordinary blessings come through His providential care.
 7. **Remain humble before God's sovereignty** — He has the right to govern every aspect of life.
 8. **Respond quickly to God's warnings** — repentance prevents greater discipline.
 9. **Depend on God rather than favourable circumstances** — He controls both abundance and scarcity.
 10. **Be confident that God guides His people faithfully** — He will not fail those who sincerely seek His will.
-

Summary Sentence

God guides His people through His special providence by directing their steps, opening and closing opportunities, providing for their needs through ordinary means, and working through every circumstance of life to accomplish His purposes, while calling them to trust, obey, seek His will, and respond humbly to His guidance and correction.

PART 6

Gifts of God's Providence

The Gift of Life

Human life comprises two elements—body and soul. In its present earthly state, the body is physical and mortal. The soul, however, is spiritual and immortal. Life is a gift of God's providence. Our life has been given to us by the Lord, and it is the Lord who preserves and sustains that life. Thus, God's Word says:

Job 12:10

¹⁰ In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of all mankind.

Acts 17:28a

^{28a} “In him we live and move and have our being’... (See also v.25)

We live by the providence of God. Without God's preservation, our lives would cease to be. As the Scripture says:

Job 34:14-15

¹⁴ If he should set his heart to it
and gather to himself his spirit and his breath,
¹⁵ all flesh would perish together,
and man would return to dust. (Cf. Ps. 104:29)

Life in the Womb

It is by the providence of God that he gives children to us. As the Scripture says:

Psalms 127:3

³ Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.

Just as God *preserves* life (body and soul), so also God *creates* life (body and soul). It is by the providence of God that new life is conceived at fertilisation. Later—and still working through the natural processes that he has created—God continues to form this new life in the womb. Thus, the Scripture says:

Job 10:8a

^{8a} Your hands fashioned and made me...

Job 10:10-12

- ¹⁰ Did you not pour me out like milk
and curdle me like cheese?
¹¹ You clothed me with skin and flesh,
and knit me together with bones and sinews.
¹² You have granted me life and steadfast love,
and your care has preserved my spirit.

Psalms 139:13

- ¹³ For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

Psalms 139:16

- ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.
(See vv.11-15; see also Ps. 119:73)

Isaiah 44:2a

- ^{2a} Thus says the LORD who made you,
who formed you from the womb and will help you...
(See vv.1-8)

Isaiah 44:24a

- ^{24a} Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer,
who formed you from the womb:
"I am the LORD, who made all things...
(See vv.21-28)

Isaiah 46:3

- ³ "Listen to me, O house of Jacob,
all the remnant of the house of Israel,
who have been borne by me from before your birth,
carried from the womb; (See v.4)

Isaiah 49:1

¹ Listen to me, O coastlands,
and give attention, you peoples from afar.
The LORD called me from the womb,
from the body of my mother he named my name.

Isaiah 49:5a

^{5a} And now the LORD says,
he who formed me from the womb to be his servant...
(See vv.1-12)

Jeremiah 1:5

⁵ “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”
(See vv.1-19; cf. Gal. 1:15)

From the above references, it is abundantly clear that life begins at conception or fertilisation. (Cf. Isa. 46:3b.) Following successful implantation in the lining of the uterus or womb, this life continues to take shape and develop during the months ahead.

Life is the creation of God. Human reproduction accounts only for the transmission of physical and mental characteristics. It does not account for the creation of a spiritual and immortal soul—a soul that God gives to each developing life.

No one, except God himself, knows at what point the soul is created within each developing life. For this reason, we must consider human life to begin at the point of successful fertilisation (conception). From this point on, the fertilised living cell begins to sub-divide. This is the very beginnings of new life. Therefore, from then on, we must regard that developing life form as sacred in the eyes of God.

Summary below

Part 6 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 6: Gifts of God's Providence

Definition

The Gifts of God's Providence are the blessings, abilities, opportunities, and life itself that God creates, sustains, and preserves through His sovereign providential care. Human life, from conception to death, exists entirely by God's will and preservation. Every person lives, breathes, develops, and continues to exist because God upholds them by His providential power.

Key Truths

1. **Life is a gift of God's providence** — God gives, sustains, and preserves all human life.
 2. **Human beings consist of body and soul** — the body is physical and mortal, while the soul is spiritual and immortal.
 3. **God holds every life in His hand** — the life and breath of every creature depend upon Him.
 4. **Without God's preservation, life would cease immediately** — all existence depends on His sustaining power.
 5. **Children are gifts from the Lord** — human life is a blessing bestowed by God's providence.
 6. **God creates as well as preserves life** — He is the Author of every human life.
 7. **God forms human beings in the womb** — the development of each person takes place under His direct providential care.
 8. **God knows every individual before birth** — His knowledge and purposes extend to life in the womb.
 9. **God appoints the days of each person's life** — our lives unfold according to His sovereign plan.
 10. **Life begins through God's creative work at conception** — the development of new life originates through His providence.
 11. **The unborn child is known, formed, and cared for by God** — life in the womb is precious in His sight.
 12. **Human reproduction does not fully explain human life** — God alone creates and gives the immortal soul.
 13. **Every person's existence reflects God's creative wisdom** — each individual is uniquely fashioned by Him.
 14. **God's providence extends to every stage of life** — from conception to death, life remains in His hands.
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15. **Human life is sacred because it belongs to God** — He is both Creator and Preserver.
 16. **God's providential care demonstrates His love and purpose** — every life exists according to His wise design.
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Biblical Foundations

The Gift of Life

1. **Job 12:10** — the life and breath of every living creature are in God's hand.
2. **Acts 17:28a** — in God we live, move, and have our being.
3. **Job 34:14-15** — if God withdrew His breath, all life would perish.
4. **Psalm 104:29** (referenced) — creatures depend upon God's sustaining power.

Life in the Womb

5. **Psalm 127:3** — children are a heritage and reward from the Lord.
 6. **Job 10:8** — God fashioned and made each person.
 7. **Job 10:10-12** — God formed the body and preserved the spirit.
 8. **Psalm 139:13** — God knit each person together in the womb.
 9. **Psalm 139:16** — God knew and ordained the days of life before birth.
 10. **Psalm 119:73** (referenced) — God made and formed His people.
 11. **Isaiah 44:2** — God formed His people from the womb.
 12. **Isaiah 44:24** — God is the Redeemer who formed life from the womb.
 13. **Isaiah 46:3** — God carries His people from before birth.
 14. **Isaiah 49:1** — God called and knew His servant from the womb.
 15. **Isaiah 49:5** — God formed His servant before birth for His purposes.
 16. **Jeremiah 1:5** — God knew, consecrated, and appointed Jeremiah before his birth.
 17. **Galatians 1:15** (referenced) — God's calling precedes birth.
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Practical Implications

1. **Value life as God's gift** — every human life derives from His creative and providential work.
 2. **Recognise your dependence on God** — every breath and every day come from His hand.
 3. **Give thanks for children** — they are blessings entrusted by God.
 4. **Trust God's care from beginning to end** — He oversees every stage of life.
 5. **Acknowledge God's purpose for your life** — your existence is neither accidental nor meaningless.
 6. **Respect the sanctity of human life** — life belongs ultimately to its Creator.
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7. **Find comfort in God's knowledge of you** — He knew you before you were born.
 8. **Trust God's plan in life's uncertainties** — your days are ordered by His wisdom.
 9. **Remember that God forms each person uniquely** — every life reflects His craftsmanship.
 10. **Live in gratitude for God's sustaining grace** — He continually preserves both life and strength.
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Summary Sentence

The gifts of God's providence include life itself, for God creates, forms, sustains, and preserves every human being from conception onward, governing each life according to His sovereign purpose, caring for every individual from the womb to eternity, and demonstrating that all life belongs to Him as Creator, Preserver, and Lord.

PART 7

It is The Lord Who Provides

All that we have by way of health, strength, abilities and talents, come to us by the providence of God. It is the Lord who provides. Similarly, our daily food, clothing, and other necessities of life, come to us by the providence of God. It is the Lord who provides. Again, our possessions, wealth—and even things like our employment—come to us from the Lord. It is the Lord who provides. Likewise, when the Lord favours us with relative peace and security, and when we can enjoy the freedom to worship God without fear of oppression, these liberties and privileges are gifts of God's providence. It is the Lord who provides.

In his providence, God provides us with all things needful, and often with many additional material and spiritual blessings. So long as we acknowledge that all things come to us from the Lord—that it is the Lord who provides—then we are honouring the Lord. If, however, we should deny that it is the Lord who provides us with these things, then we are denying the providence of God. In addition, we are denying God's right of sovereignty over our lives.

Regarding our duty to acknowledge the providence of God, and to honour him accordingly, the Scripture says:

Proverbs 3:9-10

⁹ Honour the LORD with your wealth
and with the firstfruits of all your produce;
¹⁰ then your barns will be filled with plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with wine. (See vv.5-12)

As God provides for us, so we must be careful to give back to God that portion of our substance that is due to him. This means duly honouring God with all that we gain (not only with our income), and with the first benefits of all our increase.

Denying God's Providence in Our Lives

If we were to deny the providence of God in our lives, then God may suspend or withdraw some or more of his blessings. We may lose the things that we have received from the Lord, until we acknowledge that all things—great and small—come to us from his hand.

It is our duty and responsibility to work to earn a living. We must always remember, however, that it is the Lord who gives us the health, strength, and ability to work and to earn. Without these gifts of God's providence, we would be unable to work for ourselves. We would be unable to enjoy many of the temporal blessings—of family, home, and possessions—that so often we take for granted. However, it is the Lord who has granted these very blessings to us, together with many other blessings and benefits. It is the Lord who provides. Thus, God's Word says:

Deuteronomy 8:17-18

¹⁷ Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand
have gained me this wealth.' ¹⁸ You shall remember the LORD your God,

for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. (See vv.1-20)

Again, the Scripture reminds us:

1 Chronicles 29:12

¹² Both riches and honour come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.

