

**I. INTRO:**

- A. **[Biblical] Anthropology has four divisions:** creation, providence, man in original righteousness, fall.
- B. **Creation:** a uniquely divine work; the execution in time of what God conceived in eternity; the giving existence to something in distinction from Himself; an orderly work; a work with man (and Christ) as goal.

**II. PROVIDENCE (God’s hand in the creation, God’s fatherly hand, Ps. 104:28; Dan. 4:35)**

**A. [Preservation] Providence is God’s work of preserving all things which He has made**

**1. When God created, He created nothing which is independent of Him, but everything depends on Him for its continued existence.**

- a. Things do not simply continue to exist: God’s Word commanding them to exist preserves them.
- b. So, for example, why does the sun continue to shine? Because every moment God commands the sun, “Shine!” His Word (“The Word of His power,” Heb. 1:3) upholds the sun. The same is true for every creature.
- c. Because all creatures depend on God for their existence, they depend on Him for their life, and for everything they need to live. Acts 17:25 (“he giveth to all life, and breath and all things”); Ps. 104:10-15, 24-29; Matt. 10:29-31; Neh. 9:6.

**2. The idea here is of God’s hand holding up the creation from falling back into nothingness and His hand opening wide to give unto His creatures everything which they need. But God’s preservation is especially seen in preserving His people.**

- a. It is because we believe in God’s providence that we pray to God for our daily bread. We believe that ultimately the bread we have on our tables is from God, and that God feeds us by that bread by His providence.
- b. It is because we believe in God’s providence that we trust that God will preserve His Church from destruction. Ps. 37:28; Ps. 124 (all).
- c. Ultimately, our comfort is that the hand which upholds the universe and all things is *our Father’s hand*.

**3. This, of course, is the opposite of the unbelieving view of the world.**

- a. Deism is the idea that the world is a machine which God constructed and then leaves to its own devices. Occasionally, He might intervene if the need arises, but such intervention is rare.
- b. Atheism is the idea that there is no God, the world came about by chance, and that eventually the world will end in a bang or a whimper. No one upholds the world, then.
- c. But the Bible teaches that God, the Creator, is personally and directly involved in upholding His world.

**B. [Government] Providence is also God’s work of direct rule in all creation, directing it to its goal.**

- 1. We would expect there to be providence because we believe that God is almighty and sovereign
  - a. That God is sovereign means that He is the Absolute Ruler and King over all: life and death, time and eternity, and all things are in His hands and He can do with all things as He pleases.
  - b. God’s sovereignty is His control of and rule over all things. It is His authority (or right to rule).
  - c. God’s Almightyness or Omnipotence is His possession of all power or might and His power to rule.

**2. The Bible teaches clearly that God rules over and controls all things by His sovereign will.**

- a. Here are some examples: Ps. 115:3; Ps. 135:6; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11.
- b. Notice that these verses teach, not only that God can do whatever He pleases, but that He actually *does do* whatever He pleases.

**3. God’s government is all comprehensive (It includes ALL things)**

- a. God governs the world of nature: He rules in the mountains and in the valleys; He rules in the seas and the deepest oceans; He controls the weather (the rain, wind, sun, snow, etc). Ps. 135:6 again.
- b. God governs the world of animals: the life and death of every creature from the most insignificant bug to the great whales of the ocean. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without the will of our Father.
- c. God governs history generally so that all the major events of history: the rise and fall of nations, the rise and fall of leaders, etc, are governed by Him.
- d. God governs the lives of every human being, down to the details. Acts 17:26 (He determines when each man will be born, where he will live and when and how he will die).

### III. PROVIDENCE, EVIL(S) AND SIN

#### A. It is a common teaching today among Christians that God's Providence does not include evils (that is, disasters).

##### 1. This is a form of dualism.

- a. Dualism is the idea that there are two powers in the universe, an evil and a good, and that the good power (God) sends the good things and the evil power (the devil) sends the evil things. This is very common among evangelicals.
- b. So, for example, you become sick. The devil sent sickness. You have a car accident. The devil did that. There is a storm and your house is destroyed. The devil did that. There is a famine and people starve to death. The devil did that. There is an earthquake. The devil sent it. Your loved one dies. The devil killed him. God, they say, did not want these terrible things to happen; God had little or no control over them. Or God had nothing to do with them. God only sends prosperity, riches, health, etc.

##### 2. But, on the very face of it, the idea is totally unbiblical. There are not two powers in the universe. There is ONLY one power. God is in complete control, including in control of the devil.

- a. The reason this belief is so common among Christians today is their idea that God loves all men, and therefore He could never want to send disasters into their lives.
- b. But the Bible teaches that men are sinners and deserve whatever evils God sends upon them.
- c. God does not stand idly by as a helpless observer to the famine, earthquakes, floods or fires.
- d. Look up Amos 3:6 ("Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?"); Job 1:21, 2:10; the Bible is full of God sending famine, pestilence and storms.

#### B. If some Christians are reluctant to confess God's providential hand in evils, they usually deny God's providence in evil.

##### 1. First, we must confess that God rules the actions of men, all men, including evil men.

- a. This does not mean that God uses men as pawns on a gigantic chess board, but God controls men *as men*.
- b. Two things we can say about the men whom God governs. First, men are *dependent creatures*. No matter how much they boast about independence and freewill, they are under God. They cannot move into an area where they are no longer under God's control (Prov. 16:1, 21:1). Second, men are rational, moral creatures, who are not blocks of wood, and therefore are "thinking, willing and active agents" (Q&A 7).
- c. Therefore, whatever a man does, he does so because he wants to. God does not compel a man to act in a certain way. And because of this, man is accountable to God for what he does. Always!

##### 2. God governs sin, and includes it in providence because He has a purpose with sin.

- a. The presence of sin and sinners in the world is necessary background so that the glory of God's grace and holiness shines all the brighter.
- b. God ordained sin (that is included in the all things) for the sake of Jesus Christ: it never was God's purpose that Adam remain innocent in the Garden, but sin came into the world so that Adam could make room for Christ. Christ is God's ultimate goal, and all other things serve Him.
- c. Put it this way, the development of the world in sin is necessary for the cross. The cross did not happen out of the blue: the nation of Israel had to apostatize, the Romans had to develop in a certain way, and all of that involved billions of sinful actions (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). There are other examples, Gen. 50:20.

##### 3. But does this make God the author of sin?

- a. What does it mean that God is the author of sin, something Christians have always denied.
- b. It means that God is the one doing the sinful action. Never the case. The sinner always sins willingly.
- c. It means that God takes pleasure in the sinful action. That is never the case. God always hates sin, and although He ordains it, controls it, governs it and directs it, He always does so as something He hates.

#### C. This is for the Christian's comfort.

##### 1. If God were in not in control of evils, how could we have any hope?

- a. Then, we would be at the "mercy" of powers outside of God's control, or even at the "mercy" of the devil.
- b. Then, we would have to believe that all things do not work out for good to those who love God.
- c. Then, we would have to imagine a God who is doing the best He can, but whose hands are tied!

##### 2. Our attitude to providence must be patience in adversity and thankfulness in adversity. That's practical providence, not that I can rhyme off the doctrine but that I do not complain when things seem to go wrong.