

INTRODUCTION: **THE PREVALANCE OF PROVIDENCE** (see Lincoln's 2<sup>nd</sup> Inaugural address)

**I. WHAT IS PROVIDENCE?**

- A. **GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN HISTORY** (Gen.1,2 & 3, etc.)
- B. **GRACIOUS & GOOD PROVIDINGS** (Ps.145:9f; Mt.5:45; 10:29; Jn.3:16f; Rom.8:28; see 1Tm.5:8)
- C. **JUST & WISE PROVIDINGS** (Ps.145:20; 1Kngs.3:28; see Ps.105,107)
- D. **NATURE IN GENERAL** (Ps.147:8f; see Heb.1:2,3; Lk.1:37)
- E. **MANKIND IN PARTICULAR** (Dan.4:17,25,32)
- F. **PERSONS INDIVIDUALLY** (Gen.50:20; Eph.1:4; Rom.9:17f)
- G. **PERSONS RESPONSIBLY** (Acts 2:23; see Rom.1:24f; Eph.2:10)

**II. WHAT PROVIDENCE IS NOT** (see Packer in *NBD*)

- A. **PANTHEISM: SELF-PROVIDENCE** (Rom.1:23)
- B. **DEISM: INACTIVE PROVIDENCE** (active oversight; Dan.4:17)
- C. **DUALISM: PLEASANT PROVIDENCE** (Job 2:10)
- D. **INDETERMINISM: NO PROVIDENCE** (Ps.94:7f)
- E. **DETERMINISM: DE-RESPONSIBLE PROVIDENCE** (Acts 2:23)
- F. **CHANCE: IRRATIONAL PROVIDENCE** (Ex.34:6f)
- G. **FATE: INDIFFERENT PROVIDENCE** (Ps.145:9f; Mt.5:45; 10:29)

**III. HOW IS IT MYSTERIOUS?**

- A. **GENERAL EVENTS ORDINARILY W/OUT SPECIAL EXPLANATION** (Dt.29:29; Is.55:8f; Job 38-42)
- B. **EXCEPTIONS: FLOOD, EXILE** (Gen.6:13; 2Chr.36:16f)
- C. **PRINCIPLES FOR APPLICATION: BLESSING & CURSING** (word & work; Dt.30:15f; Ps.1:6; Rom.6:23; see Lincoln's 2<sup>nd</sup> inaugural address)
- D. **WHY BAD THINGS TO GOOD PEOPLE?** (2Sam.12:10f; Heb.12:5f /Acts 2:23; 1Pt.1:6f; 4:12f)
- E. **WHY GOOD THINGS TO BAD PEOPLE?** (Eph.6:1f; Ex.34:6f; Ps.73:17; Rom.2:4; Jms.5:5)

**IV. HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO THESE THINGS?**

- A. **UNDERSTAND PROVIDENCE BY THE SPIRIT IN WORD & PRAYER, NOT BY YOUR IMAGINATION AND, EVEN THEN, WITH RESTRAINT AND HUMILITY** (2Tm.3:16,17; Dt.30:15f; Ps.119:105; e.g., Lincoln's 2<sup>nd</sup> Inaugural address)
- B. **RECOUNT GOD'S GRACIOUS & JUST PROVIDENCES IN YOUR LIFE** (see Ps.107)
  - 1. *birth & early days* (Ps.22:9f; 71:6; 139:13; 2Tm.3:14f)
  - 2. *marriage & family* (Prov.19:14; Ps.127:3)
  - 3. *conversion & sanctification* (Eph.2:5-10; 1Cor.6:11; 2Th.2:13; 1Pt.1:1f)
  - 4. *employment & relationships* (Eccl.2:24; Col.4:3; Eph.4:11-16)
  - 5. *note: extensively & intensively* (Ps.48:12f; 116:12)
  - 6. *note: read church history* (Oswego RPC "Story Corp")
- C. **PRAISE HIM FOR HIS GOODNESS & JUSTICE TOWARD YOU** (see Ps.19:9; 107:1f; see Psalms!)
- D. **PETITION HIM FOR HIS GOODNESS & JUSTICE TOWARD YOU AND WAIT PATIENTLY** (Is.49:4f; Ps.39:7f; 40:1f; 41:10f; 42:5,11; 43:5; Lk.18:13; Rom.8:28; see Psalms!)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PRIVATE, FAMILY AND SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP**

*Suggestions: Don't feel obliged to use every question or every part of every question. Go through and discuss those that are of greatest interest to you. Then consider going back and discussing those that may also be useful, including those that may have seemed a bit difficult. In all questions, keep the outline before to identify entries relevant to the question and to look up appropriate verses listed.*

1. What most surprised, puzzled or impressed you from this sermon?
2. What was most helpful? Why? How will you apply it in your daily life?
3. What verses covered were most helpful? How so?
4. What is providence?
5. How does it relate to creation? to redemption?
6. Read through the *Shorter Catechism* Q&A #7-12. How does providence fit into this section?
7. How does God rule over
  - a. Nature
  - b. Mankind
  - c. Individuals
8. How does God's providence respect human liberty rather than destroy it?
9. Among the things that providence is not, which were most interesting or helpful to you and why?
10. How is God's providence mysterious?
11. How can His works be rightly understood? What are the limitations of this?
12. How does the familiar complementation between word & work (e.g., faith & life; word & sacrament) apply to providence?
13. Why do bad things happen to good people?
14. Why do good things happen to bad people?
15. How do you go about understanding God's providences in your life?
16. Recount a few of the more remarkable providences of God in your life and your understanding of them.
17. How can you grow in honoring God in His providence?
18. How can we as a congregation grow in honoring God in His providence?

**For further consideration:**

*Reformed Confessions Harmonized* by Beeke & Ferguson, pgs.40-44

includes *Westminster Confession*, chp.5; *Larger Catechism* Q.18-20; *Shorter Catechism*, Q.11

Article on *Providence* by J.I. Packer in *The New Bible Dictionary*

*What is Providence* (booklet) by Derek W.H. Thomas in Basics of the Reformed Faith series (info. table)

*Behind a Frowning Providence* (booklet) by John J. Murray

*The Mystery of Providence* by John Flavel

Any book on church history but especially *A History of Christian Missions* by Stephen Neill