God's servant, David, continues by acknowledging the true source of his—and of his people's—many temporal blessings:

1 Chronicles 29:14

¹⁴ “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.

1 Chronicles 29:16

¹⁶ O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.

Acknowledging God's Providence in Our Lives

The passage quoted above from 1 Chronicles chapter 29 refers to the provision of wealth to purchase the materials necessary for the building of God's temple. Again, it refers to the provision of the necessary strength required by the labourers in constructing and furnishing the house of God. It refers, too, to the provision of the necessary skills to the craftsmen, and to the provision of all the necessary raw materials for these purposes.

The people could have claimed that the wealth was their own. They could have claimed that the strength belonged to the labourers, and the skill to the craftsmen. They could have claimed that all the raw materials necessary for the construction and furnishing of the temple had been gathered, paid for, and provided by the people themselves.

Such claims, however, would have been to deny the providence of God. The people would have been refusing wilfully to acknowledge that they were wholly dependent upon the Lord for his gracious provision. All these material provisions—even those in their raw state—had come to them from the hand of the Lord. It is the Lord who provides. The people had indeed gathered all the materials necessary for the work—and it was their duty and responsibility to do so. Nevertheless, they were careful to acknowledge that even these bare building materials had been provided by the Lord, and that they belonged to the Lord.

We have already seen this principle exemplified in the passages quoted earlier (Deut. 8:17-18; 1 Chron. 29:12). However, as further indication of the fact that all things belong to the Lord, the Scriptures remind us that:

Psalms 24:1

¹ The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein,

Psalms 50:10

¹⁰ For every beast of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.

Psalms 50:12

¹² "If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
for the world and its fullness are mine.

Everything in all creation belongs of right to our Sovereign Creator. God has given these things to mankind as a trust: That is the LORD has committed the earth's riches to mankind's stewardship—and mankind is responsible and accountable to God for the proper management of this trust.

Mankind, therefore, must acknowledge that the earth—and everything it contains—is the LORD'S.⁷

Summary below

⁷ See also on Bible Truths Explained: *The Sovereignty of God*.

Part 7 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 7: It Is the Lord Who Provides

Definition

God's providential provision is His sovereign and continual supplying of all that His creatures need for life and well-being. Health, strength, abilities, employment, possessions, food, clothing, security, opportunities, and every other blessing come ultimately from God's hand. Believers are called to acknowledge Him as the source of all good gifts and to act as faithful stewards of what He has entrusted to them.

Key Truths

1. **God is the source of every blessing** — all health, strength, talents, abilities, and resources come from Him.
 2. **Daily necessities are gifts of providence** — food, clothing, shelter, and provision come from God's hand.
 3. **Material prosperity comes from God** — wealth, possessions, employment, and opportunities are bestowed according to His providence.
 4. **Peace and security are providential blessings** — freedom, stability, and protection are gifts from the Lord.
 5. **Believers must acknowledge God as Provider** — gratitude honours God and recognises His sovereignty.
 6. **Denying God's providence dishonours Him** — attributing blessings solely to human effort ignores God's provision.
 7. **God gives the ability to acquire wealth** — even the capacity to work and earn is His gift.
 8. **All human achievements ultimately depend on God** — strength, skill, wisdom, and opportunity come from Him.
 9. **Believers should honour God with their resources** — stewardship includes returning to God what is due to Him.
 10. **Everything belongs to the Lord** — God is the rightful owner of all creation.
 11. **People are stewards, not owners** — God entrusts His resources to mankind for responsible management.
 12. **God may withdraw blessings when His providence is denied** — failure to acknowledge Him can result in loss or discipline.
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13. **God's people must give thanks for all they possess** — gratitude reflects faith in divine providence.
 14. **Even raw materials and natural resources belong to God** — all earthly wealth originates from Him.
 15. **Human responsibility and divine provision work together** — people labour, but God supplies the means and ability.
 16. **Providence calls for humility and dependence** — all blessings should lead believers to worship and honour the Lord.
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Biblical Foundations

Honouring God for His Provision

1. **Proverbs 3:9-10** — believers are to honour the Lord with their wealth and firstfruits.

God Gives the Ability to Prosper

2. **Deuteronomy 8:17-18** — God gives power to gain wealth and warns against self-reliance.
3. **1 Chronicles 29:12** — riches, honour, strength, and power come from God.

Acknowledging God's Providence

4. **1 Chronicles 29:14** — all things come from God's hand.
5. **1 Chronicles 29:16** — even resources gathered by people ultimately belong to God.

Everything Belongs to the Lord

6. **Psalms 24:1** — the earth and everything in it belong to the Lord.
7. **Psalms 50:10** — every animal belongs to God.
8. **Psalms 50:12** — the world and its fullness belong to Him.

Stewardship and Ownership

9. **Genesis 1:28** (principle implied) — mankind exercises stewardship under God's authority.
 10. **Psalms 24:1** — ownership belongs to God, stewardship belongs to mankind.
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Practical Implications

1. **Thank God for every blessing** — recognise Him as the ultimate source of all good things.
 2. **Avoid pride and self-sufficiency** — success should never be attributed solely to personal effort.
 3. **Honour God with your resources** — use wealth, possessions, and abilities for His glory.
 4. **Recognise that work itself is a gift** — the ability to labour comes from God.
 5. **Practice faithful stewardship** — manage God's resources wisely and responsibly.
 6. **Live with gratitude rather than entitlement** — everything received is a gift of providence.
 7. **Trust God for daily needs** — He is the Provider of both material and spiritual blessings.
 8. **Acknowledge God's ownership of all things** — possessions are entrusted to us, not ultimately owned by us.
 9. **Use prosperity humbly** — wealth and influence are opportunities to serve God and others.
 10. **Depend continually upon God's provision** — every blessing, whether large or small, comes from His hand.
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Summary Sentence

God's providence supplies every blessing enjoyed by His creatures, including life, health, strength, abilities, wealth, possessions, opportunities, and daily necessities, and believers honour Him by acknowledging that all things come from His hand, giving thanks for His provision, and faithfully stewarding all that He has entrusted to them for His glory.

PART 8

Providential Tests and Trials

In his infinite mercy and never-ending love, God sometimes tests his people by permitting them to endure some form of suffering or affliction. These tests or trials of our faith usually come to us through the works of God's providence. They are specifically designed to bring glory to our heavenly Father, and to strengthen us in our faith.

At the time the Lord calls upon us to endure them, however, we often cannot understand the reason for—or the purpose behind—these tests and trials. In our despondency, we tend sometimes to believe that God has forsaken us, or that he is punishing us for some sin in our lives. However, this is not necessarily the case. It is perfectly possible for God to send us great sorrow, suffering, or grief—or to afflict us in some other way—even when we have done nothing specifically wrong or worthy of chastisement. Providential tests and trials, therefore, are not always connected with wrongdoing or sin in our lives. Thus, God's Word says:

Philippians 1:29-30

²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. (See vv.27-28)

1 Peter 4:19

¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. (See vv.12-18)

God is faithful, and he will preserve every saint whom he calls upon to suffer according to the purposes of his will.

The Sufferings of Christ

As an example of suffering according to the will of God, we need only consider the Lord Jesus. We know that the Lord Jesus Christ never at any time committed sin, nor was there any sinful inclination in his mind. Yet, God permitted the evil one to tempt severely his well-beloved Son. He allowed his own dear Son to be treated with scorn and contempt, and his name to be maligned, by a hypocritical religious leadership. He permitted the people to despise and reject their Lord and Messiah. God allowed his one and only Son to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men. By these evil hands, the Lord of glory was taken, cruelly crowned with thorns, spat upon, mocked, scourged, and finally, nailed to a cross.

All these things happened to the sinless Son of God. Yet, they happened according to God's providence, and in fulfilment of his eternal purposes. This does not excuse the sinful deeds of wicked men; nor does it in any way mitigate the gravity of their crimes, or diminish their responsibility for those crimes. However, it shows very clearly that—although Christ was totally without sin—yet he was not exempted from God's providential dealings.

Thus, God's Word says:

Acts 2:23

²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. (See vv.22-24)

Isaiah 53:10

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (Cf. Heb. 10:7,9)

Christ's sufferings were vicarious (substitutionary). Even so, the principle remains that Christ suffered according to the providential purposes of God. If Christ should so suffer for his people, should not his people expect to share in sufferings—under the providence of God?

The Sufferings of Believers

It is possible for a believer to be sorely and grievously afflicted—in body and soul (including the mind). God may never have intended these afflictions, however, as a punishment for sin. The Lord may very well have been sent them into our lives to achieve greater ends than we can ever understand. Let us remember the example of Joseph. Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt. His brothers intended it for evil, but the Lord intended it for good—to preserve his own people alive in Egypt during the great famine.

Again, let us remember what the Lord Jesus told his disciples when they asked why a certain man had been born blind. The Lord replied that it was neither because of this man's sin—nor because of his parent's sins—that he had endured this affliction. Rather, he had been born blind that the glory of God might be wrought in his life. This man had suffered long without sight. He rejoiced longer, however, when the Lord Jesus granted him his sight, and the man came to behold the Light of the World. (John 9:1-38)

Concerning the sufferings of believers, the apostle Peter tells us:

1 Peter 4:12-13

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (See vv.14-19; cf. 1 Pet. 3:14,17-18; cf. Heb. 11:32 - 12:3)

Again, in the midst of great suffering and heartbreaking loss, Job declares:

Job 1:21

²¹ And he said, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (See vv.13-22)

To his wife, Job said:

Job 2:10

¹⁰ But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (See vv.9-10a)

In the providence of God, we may expect not only manifold blessings, but also manifold sorrows. Such is the way of the cross, and to such has God called his redeemed and holy people. (Phil. 1:29) Yet, God is faithful. He will never allow his people to endure more than they are able to bear. (1 Cor. 10:13.) Rather, in their afflictions, trials, and distresses, the Lord himself will bear them. In all their calamities and perplexities, the Lord will uphold his people. For underneath the saints of God are the loving Redeemer's everlasting arms. Again, we have this certain assurance from the Word of God:

Isaiah 43:1-4

¹ But now thus says the LORD,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
³ For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in exchange for you.
⁴ Because you are precious in my eyes,
and honoured, and I love you,
I give men in return for you,
peoples in exchange for your life.

