

Grace OPC High School Sunday Class Teaching Notes			
Year:	1 of 4		Date: 11/08/2003
Quarter:	1 of 4	Theology	
Lesson Title:	Providence – part 1		
Lesson Purpose:	To Examine and Understand the Doctrine of Providence and How it Applies in Our Lives		

1. Introduction

What did we see last week about creation?

- Man was created immediately by God, and last of the creatures.
- That God created one human pair, from whom the entire race in all its varieties has descended by generation.
- God created man in his own image, possessing reasonable and immortal souls, and was given knowledge, righteousness and true holiness.
- God furnished Adam with enough knowledge for his guidance: God wrote the law on his heart and gave him clear command to obey under the penalty of death.
- Adam, although created holy and capable of obedience, was at the same time capable of falling. This was the moral condition in which both angels and men were created.

Providence – the concept takes into account more than God governing His creation. The Puritan Thomas Watson said, “There are three things in providence: God’s foreknowing, God’s determining, and God’s directing all things to their periods and ends.” The Puritan preacher Richard Sibbes declared, “Providence is the perpetuity and continuance of creation.”

2. Divine Providence and Its Relation to Creation

- God upholds, governs and controls the actions of all His creatures.
- All things created by God are always totally dependant on God for their existence.
- A created thing can never be independent of God.
- Creation is a necessary extension of God’s decree.
- Providence is a necessary extension of God’s creation.

Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Genesis 45:6-8 “For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. 7 “And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 “So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Daniel 4:34-35 34And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. 35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, “What have You done?”

Acts 17:25 “Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings... 28 “for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’

Matthew 10:29-31 “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. 30 “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 “Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

- Deism is a religious system that denies the doctrine of God’s providence. Deism holds that God created the universe in the first place, and left it to work out its own destiny. According to Deism, the universe is like a clock, which God made and wound up. Since then, He has let it alone and now it is slowly running down in its own way, according to natural laws and without divine control. Deism denies that God has anything to do with the world we live in today. The Deist holds that God and the world parted company ages ago. Also, the Deist teaches that we cannot have contact with Him and He cannot answer our prayers.ⁱ
- Many people believe that events happen by “chance” but the Bible clearly teaches that this is not possible.

Matthew 10:29-31 “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will.

Ephesians 1:11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will....

Psalms 33:11 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. ¹¹ The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations.

3. God Manifesting His Own Glory

- The purpose or end of God’s providence is the manifestation or demonstration of God’s own glory.

Isaiah 63:14 As a beast goes down into the valley, And the Spirit of the Lord causes him to rest, So You lead Your people, To make Yourself a glorious name.

Ephesians 3:10 “To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places....

Romans 9:17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.”

Psalms 145:7 They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness, And shall sing of Your righteousness.

- Today many people have false ideas about God’s purpose. They say they believe in a “democratic God” who does things for the benefit of a majority of His creatures, or for the greatest good of the greatest number.ⁱⁱ
- The “democratic God” is contrary to the teachings about God in the Bible. This is a god made in man’s image, and is therefore idolatry. This overlooks the truth that the glory of God includes the welfare of His creatures in general.
Matthew 5:44-45 “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 “that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

4. God Brings all Things to Pass

- God is the first cause of all things.
- God brings all things to pass by His foreknowledge and decree.

Acts 2:23 “Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

Isaiah 4:24, 27 24The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, “Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, And as I have purposed, so it shall stand... 27For the Lord of hosts has purposed, And who will annul it?His hand is stretched out, And who will turn it back?”

- God orders things to pass by the use of second causes.

Genesis 8:22-23 "While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease."

Jeremiah 31:35 Thus says the Lord, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name): Exodus 21:13 "However, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered him into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee.

Deuteronomy 19:5 "as when a man goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he shall flee to one of these cities and live;

Isaiah 10:6-7 I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7 Yet he does not mean so, Nor does his heart think so; But it is in his heart to destroy, And cut off not a few nations.

5. God Uses Means in the Exercise of His Providence.

- God makes use of means in upholding, directing and controlling His creation and all His creatures.

Acts 27:31, 44 ³¹ Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." ⁴⁴ and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.

Isaiah 55:10-11 ¹⁰ "For as ^{the} rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, ¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Hosea. 2:21-22 ²¹ "It shall come to pass in that day That I will answer," says the Lord; "I will answer the heavens, And they shall answer the earth. ²² The earth shall answer With grain, With new wine, And with oil; They shall answer Jezreel.

- Although God uses means to accomplish His purposes, He is free to work without, above, or against them.

Hosea 1:7 Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, Will save them by the Lord their God, And will not save them by bow, Nor by sword or battle, By horses or horsemen."

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Job 34:10 "Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: Far be it from God to do wickedness, And from the Almighty to commit iniquity.

Romans 4:19-21 ¹⁹ And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

2 Kings 6:6 So the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float.

Daniel 3:27 And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

- God controls the actions of all His creatures

Genesis 45:6-8 "For these two years the famine *has been* in the land, and *there are* still five years in which *there will be* neither plowing nor harvesting. ⁷ "And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. ⁸ "So now *it was* not you *who* sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

6. Definition of Providence according to Webster's Dictionary, 1828

PROVIDENCE, n. [L. providentia.]

1. The act of providing or preparing for future use or application.

Providence for war is the best prevention of it. [Now little used.]

2. Foresight; timely care; particularly, active foresight, or foresight accompanied with the procurement of what is necessary for future use, or with suitable preparation. How many of the troubles and perplexities of life proceed from want of providence!

3. In theology, the care and superintendence which God exercises over his creatures. He that acknowledges a creation and denies a providence, involves himself in a palpable contradiction; for the same power which caused a thing to exist is necessary to continue its existence. Some persons admit a general providence, but deny a particular providence, not considering that a general providence consists of particulars. A belief in divine providence, is a source of great consolation to good men. By divine providence is often understood God himself.

4. Prudence in the management of one's concerns or in private economy.

ⁱ Vos, Hohannes G., The Westminster Larger Catechism (P&R Publishing 20002) p.44-45

ⁱⁱ Vos, Hohannes G., p.46