To whom is the above Scripture addressed? God's own Word provides the answer:

Isaiah 43:7

⁷ everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made.”
(See vv.5-6; cf. 1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13-14)

Through all our extreme sufferings and painful trials, therefore, it remains unchangeably true that all things work together for good for those who love God; for those who are the called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28)

Misjudging a Fellow Believer's Sufferings

In the providence of God, many of the Lord's people in different ages have suffered great trials and sorrows. Sometimes, however, their fellow-believers have misunderstood the reason for their sufferings, and the purpose of a loving and compassionate God in permitting these sufferings.

We must be very careful lest we misjudge our brother or sister in the Lord. We must never assume that—because they are enduring some form of affliction, sorrow, or pain—this must be God's judgment upon them for some sin that they have committed. This may be true in certain cases, but it is certainly not true in every case.

Instead of causing them even greater anguish, sorrow or distress by thinking or speaking unkindly or an afflicted brother or sister, we should endeavour to help them in a practical and prayerful manner. We should not be critical of their misfortunes. Rather, we should remember that *he who is spared the trial today, may not be spared tomorrow*. Let us not presume upon the grace that keeps us, and without which we ourselves would most assuredly fall. (1 Cor.10:12)

Summary below

Part 8 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 8: Providential Tests and Trials

Definition

Providential Tests and Trials are sufferings, afflictions, hardships, and difficulties that God, in His wisdom, love, and mercy, permits His people to endure for their spiritual good and for His glory. These trials are not always punishments for sin but are often divinely appointed means of strengthening faith, producing spiritual growth, and accomplishing God's higher purposes.

Key Truths

1. **God sometimes tests His people through providence** — trials are often part of His loving and wise purposes.
2. **Suffering is not always a punishment for sin** — believers may endure affliction even when no specific wrongdoing is involved.
3. **Trials are designed to strengthen faith** — God uses hardship to develop spiritual maturity.
4. **God's purposes in suffering are often hidden** — believers may not immediately understand the reason for their trials.
5. **Christ Himself suffered according to God's providence** — the sinless Son of God endured suffering in fulfilment of God's plan.
6. **God's sovereignty and human responsibility operate together** — wicked men were responsible for Christ's suffering, yet God's purposes were fulfilled through it.
7. **Believers are called to share in Christ's sufferings** — suffering for Christ is part of Christian discipleship.
8. **God can use affliction for greater purposes** — trials may accomplish blessings beyond present understanding.
9. **Providential suffering may serve God's glory** — hardships can become occasions for displaying His power and grace.
10. **God remains faithful during every trial** — He never abandons those who suffer according to His will.
11. **Believers should not be surprised by suffering** — trials are a normal aspect of the Christian life.
12. **God provides sustaining grace in affliction** — He strengthens His people to endure what He permits.

13. **All things work together for the believer's good** — even painful experiences are incorporated into God's redemptive plan.
 14. **God's love remains unchanged in suffering** — affliction does not mean God has ceased caring for His people.
 15. **Believers should respond with trust and submission** — faith rests in God's wisdom when circumstances are difficult.
 16. **Christians should avoid judging the suffering of others** — trials are not always evidence of divine chastisement.
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Biblical Foundations

Suffering According to God's Will

1. **Philippians 1:29-30** — believers are granted not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for His sake.
2. **1 Peter 4:19** — those who suffer according to God's will should entrust themselves to their faithful Creator.

The Sufferings of Christ

3. **Acts 2:23** — Christ's crucifixion occurred according to God's definite plan and foreknowledge.
4. **Isaiah 53:10** — it was the Lord's will that Christ should suffer as the guilt offering for His people.
5. **Hebrews 10:7, 9** (referenced) — Christ fulfilled the Father's will through His sacrificial obedience.

The Sufferings of Believers

6. **John 9:1-38** (referenced) — the man born blind suffered not because of sin but so that God's works might be displayed.
7. **1 Peter 4:12-13** — believers should rejoice when sharing in Christ's sufferings.
8. **1 Peter 3:14,17-18** (referenced) — suffering for righteousness is honoured by God.
9. **Hebrews 11:32-12:3** (referenced) — many faithful believers endured hardship and persecution.

Job's Example

10. **Job 1:21** — Job worshipped God despite devastating loss.
11. **Job 2:10** — Job accepted both prosperity and adversity from God's hand.

God's Preserving Care

12. **1 Corinthians 10:13** — God provides grace and endurance during testing.
 13. **Isaiah 43:1-4** — God promises to be with His people through waters, rivers, and fire.
 14. **Isaiah 43:7** — God's people are created for His glory.
 15. **Romans 8:28** (referenced) — God works all things together for good for those who love Him.
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Practical Implications

1. **Do not assume all suffering is punishment for sin** — God often has purposes beyond what we can see.
 2. **Expect trials in the Christian life** — suffering is not unusual for believers.
 3. **Trust God's wisdom when answers are unavailable** — His purposes are often greater than immediate understanding.
 4. **Look to Christ's example in suffering** — He endured affliction according to the Father's will.
 5. **Persevere in faith during hardship** — God is accomplishing spiritual good through trials.
 6. **Entrust yourself to God's care** — He remains faithful throughout every difficulty.
 7. **Remember that suffering has a purpose** — no trial is meaningless in God's providence.
 8. **Take comfort in God's presence** — He walks with His people through every affliction.
 9. **Support suffering believers compassionately** — offer prayer, encouragement, and practical help.
 10. **Avoid judging the trials of others** — do not assume their suffering results from personal sin.
 11. **Remain humble and dependent on grace** — today's preserved believer may face tomorrow's trial.
 12. **Rest in God's promise of ultimate good** — even painful providences serve His redemptive purposes.
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Summary Sentence

Providential tests and trials are God-appointed hardships that He permits in the lives of His people to strengthen faith, display His glory, and accomplish His wise purposes, teaching believers to trust His faithfulness, follow Christ's example in suffering, and rest in the assurance that all things work together for their ultimate good and His glory.

PART 9

Blessings and Judgments

Providential Blessings

God Requires Obedience to the Moral Law

We stand in relation to God as his adopted sons and daughters. As the children of our Father in heaven, there are many blessings that we may receive when we are obedient to the Word and will of our heavenly Father. However, there are many ‘curses’ (or forms of chastisement) that we may receive when we disobey or dishonour our heavenly Father.

As the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, we are not subject to the law as a covenant of works. That law has been abrogated. In this respect, we are not under law, but under grace. Nevertheless, although not bound by the law of works, we are bound to obey the moral teachings and spiritual principles of God’s Word. For example, the law says that we must not murder, commit adultery, steal, provide false testimony, or covet our neighbour’s house or possessions. (Exodus 20:13-17.) Being under grace does not nullify the requirements of God’s moral law—of which these commandments form an integral part. God requires us to observe all these commands in full, together with the spiritual principles that derive from each of them individually. This requirement extends to both tables of the law; i.e. to all the Ten Commandments.

It is our duty and responsibility to honour God as our Father. If, however, we fail to honour him by our daily lives and conduct, then we may forfeit his blessings. Instead, we may find that God has replaced these blessings by the curses or forms of chastisement that he has threatened.

Blessings for Obedience

If his people are obedient to him, God promises to bless them with sufficiency or with plenty through his acts of providence. Thus, the Scripture says:

Leviticus 26:3-4

³ “If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, ⁴ then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. (See vv.1-12)

If we obey the Word and will of God—by keeping and doing God’s commands (v.3)—then God will ensure that all our daily needs are met. He will ensure, too, that we are successful in all the work of our hands. To this end, the Scripture says:

Deuteronomy 28:2-6

² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. ³ Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. ⁴ Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. ⁵ Blessed shall be your basket and

your kneading bowl. ⁶Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. (See vv.1-10)

Deuteronomy 28:11-12

¹¹And the LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. ¹²The LORD will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. (See vv.13-14)

These are just a sample of the providential blessings that God promises to bestow upon his people in all ages. These blessings are conditional on his people's wholehearted faithfulness, love, and obedience to him, and to his Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Providential Judgments

Discipline for Disobedience

God is abundantly merciful and willing to forgive those who repent. Nevertheless, if God's people persist in their sin and unfaithfulness, and if they do not obey God's Word and will, then eventually the Lord will withdraw his blessings and may discipline them by imposing some form of judgment. Thus, for example, God's Word says:

Deuteronomy 28:58-59

⁵⁸"If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, ⁵⁹then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting. (See vv.60-68)

We must emphasise that the Lord imposes judgments such as these only on those who wilfully and stubbornly refuse to respond to all other lesser forms of correction. When imposed on a national scale, however, it is inevitable that those who have remained faithful to God will—to some extent—be affected by the judgment imposed on the nation. Even so, God will preserve his faithful saints. However, for those who stubbornly and repeatedly have disobeyed the Lord—refusing to repent—the '*pro-vidence*' of blessings has become the '*pro-vidence*' of afflictions. Yet, God imposes even these in love, and with compassion, with the aim of effecting true, godly repentance, restoration, and reconciliation.

God's Word Withdrawn in Judgment

Another form of discipline or judgment on a wilfully and persistently rebellious people, is the suspension or removal of God's works of grace. For example, when the Holy Spirit no longer strives with men and women, this is a form of judgment on that people or nation. Similarly, when the Word of God is no longer proclaimed in all its power and fullness, this too is a form of judgment on a disobedient people or nation. To this end, God's Word warns:

Amos 8:11

¹¹ “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD,
“when I will send a famine on the land—
not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,
but of hearing the words of the LORD.

When a people or nation consistently despises the Word of the living God and practises iniquity, and when their religious leaders condone sin or practise it themselves, God acts in judgment. He withdraws the Word of life, and therefore the only message of salvation. As the Scripture says:

Amos 8:12

¹² They shall wander from sea to sea,
and from north to east;
they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD,
but they shall not find it.

Again, the Scripture warns:

Proverbs 29:18a

^{18a} Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint...

This is a most solemn warning from the Word of God. Where there is no revelation—no teaching of the revealed will of God, as expressed in the Bible—the people throw off restraint. God then leaves such wicked people to perish in their iniquity. They loved not the truth, but delighted in a lie. God, therefore, gives them over to the punishment of their perverse and sinful ways. This is God’s judgment on their evil way of life. (Rom. 1:18-32; 2 Thess. 2:10-12)

Summary below

Part 9 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 9: Blessings and Judgments (Individuals)

Definition

Providential Blessings and Judgments are God's sovereign dealings with His people through the blessings He bestows for obedience and the discipline He administers for persistent disobedience. As a loving Father, God rewards faithfulness with His favour and provision, while also correcting His people through providential chastisements designed to restore them to obedience, repentance, and fellowship with Himself.

Key Truths

1. **God requires obedience from His children** — believers are called to honour Him by obeying His Word and moral law.
2. **Grace does not abolish moral responsibility** — Christians are not justified by law-keeping, yet they remain obligated to obey God's commands.
3. **God blesses obedience through providence** — faithful living is often accompanied by His favour and provision.
4. **God promises to supply the needs of His people** — He provides for those who walk in His ways.
5. **Providential blessings affect every area of life** — family, labour, provision, prosperity, and daily needs come under God's blessing.
6. **Disobedience may result in the loss of blessings** — persistent sin can lead to the withdrawal of God's favour.
7. **God disciplines His people because He loves them** — His corrections are intended to bring repentance and restoration.
8. **Providential afflictions can be forms of divine discipline** — hardship may be used to awaken God's people to their need of Him.
9. **God is patient before exercising judgment** — greater discipline usually follows repeated warnings and lesser corrections.
10. **God's judgments are redemptive in purpose** — He seeks repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual renewal.
11. **One severe judgment is the withdrawal of God's Word** — spiritual darkness results when people consistently reject divine truth.

12. **A famine of God's Word is more serious than material famine** — spiritual deprivation affects eternal realities.
 13. **Where God's truth is absent, moral restraint declines** — societies drift into increasing disorder and sin.
 14. **God may give persistent rebels over to their chosen path** — rejection of truth can result in deeper spiritual blindness.
 15. **Faithful believers may suffer during national judgments** — yet God continues to preserve and care for His people.
 16. **Blessings and judgments both reveal God's providence** — whether in favour or discipline, God remains sovereign and purposeful.
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Biblical Foundations

God Requires Obedience to the Moral Law

1. **Exodus 20:13-17** (referenced) — God's moral law continues to reveal His righteous standards.

Blessings for Obedience

2. **Leviticus 26:3-4** — God promises provision and fruitfulness to those who obey His commandments.
3. **Deuteronomy 28:2-6** — blessings accompany obedience in every sphere of life.
4. **Deuteronomy 28:11-12** — God prospers and blesses the work of faithful people.

Discipline for Disobedience

5. **Deuteronomy 28:58-59** — persistent rebellion may bring affliction and hardship.

God's Word Withdrawn in Judgment

6. **Amos 8:11** — God warns of a famine of hearing His Word.
7. **Amos 8:12** — people may seek God's Word and not find it after rejecting it.
8. **Proverbs 29:18a** — where revelation is absent, people cast off restraint.

The Consequences of Rejecting Truth

9. **Romans 1:18-32** (referenced) — God may give people over to the consequences of their sin.
10. **2 Thessalonians 2:10-12** (referenced) — those who reject the truth may be handed over to deception.

Practical Implications

1. **Take God's commands seriously** — obedience remains essential in the Christian life.
 2. **Do not presume upon grace** — forgiveness is never an excuse for disobedience.
 3. **Seek God's blessing through faithful living** — honouring Him invites His favour.
 4. **Recognise discipline when it comes** — hardship may be God's loving correction.
 5. **Respond quickly to God's warnings** — repentance can prevent greater consequences.
 6. **Value the preaching and teaching of God's Word** — spiritual truth is one of God's greatest blessings.
 7. **Avoid spiritual complacency** — persistent neglect of God's truth can lead to spiritual decline.
 8. **Pray for national and spiritual renewal** — God's people should seek His mercy for their communities and nations.
 9. **Trust God's purposes in both blessing and discipline** — He works for the good of His people in every circumstance.
 10. **Remain faithful during difficult times** — God preserves those who continue to trust and obey Him.
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Summary Sentence

God's providence is displayed both in the blessings He grants to obedient believers and in the discipline He administers to those who persist in disobedience, using both favour and correction to accomplish His purposes, preserve His people, uphold His truth, and lead them into deeper repentance, faithfulness, and dependence upon Him.

PART 10

Sin Leads to a Nation's Disgrace

God cannot be mocked. Those who despise the Word of God will themselves be despised. It is not in vain that the Scripture says:

Proverbs 14:34

³⁴ Righteousness exalts a nation,
but sin is a reproach to any people.

In his Word, the Bible, God reveals his ways and standard of righteousness. This is the only standard of behaviour acceptable to God. Without a true knowledge and understanding of God's righteous standard as revealed in his Word, however, a nation eventually brings disgrace upon itself by its unrighteous, ungodly, rebellious and sinful behaviour.

If a nation still refuses to repent and return to God, then ultimately that nation will face moral and spiritual ruin. It will be destroyed as a civilised nation, or it will lose its independence or autonomy. God will hand that nation over to its enemies. In his providence, the Lord appoints an enemy to execute his judgments on a persistently sinful and rebellious nation. Thus, God's Word says:

Jeremiah 6:19

¹⁹ Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people,
the fruit of their devices,
because they have not paid attention to my words;
and as for my law, they have rejected it.

Jeremiah 6:22-23

²² Thus says the LORD:
"Behold, a people is coming from the north country,
a great nation is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth.
²³ They lay hold on bow and javelin;
they are cruel and have no mercy;
the sound of them is like the roaring sea;
they ride on horses,
set in array as a man for battle,
against you, O daughter of Zion!"
(See vv.13-30; see also Jer. 9:12-16)

Regarding the subsequent invasion and captivity of Judah, God's Word says:

Jeremiah 40:1-3

¹ The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD after Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he took him bound

in chains along with all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon. ²The captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him, “The LORD your God pronounced this disaster against this place. ³The LORD has brought it about, and has done as he said. Because you sinned against the LORD and did not obey his voice, this thing has come upon you.

This is one of history’s painful and frequently repeated lessons. It is a lesson, however, that many people still have not learned.

Example of Israel

On numerous occasions, and in many different ways, God punished Israel (or Israel and Judah) by his providential acts of judgment. These judgments ranged from drought, famine, pestilence or plague, to war, captivity and devastation of their land. As so often happens, these disasters brought with them the consequential disasters of loss of fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, children and other loved ones.

In his mercy, God had at first sent his prophets to warn the people of the consequences of their sinful actions. The people, however, would not listen to the prophets of God. (Jer. 6:10,17.) They did not believe that God would act in judgment if they continued in their sin. Notwithstanding their stubbornness and rebellion, God sent more prophets. These prophets warned the people that—if they did not utterly forsake their sinful ways, and return to the LORD their God—then God would send upon them the sword, famine, plague (pestilence) or captivity. Thus, God’s Word says:

Jeremiah 14:11-12

¹¹ The LORD said to me: “Do not pray for the welfare of this people.

¹² Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.” (See v.10)

Again, God’s Word says:

Jeremiah 15:1-2

¹ Then the LORD said to me, “Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn towards this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go! ² And when they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’ you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD:

“Those who are for pestilence, to pestilence,
and those who are for the sword, to the sword;
those who are for famine, to famine,
and those who are for captivity, to captivity.’
(See vv.3-4)

Still, however, the people would not listen to God's warnings, nor turn from their sin and unfaithfulness to God. They persisted in their iniquity and rebellion. They mocked and shamefully treated and rejected the true prophets of God. By doing so, however, they had been despising the very Word of God: for the prophets had been the bearers of that Word. Therefore, when these people consistently despised God's message of grace and mercy, the Lord finally acted in judgment, and in fulfillment of his many warnings.

For their persistent unfaithfulness to God (spiritual adultery), the Lord ultimately gave the northern kingdom of Israel into the hands of her enemies. When at last the capital city of Samaria fell, the remaining people were taken captive to a foreign land. At a later stage in history, God imposed a similar judgment on the southern kingdom of Judah. Because of their unfaithfulness to God's covenant with them, the Lord delivered the people of Judah over to their enemies. When the capital city of Jerusalem fell, most of the remaining people were exiled to Babylon, as the prophets had predicted and forewarned.

These examples represent the kind of providential judgments that God ultimately imposes upon a stubbornly rebellious people when they despise his grace. This is the kind of judgment that God can impose when people wilfully refuse to respond to all other lesser forms of correction.

In these last days, God has sent one greater than any of the former prophets. For he has given us his Son—the One who is Prophet, Priest and King. In view of the majesty of his person, and the dignity of his offices, what will God do to a people who wilfully despise and reject his one and only Son? It is well for us to remember these Scriptures:

Matthew 21:37-41

³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' ³⁹ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹ They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." (See vv.33-44)

Hebrews 1:1-2a

¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ^{2a} but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...

Hebrews 2:1-3

¹ Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It

was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, (See v.4)

God Disciplines, but does not Abandon His People

God disciplines those who rebel against his Word or fail consistently to follow his paths.

God delights in mercy. He will not discipline his children without just cause. Nor will he chastise them severely or punish them without giving them prior warnings of more serious afflictions if they continue to rebel—as did Israel.

The Lord our God is a loving, caring and compassionate Father to all those who follow him and his Son faithfully. But to those who prove persistently unfaithful to their calling, he will discipline with the rod—but only in love, and with a view to repentance and restoration.

Israel suffered severely because they refused to repent and return to God. They lost the blessings God had bestowed upon them. They lost their land and were exiled to a foreign land who did not recognise their God. Ultimately, after many years, God would bring them back to their homeland. But an entire generation had missed many of the blessings that God promises to those who love him and remain faithful to his Word and his ways.

So it is with the Lord's people today. Upon their genuine and godly repentance, God will restore those who have proved unfaithful to his Word and his ways. But, had they obeyed to Word of God to begin with, they would never have missed out on the many blessings he plans for all those who remain faithful to him and to his Son.

Summary below

Part 10 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 10: Blessings and Judgments (Societies and Nations)

Definition

Providential Blessings and Judgments are God's sovereign acts of rewarding obedience and disciplining persistent disobedience in individuals and nations. Through His providence, God blesses those who honour His Word and warns, corrects, and judges those who continually reject His truth, all while pursuing His purposes of righteousness, repentance, and restoration.

Key Truths

1. **Righteousness exalts a nation** — obedience to God's standards brings honour, stability, and blessing.
 2. **Sin brings disgrace to a people** — persistent rebellion against God's Word leads to moral and spiritual decline.
 3. **God governs nations through providence** — national prosperity and decline occur under His sovereign oversight.
 4. **God warns before He judges** — He repeatedly calls people to repentance through His Word and messengers.
 5. **Persistent rejection of God's truth invites judgment** — refusal to heed divine warnings eventually brings consequences.
 6. **God may use other nations as instruments of judgment** — foreign powers can serve His providential purposes.
 7. **National judgments often follow moral and spiritual corruption** — widespread disobedience leads to public consequences.
 8. **Israel and Judah illustrate the reality of providential judgment** — their histories demonstrate both God's patience and His justice.
 9. **God's judgments may include war, famine, pestilence, captivity, and loss** — these are among the means He may employ in discipline.
 10. **Despising God's messengers is ultimately despising God's Word** — rejection of divine truth leads to accountability before God.
 11. **Greater revelation brings greater responsibility** — those who reject Christ reject One greater than all the prophets.
 12. **Neglecting salvation invites severe judgment** — God's gracious offer of salvation must not be ignored.
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13. **God disciplines but does not abandon His people** — His corrections are expressions of covenant faithfulness.
 14. **Divine discipline is motivated by love** — God seeks repentance and restoration, not destruction.
 15. **Repentance opens the way to restoration** — God receives and restores those who genuinely return to Him.
 16. **Disobedience may cause believers to forfeit blessings** — while God's people remain His own, they may lose opportunities and privileges through unfaithfulness.
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Biblical Foundations

Righteousness and National Blessing

1. **Proverbs 14:34** — righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

National Judgment for Rejecting God's Word

2. **Jeremiah 6:19** — disaster comes upon a people who reject God's law.
3. **Jeremiah 6:22-23** — God may raise up nations as instruments of judgment.
4. **Jeremiah 9:12-16** (referenced) — God's judgments result from persistent disobedience.
5. **Jeremiah 40:1-3** — Judah's captivity came because they sinned against the Lord and ignored His voice.

The Example of Israel and Judah

6. **Jeremiah 14:11-12** — sword, famine, and pestilence were threatened against a rebellious people.
7. **Jeremiah 15:1-2** — judgment became inevitable because of persistent rebellion.

God's Final Word in His Son

8. **Matthew 21:37-41** — the parable of the tenants warns about rejecting God's Son.
9. **Hebrews 1:1-2** — God has spoken finally and supremely through His Son.
10. **Hebrews 2:1-3** — there is no escape for those who neglect so great a salvation.

Discipline and Restoration

11. **Jeremiah 26:13** (theme referenced) — repentance averts judgment.
 12. **Romans 8:28** (principle implied) — God continues working for the good of His people even through discipline.
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Practical Implications

1. **Take God's Word seriously** — obedience brings blessing, while persistent rebellion invites discipline.
 2. **Learn from the history of Israel and Judah** — God's dealings in the past reveal His character and ways.
 3. **Respond quickly to God's warnings** — early repentance prevents deeper consequences.
 4. **Pray for moral and spiritual renewal in society** — national wellbeing is connected to righteousness.
 5. **Do not presume upon God's patience** — His mercy is great, but His warnings must not be ignored.
 6. **Treasure the gospel of Christ** — God has spoken through His Son with final authority.
 7. **Avoid spiritual complacency** — neglecting God's truth can lead to decline and loss.
 8. **Receive discipline as a sign of God's fatherly care** — correction is intended for restoration.
 9. **Remain faithful during times of national or cultural decline** — God preserves those who trust Him.
 10. **Seek continual repentance and obedience** — God's blessings are enjoyed through faithful submission to His will.
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Summary Sentence

Through His providence, God blesses righteousness and disciplines persistent sin, dealing with both individuals and nations according to His perfect justice, while patiently warning, correcting, and calling people to repentance, and ultimately revealing His greatest message of grace and salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

PART 11

Failing to Acknowledge God's Providence

Everything recorded in the Bible was recorded for our learning that we might not presume upon the grace of God and become like Israel and Judah in turning away from the Lord. We can turn away from the Lord when, for example, we are attempting to serve him, while—in our hearts—we are secretly harbouring false gods or idols.

One way of harbouring false gods in our hearts is to set great store by our personal achievements. We glory in our abilities, in our position, in our wealth, and in our possessions; not acknowledging that all these things—together with every other good and perfect gift—have come to us from the Lord. (Jas. 1:17) Instead of being grateful and humble because God has enabled us to achieve these successes, or to attain these things, we become proud and conceited. We vainly imagine that we have a right to be proud of the fruits of our own efforts.

What, however, does the Scripture say?

Deuteronomy 8:2

² And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

Deuteronomy 8:12, 14

¹² lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them...

¹⁴ then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,

Deuteronomy 8:17-18a

¹⁷ Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' ¹⁸ You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth... (See vv.18b-20)

This kind of attitude is sinful pride. It is a refusing to acknowledge the providence of God in our lives, and in the lives of our families. Of all sins, however, pride is one that God most detests. Pride is a kindred sin to the sin of rebellion: the rebellion of God's own people against their Creator, Provider and Redeemer. We must ever remember that—although we are God's people—we are a people whom he has saved and whom he is keeping eternally secure by his sovereign grace. If, however, we will not learn that God will judge his people, and if we presume upon the grace of God, then we are leaving ourselves open to the judgments that God has threatened. Initially, this may be of a milder

disciplinary nature. If, however, we fail to heed the lesser forms of correction, God will ultimately impose a greater.⁸

Neglecting Christ Brings Judgment

If unconverted people live without regard for Christ and his atoning work on behalf of sinners, then they have neglected or rejected God's appointed way of salvation. To neglect or reject the way of salvation is to despise the grace of God, and to treat God's Word and Spirit with contempt. (Heb. 2:1-3; 10:26-31; 12:25,29)

Since they have carelessly neglected or wilfully refused to turn with all their hearts to the living and true God through faith in his Son, these people stand justly condemned. They are presently abiding under the wrath of God; and, unless they repent, they will forever remain under that wrath (John 3:18,36) Judgment must assuredly come upon unrepentant sinners. At the Last Day, the Lord will pronounce his final judgment against these wicked people. Even in this present life, however, God may also pronounce and impose temporal judgments, to warn of the coming final judgment.

Natural Disasters

Natural disasters occur frequently throughout the world. These disasters, however, are always according to the providence of God. On occasions, natural disasters come as a direct consequence of a people's persistently sinful behaviour. On these occasions, God may impose such disasters as a form of judgment. For example, in Noah's day, God destroyed mankind with a catastrophic flood, because of the unbridled wickedness, corruption, and violence of the people. (Gen. 6:5-13; 2 Pet. 2:5; 3:5-7.) Similarly, on another occasion, the LORD destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain, because of the people's sexual immorality and unnatural and perverted homosexual practices. (Gen. 19:1-29; 2 Pet. 2:6-8; Jude 1:7)

Often, the purpose of inflicting temporal judgments such as these is to warn people of that greater and final judgment that will take place at the Last Day. Against this final judgment, there will be no appeal. God gives space to repent in this world only. Yet, people may persistently refuse to forsake their greed, covetousness, lust, and idolatry. They may continue in their immorality, or any other sinful practices or attitudes. If, however, they do so and remain impenitent to the end, then inevitably they must reap the consequences.

Would God Destroy Innocent Lives?

Sometimes, people suggest that God cannot be directly responsible for natural disasters, since these disasters often involve the destruction of many 'innocent' lives. They argue that a God of love would not bring such destruction on anyone. This argument is, however, unsound, untenable and invalid. For if God will not bring destruction⁹ on anyone, then there can be no such place as hell or the lake of fire: for the lake of fire represents a place or state of eternal conscious torments.

A person may assert that hell (or, the lake of fire) is reserved only for the worst of impenitent and wicked sinners. This assertion, however, is unsatisfactory. For, outside of Christ, everyone in the world

⁸ See further on Bible Truths Explained: *Adoption under Discipline*.

⁹ In this connection, it must be remembered that *to destroy* means *to bring to complete ruin*—not to annihilate.

is unrepentant and wicked in the sight of a holy and righteous God. The entire world of unbelievers is guilty of sin, and polluted by sin. No one is innocent. Without exception, everyone outside of Christ lies under the wrath and condemnation of God for their sin. Again, the whole world stands justly condemned, because they have despised the death of God's only Son by refusing to repent and believe on him. It is true that God is a God of love. However, we must never forget that God is also a God of light; i.e. of absolute or transcendent holiness, righteousness, justice and truth. An absolutely holy and righteous God can by no means clear the guilty. (Nahum 1:2-3)

Again, we cannot contend that no one deserves to die. The truth is that no one deserves to live. Except for the mercy and grace of God, all of us alike would perish without hope of redemption. We have already said, however, that God is the God of Creation, Providence, and Redemption. In his great and eternal love, and yet in full consistency with his absolute holiness and with the demands of justice against the sinner, God has provided a way of redemption. This way is open to all those who believe in God's one and only Son for their salvation.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the sacrifice for their sin—the sacrifice of atonement that fully satisfies and turns aside the wrath of God. Christ bore the wrath of God on behalf of the repentant and believing sinner. The Lord Jesus is the means through whom God reconciles sinners to himself, by the work of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling and through the repentant sinners' faith in God's Son. Being justified and reconciled, God then adopts these redeemed sinners into his family as his beloved children and heirs.¹⁰

Summary below

¹⁰ See further on Bible Truths Explained: *Repentance*..

Part 11 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 11: Failing to Acknowledge God's Providence

Definition

Failing to acknowledge God's providence occurs when people refuse to recognise God as the source of their blessings, achievements, abilities, and possessions. Such pride and self-reliance dishonour God, deny His providential care, and expose individuals and nations to divine discipline. In contrast, acknowledging God's providence leads to humility, gratitude, repentance, and dependence upon His grace and salvation through Christ.

Key Truths

1. **God's people must remember His providential care** — Scripture was written to teach believers not to repeat the sins of Israel and Judah.
 2. **Pride is a denial of God's providence** — taking credit for blessings and achievements ignores God's provision.
 3. **All good gifts come from God** — abilities, wealth, opportunities, and success are gifts of His grace.
 4. **Prosperity can become a spiritual danger** — abundance may tempt people to forget the Lord.
 5. **God opposes pride and self-sufficiency** — He calls His people to humility and gratitude.
 6. **Believers remain dependent upon God's grace** — salvation and preservation are entirely God's work.
 7. **God disciplines those who presume upon His grace** — persistent pride and disobedience invite correction.
 8. **Rejecting Christ brings judgment** — neglecting God's appointed way of salvation leaves people under condemnation.
 9. **Those who refuse God's grace remain under His wrath** — only faith in Christ removes condemnation.
 10. **Temporal judgments may foreshadow final judgment** — present judgments warn of ultimate accountability before God.
 11. **Natural disasters occur under God's providence** — they are never outside His sovereign control.
 12. **At times, God uses disasters as acts of judgment** — Scripture presents examples such as the Flood and the destruction of Sodom.
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13. **No person is truly innocent before God** — all humanity stands guilty of sin apart from Christ.
 14. **God is both loving and holy** — His mercy never compromises His righteousness and justice.
 15. **God has provided a way of salvation** — redemption is available through the atoning work of Christ.
 16. **Christ bore God's wrath for believing sinners** — through faith in Him, sinners are reconciled, justified, and adopted into God's family.
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Biblical Foundations

Failing to Acknowledge God's Providence

1. **James 1:17** — every good and perfect gift comes from God.
2. **Deuteronomy 8:2** — God tested His people to reveal what was in their hearts.
3. **Deuteronomy 8:12,14** — prosperity can lead people to forget the Lord.
4. **Deuteronomy 8:17-18** — God gives the power to gain wealth, and people must not take credit for His blessings.

Neglecting Christ Brings Judgment

5. **Hebrews 2:1-3** — there is no escape for those who neglect so great a salvation.
6. **Hebrews 10:26-31** — deliberate rejection of God's truth brings fearful judgment.
7. **Hebrews 12:25,29** — believers are warned not to refuse God's voice.
8. **John 3:18** — those who do not believe stand condemned already.
9. **John 3:36** — whoever rejects the Son remains under God's wrath.

Natural Disasters and Providential Judgment

10. **Genesis 6:5-13** — God judged the world in Noah's day because of widespread wickedness.
11. **2 Peter 2:5** — Noah's generation experienced God's judgment through the Flood.
12. **2 Peter 3:5-7** — the Flood foreshadows future judgment.
13. **Genesis 19:1-29** — Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed under God's judgment.
14. **2 Peter 2:6-8** — Sodom's destruction serves as an example of judgment.
15. **Jude 7** — Sodom and Gomorrah illustrate the consequences of persistent sin.

God's Holiness and Salvation

16. **Nahum 1:2-3** — God is holy and will not leave guilt unpunished.
 17. **John 3:16** (implied) — God provides salvation through His Son.
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18. **Romans 3:23** (principle implied) — all have sinned and fall short of God's glory.
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Practical Implications

1. **Acknowledge God as the source of every blessing** — success should lead to gratitude rather than pride.
 2. **Guard against spiritual self-reliance** — prosperity can tempt believers to forget their dependence on God.
 3. **Remain humble before God** — all achievements ultimately come through His providence.
 4. **Take God's warnings seriously** — discipline often begins with smaller corrections before greater consequences.
 5. **Do not presume upon God's grace** — mercy should produce obedience and thanksgiving.
 6. **Respond to the gospel while opportunity remains** — neglecting Christ has eternal consequences.
 7. **View current judgments as calls to repentance** — temporal afflictions remind people of ultimate accountability.
 8. **Remember God's holiness as well as His love** — both aspects of His character must be honoured.
 9. **Trust fully in Christ's atoning work** — He alone provides deliverance from God's wrath.
 10. **Live as grateful children of God** — recognising His providence leads to worship, humility, and faithful obedience.
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Summary Sentence

Failing to acknowledge God's providence leads to pride, spiritual blindness, and ultimately divine discipline or judgment, while humble recognition of God's sovereign provision and wholehearted trust in Christ lead to repentance, reconciliation, and the enjoyment of God's saving grace and fatherly care.

PART 12

God Judges Nations

God rules as absolute Sovereign over all the nations. Whether the nations acknowledge him or not, God controls their affairs and holds their destiny in his hands. Every nation in the world comes under the judgments of God—for good or evil. Thus, concerning King Belshazzar of Babylon, the Scripture says: ¹¹

Daniel 5:18-21

¹⁸ O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. ¹⁹ And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. ²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. ²¹ He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will. (See vv.1-31; see also Dan. 4:17,25-37)

Of course, there will be a time when all the nations will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. God, however, does not reserve his judgments for the future alone. Even now, God is visiting the nations in judgment. These judgments are of limited scope, nature and duration. They pertain only or principally to this present world or age. Thus, we refer to them as ‘temporal judgments’; i.e. judgments relating to this life and to the existing form of creation.

Temporal Judgments

In his providence, God sustains the nations with all things needful. As the Scripture says:

Matthew 5:45b

^{45b} ...For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

However, if a nation refuses to acknowledge the true God as their Provider, Lord, and Sovereign, and if it continues to practise those evil deeds that God’s Word condemns, then God will judge that nation. God brings judgment upon a nation in exactly the same way as he sometimes judges his own rebellious people. He judges them by ‘sword’ (war or conflict), famine, or plague, or by any other similar devastation or destruction, such as drought or flood. As an example of God’s power to control and channel the forces of nature to accomplish his sovereign purposes, the Scripture says:

Job 12:15

¹¹ See further on Bible Truths Explained: *Sovereignty of God* under *God’s Sovereignty Over the World*.

¹⁵ If he withholds the waters, they dry up;
if he sends them out, they overwhelm the land.
(See vv.13-16)

In his providence, God may use drought, flood, or any other disaster to judge a country or a nation. He may do so to remind the inhabitants of that land that there is a God in heaven who rules as Sovereign over all creation. Thus, the Scripture says:

Psalms 103:19

¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.

Again:

Micah 5:15

¹⁵ And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance
on the nations that did not obey. (See vv.7-14)

We need only consider the present state of the world, and of many thousands of suffering individuals within the world, to see the effects of God's judgments upon people's wilful sin and rebellion. It is folly indeed to neglect or reject the living God of all creation: for he is a great King, and every nation on earth ought to fear or reverence his name. (Mal. 1:14b)

We have said that God is a righteous, holy and just God who will by no means acquit the guilty. (Nahum 1:2-3) Even so, the Lord is also a God who delights in mercy. He is a God who has great compassion toward sinners. He does not desire the death of anyone. Rather, he desires that they should turn from their wicked ways and live. (Ezek. 18:23; 33:11)

In Wrath, God Remembers Mercy

In righteous judgment, God will send disaster upon all unrighteous people and nations. However, in mercy and compassion, the Lord will first give his own backsliding people space to repent. Thus, the Word of God holds out hope to his backslidden and rebellious people:

Jeremiah 26:13

¹³ Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of
the Lord your God, and the Lord will relent of the disaster that he has
pronounced against you. (See vv.1-15)

God extends similar hope of mercy to any nation that repents of its evil deeds and turns to him in repentance. As an illustration, we need only consider what God said to the great city of Nineveh:

Jonah 3:4

⁴ Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out,
"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (See vv.1-3)

How, though, did the people respond to God's threat of imminent judgment?

Jonah 3:5

⁵ And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

Jonah 3:10

¹⁰ When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it. (See vv.6-9)

On this occasion, God spared Nineveh. However, we must never forget that—on a later occasion—the Lord totally destroyed this city. Then, the judgment of God—which had been averted as a result of Jonah's preaching and the people's repentance—fell with full force on the Ninevites. This judgment came because the Ninevites later spurned the grace of God to return to their rebellious and sinful ways. (See the book of Nahum.)

God's Wrath Strikes the Unrepentant

When a people stubbornly refuse to repent with all their heart and soul, and deliberately continue to practise their sinful deeds, then God will certainly act in judgment. God's Word does not warn in vain:

Jeremiah 21:3-6

³ Then Jeremiah said to them: ⁴ "Thus you shall say to Zedekiah, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands and with which you are fighting against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans who are besieging you outside the walls. And I will bring them together into the midst of this city. ⁵ I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm, in anger and in fury and in great wrath. ⁶ And I will strike down the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast. They shall die of a great pestilence. (See vv.1-14)

These solemn words were written for our instruction and warning. For those, however, who will not heed the warning of God, they will find that history has a habit of repeating itself. Thus, today, many people are enduring the consequences of their own sinful actions. Sadly, and through no fault of their own, many individuals are enduring the consequences of other people's sin—consequences for which God will one day judge those responsible.

Though mankind knew God's righteous decree, they refused to repent and forsake their evil ways. The Lord, therefore, has inflicted upon sinful mankind the judgments that he has threatened. He has given these impenitent individuals over to the consequences of their chosen evil ways. (Jer. 2:17,19; 21:14; Rom. 1:18-32)

Summary below

Part 12 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 12: God Judges Nations

Definition

God's providential judgment of nations is His sovereign rule over the rise, fall, blessing, and discipline of peoples and kingdoms. As the absolute Ruler of the world, God governs nations according to His justice, holiness, mercy, and eternal purposes. He may bless, discipline, warn, or judge nations through historical events, natural disasters, military conflicts, and other providential means, while continually calling people to repentance and faith.

Key Truths

1. **God is sovereign over all nations** — every kingdom, ruler, and government remains under His authority.
2. **National power comes from God** — He raises up rulers and removes them according to His purposes.
3. **God judges nations in history as well as eternity** — His judgments are not reserved solely for the final judgment.
4. **Temporal judgments occur in the present age** — God may judge nations through events that affect this life and world.
5. **God provides for all people through common providence** — He gives sunlight, rain, and material blessings to both righteous and unrighteous people.
6. **Persistent national rebellion invites judgment** — nations that reject God's authority and moral standards expose themselves to His correction.
7. **God may use natural forces as instruments of judgment** — droughts, floods, famines, and other disasters remain under His control.
8. **God rules over creation and history simultaneously** — both natural events and political developments serve His providential purposes.
9. **God delights in mercy even when warning of judgment** — His desire is that people turn from sin and live.
10. **Repentance can avert threatened judgment** — God often withholds judgment when people genuinely repent.
11. **Nineveh demonstrates God's willingness to forgive** — sincere repentance brought mercy and delayed destruction.

12. **Temporary repentance does not guarantee permanent blessing** — returning later to sin invites renewed judgment.
 13. **Persistent rebellion eventually brings wrath** — God will not ignore deliberate and continued disobedience forever.
 14. **God's warnings are acts of grace** — they provide opportunity for repentance before judgment falls.
 15. **Human suffering often results from collective sin** — people may endure the consequences of their own actions and the actions of others.
 16. **God remains both just and merciful** — He judges sin while extending opportunities for repentance and restoration.
-

Biblical Foundations

God Judges Nations

1. **Daniel 5:18-21** — God gives kingdoms to whom He wills and humbles proud rulers.
2. **Daniel 4:17, 25-37** (referenced) — the Most High rules over the kingdoms of men.

Temporal Judgments

3. **Matthew 5:45** — God provides common blessings to both the just and the unjust.
4. **Job 12:15** — God controls droughts and floods.
5. **Psalms 103:19** — God's kingdom rules over all.
6. **Micah 5:15** — God executes judgment upon nations that refuse to obey Him.
7. **Malachi 1:14** (referenced) — God is a great King whose name should be feared among the nations.
8. **Nahum 1:2-3** (referenced) — God is righteous and does not leave guilt unpunished.
9. **Ezekiel 18:23** — God does not delight in the death of the wicked.
10. **Ezekiel 33:11** — God calls sinners to turn from their evil ways and live.

In Wrath, God Remembers Mercy

11. **Jeremiah 26:13** — repentance can cause God to withhold threatened judgment.
12. **Jonah 3:4** — Nineveh was warned of impending destruction.
13. **Jonah 3:5** — the people believed God and repented.
14. **Jonah 3:10** — God relented when Nineveh turned from its evil ways.
15. **Nahum** (referenced) — Nineveh was later judged after returning to wickedness.

God's Wrath Strikes the Unrepentant

16. **Jeremiah 21:3-6** — God judged Jerusalem because of persistent rebellion.
 17. **Jeremiah 2:17,19** (referenced) — people suffer the consequences of forsaking God.
 18. **Jeremiah 21:14** (referenced) — God's judgment follows continued disobedience.
 19. **Romans 1:18-32** — God may give people over to the consequences of their sinful choices.
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Practical Implications

1. **Recognise God's authority over nations** — political and historical events occur under His sovereign rule.
 2. **Do not presume upon God's patience** — His mercy provides opportunity to repent, not permission to continue in sin.
 3. **Respond to God's warnings quickly** — delayed repentance increases the danger of judgment.
 4. **Pray for national repentance and renewal** — God is willing to show mercy when people turn to Him.
 5. **Learn from biblical examples** — Israel, Judah, Babylon, and Nineveh demonstrate God's dealings with nations.
 6. **Remember that prosperity does not guarantee God's approval** — nations remain accountable to Him.
 7. **Trust God's justice when evil seems unchecked** — He governs all peoples and kingdoms.
 8. **Value God's mercy** — His warnings are expressions of compassion and grace.
 9. **Take personal responsibility for obedience** — national decline often begins with individual rebellion.
 10. **Look to Christ for salvation** — only God's grace can deliver sinners from ultimate judgment.
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Summary Sentence

God sovereignly governs and judges nations through His providence, blessing obedience, warning against sin, extending mercy to the repentant, and bringing temporal and ultimately final judgment upon persistent rebellion, while continually demonstrating both His perfect justice and His abundant compassion.

PART 13

Sins of the Father

There is a sense in which God holds every person accountable for his *own* sins. In this sense, the sins of the son are not attributable to—nor are they derived from—the sins of the father: (e.g. the man born blind). (Ezek. 18:19-20; John 9:1-3)

There is, however, another sense in which the sins of the father are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate God. When people continue to practise their evil deeds in defiance of God's Word, then God warns that the children will bear the consequences of their parent's sin. Thus, for example, God's Word says:

Exodus 20:5-6

⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. (See vv.1-17)

Exodus 34:6-7

⁶ The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." (See vv.1-8)

Jeremiah 32:18-19

¹⁸ You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts, ¹⁹ great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds. (See vv.16-35)

Tragically, the effects of disregarding God's warning are plainly evident today on every hand. People who have lived in defiance of God and who have defiled and distorted God's moral laws are now seeing the consequences of their evil deeds in the lives of their children and grandchildren. It is a true saying indeed:

Hosea 8:7a

^{7a} For they sow the wind,
and they shall reap the whirlwind...
(See vv.1-14)

Consequences of Parents' Sin on their Children

Thus we see that a consistently sinful lifestyle practised by parents—and by grandparents before them—can well result in their children living in very similar, or even more depraved lifestyles than their forebears. This is what the Lord means by saying that the sins of the parents are visited on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate (i.e. despise) him, his Word, and his ways.

By despising God, his Word and his ways, these parents have rejected God's standards of righteousness, and have chosen to live according to their own sinful ways. Not only have they set their children the worst possible example, but they have caused their children to despise and repudiate moral and spiritual values, and to stifle the voice of conscience within them. Of course, as they grow older, the children will become accountable before God for their own sins.

Yet, even in such a situation, God can and does show mercy. Many such children—and parents—have been redeemed from such a lifestyle by the sovereign grace of God. No doubt, many more will yet be redeemed and made the children of God. Nevertheless, it remains true that God will judge those who remain impenitent unto the end.

God is Not Mocked

Multitudes of people around the world are discovering the truth of God's Word:

Jeremiah 4:18

¹⁸ Your ways and your deeds
have brought this upon you.
This is your doom, and it is bitter;
it has reached your very heart."
(See vv.11-22)

Or, as expressed by the NIV:

Jeremiah 4:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ "Your own conduct and actions have brought this upon you. This is your punishment. How bitter it is! How it pierces to the heart!" (NIV)

God is not mocked. Those who have sown the wind—and have enjoyed their sinful pleasures—are now reaping the bitter harvest. They have sown to the flesh—their sinful nature; and of the flesh, they have reaped corruption: corruption of body, and corruption of mind. It is a dreadful thing indeed to despise the warnings contained in the Word of the living Sovereign God.

The Ungodly Called to Repentance

It is an undeniable truth of the Bible that the most holy and righteous God visits people in judgment. Yet, he is still the same loving, merciful, and compassionate God who gave his one and only Son to be the Redeemer of sinful men and women. Regarding those who turn to God with all their heart and soul, seeking mercy and forgiveness through the merits of Christ's blood, God has promised to be

merciful. He has assured everyone who calls upon the name of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that their sins—however great—will be forgiven, and will never again be called to remembrance. (Jer. 31:34; Rom. 10:13; Heb. 8:12)

There is no limit to the love of God, nor to his willingness to forgive and to reconcile to himself the truly repentant sinner. As the Scripture says:

Isaiah 1:18

¹⁸ “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool. (See vv.1-20)

The Scripture continues:

Isaiah 1:19-20

¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land;
²⁰ but if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be eaten by the sword;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

God promises mercy to those who truly repent and utterly forsake their evil ways. The Lord reserves judgment, however, for those who refuse to repent. Similarly, God holds judgment in store for those who make an outward show of repentance, but who later return to their old sinful way of life. Remember the people of Nineveh!

God’s People Called to Repentance

At times, God’s own people prove unfaithful to him. Yet, the Lord promises mercy to them upon their true and heartfelt repentance toward him, and the forsaking of their sin. Though God may have visited his people with providential judgments, yet the Lord gives them this assurance:

2 Chronicles 7:13-14

¹³ When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, ¹⁴ if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (See vv.1-22)

God sends drought, destructive insects (or, alternatively, vermin), and plagues (including epidemics or pandemics). However, the same God of providence who brings these disasters will remove them when his people humble themselves, repent, and call upon his name. Not only will God forgive his people’s sins, but he will also heal their devastated land (naturally or spiritually). He will restore to them the years that the locusts have eaten. (Joel 2:25)

It was this kind of godly sorrow for sin that the Corinthian church experienced, and that led to their repentance and their earnest desire to set themselves and their church right with God. Thus, the apostle Paul says:

2 Corinthians 7:8-11

⁸ For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while.

⁹ As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.

¹⁰ For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. ¹¹ For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. (See v.12; cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-13)

God Rules Over His People

The Lord God Almighty rules supreme in the kingdoms of men; i.e. he exercises his absolute or sovereign dominion over all nations. God applies this rule through his works of Creation, Providence, and Redemption. Concerning providence, we may summarise God's rule as follows:

1. **General Providence** is the ruling hand of God over all mankind, and over all creation in heaven above and on the earth beneath.
2. **Special Providence** is the ruling hand of God over his own elect people; ordaining or permitting all events and circumstances so that all things work together for good to those who love God: to those who are the called according to his purpose.
3. **Extraordinary Providence** is the ruling hand of God over mankind in general, and over his own people in particular, by works of a supernatural or miraculous nature.

Regarding special providence, the Lord God gives each of his own people this solemn assurance from his Word:

Psalms 121:5-8

⁵ The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade on your right hand.

⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.

⁸ The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and for evermore. (See vv.1-4)

The God who preserves the universe, is the God who preserves our lives.

Summary below

Part 13 Summary

BTE14 Summary — Providence of God (ESV Edition)

Part 13: Sins of the Father and God's Providential Rule

Definition

God's providential government of families and generations includes both individual accountability for personal sin and the far-reaching consequences of sinful conduct upon future generations. While each person answers to God for his own actions, the effects of parental rebellion, ungodliness, and disregard for God's Word often influence children and grandchildren. Yet God's providence also extends mercy, forgiveness, restoration, and preservation to all who genuinely repent and trust in Him.

Key Truths

1. **Each person is accountable for his own sins** — individuals bear personal responsibility before God.
 2. **The consequences of sin often extend beyond one generation** — children and grandchildren may suffer the effects of their forebears' rebellion.
 3. **God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon succeeding generations** — persistent family patterns of sin can produce lasting consequences.
 4. **God's steadfast love extends far beyond His judgments** — His mercy reaches thousands who love and obey Him.
 5. **Parents profoundly influence their children** — example, values, and conduct help shape future generations.
 6. **Habitual sin produces a harvest of corruption** — rebellion against God's ways often results in greater moral and spiritual decline.
 7. **People reap what they sow** — sinful choices eventually bring bitter consequences.
 8. **God is not mocked** — the outcomes of sin ultimately confirm the truth of God's warnings.
 9. **The consequences of sin are often self-inflicted** — people experience the results of their own conduct and actions.
 10. **God continues to show mercy to sinners** — no one is beyond the reach of His grace.
 11. **Christ is God's provision for forgiveness and reconciliation** — salvation is available through His atoning work.
 12. **True repentance brings complete forgiveness** — God promises not to remember the forgiven sins of His people.
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13. **God's people are also called to repentance** — believers who stray from God's ways must return to Him.
 14. **God may use providential hardships to awaken repentance** — droughts, disasters, and difficulties can serve corrective purposes.
 15. **God restores those who genuinely repent** — He heals, forgives, and renews His people.
 16. **God rules through general, special, and extraordinary providence** — His sovereign hand governs all creation, His redeemed people, and miraculous interventions.
 17. **Special providence assures believers of divine protection** — God preserves and keeps His people throughout life.
 18. **The God who sustains the universe also sustains His children** — His care extends from creation itself to every individual believer.
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Biblical Foundations

Personal Accountability and Generational Consequences

1. **Ezekiel 18:19-20** — each person is accountable for his own sin.
2. **John 9:1-3** — suffering is not always directly related to parental sin.
3. **Exodus 20:5-6** — God visits the iniquity of fathers upon succeeding generations while showing steadfast love to those who obey Him.
4. **Exodus 34:6-7** — God is merciful and forgiving, yet just in dealing with sin.
5. **Jeremiah 32:18-19** — God rewards people according to their ways while showing mercy to thousands.

The Consequences of Sin

6. **Hosea 8:7** — those who sow the wind reap the whirlwind.
7. **Jeremiah 4:18** — sinful conduct brings its own bitter consequences.

The Ungodly Called to Repentance

8. **Jeremiah 31:34** — God promises complete forgiveness for His people.
9. **Romans 10:13** — everyone who calls on the Lord will be saved.
10. **Hebrews 8:12** — God remembers forgiven sins no more.
11. **Isaiah 1:18** — God offers cleansing and forgiveness to repentant sinners.
12. **Isaiah 1:19-20** — obedience brings blessing, while rebellion brings judgment.

God's People Called to Repentance

13. **2 Chronicles 7:13-14** — God promises forgiveness and restoration when His people humble themselves and repent.
14. **Joel 2:25** — God restores what has been lost through judgment.
15. **2 Corinthians 7:8-11** — godly sorrow produces genuine repentance.
16. **1 Corinthians 5:1-13** (referenced) — church discipline aims at repentance and restoration.

God Rules Over His People

17. **Psalms 121:5-8** — the Lord preserves and keeps His people continually.
 18. **Romans 8:28** (referenced) — God's special providence works all things together for good for His people.
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Practical Implications

1. **Take personal responsibility for your actions** — each individual stands accountable before God.
 2. **Recognise the influence of your example** — your choices affect future generations.
 3. **Guard against habitual sin** — its consequences often reach further than anticipated.
 4. **Do not despair over family history** — God's grace can break patterns of sin and rebellion.
 5. **Respond quickly to God's warnings** — repentance prevents greater consequences.
 6. **Trust God's willingness to forgive** — no sinner is beyond His mercy.
 7. **Seek genuine rather than superficial repentance** — true repentance produces lasting change.
 8. **Pray for future generations** — ask God to preserve them from the effects of sin.
 9. **Accept God's correction humbly** — providential discipline is intended for restoration.
 10. **Rest in God's preserving care** — He faithfully keeps those who belong to Him.
 11. **Encourage godly sorrow rather than worldly regret** — repentance leads to life and restoration.
 12. **Live confidently under God's special providence** — the Lord who governs creation is also your Keeper.
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Summary Sentence

God's providence teaches that while every person is accountable for his own sins, the consequences of ungodliness often affect future generations, yet God's mercy remains greater

than judgment, offering forgiveness, restoration, and preserving grace to all who truly repent and trust in Him, while faithfully keeping His people under His special providential care.

Final Summary of entire study follows below

Final Summary

Providence

1. Purpose of the Doctrine

The doctrine of **Providence** explains how God continually upholds, governs, and directs all things according to His perfect wisdom, power, and goodness. It shows that creation is not left to chance, fate, or impersonal forces, but is sustained and guided by the personal, sovereign God who works all things according to the counsel of His will. Providence assures believers that every event — great or small, joyful or painful — unfolds under God’s purposeful care for His glory and their ultimate good.

2. Key Biblical Foundations

Scripture teaches that God **upholds all things** by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3) and that **from Him and through Him and to Him are all things** (Rom. 11:36). He works **all things together for good** for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28), and **His counsel shall stand** as He accomplishes all His purposes (Isa. 46:9–10). Jesus affirms that God’s providence extends even to the smallest details of life — the fall of a sparrow and the numbering of every hair (Matt. 10:29–31). These passages establish providence as God’s ongoing, sovereign, and meticulous care over all creation.

3. How the Parts Fit Together

The study begins by defining providence as God’s continual involvement in the world He created — preserving, governing, and directing all things. It then explains God’s **preserving work**, by which He sustains creation moment by moment. Next, it explores His **governing work**, showing how He orders events, nations, and individuals according to His sovereign plan. Further Parts examine God’s **special providence** toward His people, including His protection, provision, discipline, and guidance. The doctrine also clarifies the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, showing how God’s providence never cancels human choice but works through it. The final sections emphasise God’s wise purposes in suffering, His control over evil without being its author, and His unfailing commitment to bring His people safely to glory.

Together these Parts form a coherent doctrinal flow: **God’s sustaining care → God’s sovereign rule → God’s special care for His people → God’s purposes in suffering → God’s governance of human choices → God’s final fulfilment of His purposes.**

4. Doctrinal Conclusion

Providence is God’s sovereign, wise, and continual governance of all creation. He sustains all things, directs all events, and accomplishes all His purposes without failure. Nothing occurs by chance; everything unfolds under His fatherly care. Providence does not eliminate human

responsibility but works through human actions to fulfil God's perfect will. For believers, providence is a source of deep comfort, assuring them that God orders their steps, provides for their needs, protects them in danger, governs their trials, and uses all things — including suffering — for their spiritual good and His eternal glory.

5. Practical Implications

This doctrine strengthens trust in God's daily care, encouraging believers to rest confidently in His sovereign goodness. It promotes gratitude, recognising every blessing as a gift of providence. It fosters patience in trials, knowing God wisely ordains suffering for sanctification. It shapes prayer, reminding believers that God governs means as well as ends. It fuels courage, assuring Christians that nothing can thwart God's purposes for them. And it inspires worship, as believers acknowledge the God who rules all things wisely, lovingly, and perfectly for His glory and their everlasting joy.

END

