

# **Providence in Pain**

## **(Making Sense of Suffering)**

**Sundays in July (2019)**

**Carl A. Hargrove**

- ☐ Life is a journey with many stops along the way. Often, these stops dock in a port that causes pain and suffering...**
- ☐ The Biblical and Theological argument for God's Providential Goodness.**
- ☐ The Biblical and Practical argument showing God's purpose for Suffering.**



# **Providence in Pain (Making Sense of Suffering)**

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**I. Rest in Providence During Difficulty as You Understand its Definition**

**II. Rest in Providence During Difficulty as You Consider its Scope**

**III. Rest in Providence During Difficulty Knowing God is Absolutely Free**

**IV. Rest in Providence During Difficulty Knowing God's Reason(s) for Allowing Pain**



# *The Pain We Face*

Illness

Rejection by loved  
ones

Divorce

Emotional

Death of loved ones

Parents

Spouse

Children

Infants

The unborn

Persecution

Criticism

Injustice

Imprisonment

Martyrdom

Starvation

Loss of property

Viewing the innocent  
suffer



# **I. Rest in Providence During Difficulty as you Understand its Definition**

- **Charles Hodge** *God's works of providence are his most **holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing** all his creatures and all their actions. Providence, therefore, includes preservation and government* (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 575)



**M. Erickson** *The providence of God means the continuing action of God in preserving his creation and guiding it toward his **intended purposes**. Preservation means that God maintains the creation that he brought into existence. Government means that God is actively engaged in achieving his purposes in his creation and that sin **cannot thwart those purposes*** (Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., 412)



**Wayne Grudem** *God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his purposes* (Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 315)



**A. A. Hodge** *Providence, from pro and video, literally means foresight, and then a careful arrangement prepared beforehand for the accomplishment of predetermined ends. Turretin defines this term as in its widest sense including (a) foreknowledge, (b) foreordination, and (c) the efficacious administration of the thing decreed. In the technical theological as well as in the common usage of the word, however, it is restricted to the last sense, namely the execution by God of his eternal decree in time, by means of the second causes he has originated in creation (A. A. Hodge, Outlines of Theology, 258)*



- **MacArthur & Mayhue** *Divine providence is God's preserving his creation, operating in **every event** in the world, and directing the things in the universe to his appointed end for them* (John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*, 218)

- **John Owen** *The **effectual working** of His power, and almighty act of His will, whereby He sustains, governs, and disposes of all things, men and their actions, to the ends which He has ordained for them* (John Owen, *Works*, 1:475)



**A.A. Hodge** *Providence, from pro and video, literally means foresight, and then a careful arrangement prepared beforehand for the accomplishment of predetermined ends. Turretin defines this term as in its widest sense including (a) foreknowledge, (b) foreordination, and (c) the efficacious administration of the thing decreed. In the technical theological as well as in the common usage of the word, however, it is restricted to the last sense, namely the execution by God of his eternal decree in time, **by means of the second causes he has originated in creation** (A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, 258)*



**Karl Barth** *Fulfills his fatherly  
Lordship over his creation by preserving,  
accompany and ruling the whole course  
of its earthly existence* (Karl Barth, *Church  
Dogmatics*, Vol. III, Part 3, 58)

•



**Bruce Ware** *God continually oversees and directs all things pertaining to the created order in such a way that 1) he preserves in existence and **provides for the creation** he has brought into being, and 2) he governs and reigns supremely over the entirety of the whole of creation in order to fulfill all of his intended purposes in it and through it*  
(Bruce A. Ware, *God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith*, 17)



# • Common words and theological concepts

- Holy
- Wise
- Power
- Preservation
- Government
- Foreknowledge
- Foreordination
- Fatherly
- Peculiar
- Creation



## II. Rest in Providence During Difficulty as you Consider its Scope

□ **Transcendence** is the eternal truth that God, because of His eternally perfect and holy nature stands above His creation...

- Transcendence in Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-5; 52:13; 55:9; 57:15a)

□ **Immanence** is the redemptive condescension of God that seeks the good of men and His glory by personally engaging in the affairs of mankind.

- Immanence in Isaiah 6:6-10; 55:10-11; 52:14-53:12; 57:15b)



## **Overview of its Scope Six Considerations**

- 1) In Ordering of all Creation as Its Author**
- 2) In Ordering the Material Universe**
- 3) In Preserving all Life**
- 4) In Ordering the Nations**
- 5) In Directing the Lives of His Children**
- 6) In Using Evil and Suffering for His Purposes**



# Biblical Episodes of Providence

☐ Genesis

☐ Exodus

☐ Joshua

☐ Judges

☐ Ruth

☐ 1&2

☐ Ezra

☐ Job

☐ Psalms

☐ Proverbs

☐ Eccl

☐ John

☐ Acts

☐ 1 Peter

☐ Revelation



The background is a piece of aged, yellowish-brown paper with significant water damage. Large, irregular, darker brown stains are visible, particularly along the right edge and bottom. Numerous smaller, circular water spots are scattered across the surface. The texture appears rough and weathered.

**Que sera, sera...**



# **III. Rest in Providence During Difficulty**

## **Knowing God is Absolutely Free**

- 1) God's chief aim is to glorify Himself  
(Exodus; Psa 16:4; Isa 43:21; 61:3,11; Jer 33:9; Rom 9:23,24; 1 Cor 10:31; Eph 1, Col 4:15)
- 2) God is creator (Gen 1; Heb 1; Col 1)
- 3) God is perfect (Job 37:16; Ps 18:25; Deut 32:4)



- 4) God is wise (Job 11:6-9; Prov 8; Rom 11)
- 5) God is all-knowing (Deut 29; Psa 139)
- 6) God is all-loving (Psa 136; 1 John 4:8, 16)
- ❑ His Love is undaunted by circumstances
  - ❑ His Love is consistent through the Testaments
  - ❑ His Love is extended generally to the world
  - ❑ His Love is experienced redemptively by the elect



- 7) God is holy (Leviticus, 1 Pet 1:19)
- 8) God is wrathful (Rom 1:18ff)
- 9) God is kind (Psa 145:9; 1 Pet 2:3; Eph 2:7-8)
- 10) God is all-powerful (Job 9:12; 11:10; 37ff)



## Review

- 1) God's chief aim is to **glorify Himself** (Exodus; Psa 16:4; Isa 43:21; 61:3,11; Jer 33:9; Rom 9:23,24; 1 Cor 10:31; Eph 1, Col 4:15).
- 2) God is **creator** (Gen 1; Heb 1; Col 1)
- 3) God is **perfect** (Job 37:16; Ps 18:25; Deut 32:4)
- 4) God is **wise** (Job 11:6-9; Prov 8; Rom 11)
- 5) God is **all-knowing** (Deut 29; Psa 139)
- 6) God is **all-loving** (Psa 136; 1 John 4:8, 16)
- 7) God is **holy** (Leviticus, 1 Pet 1:19)
- 8) God is **wrathful** (Rom 1:18ff)
- 9) God is **kind** (Psa 145:9; 1 Pet 2:3; Eph 2:7-8)
- 10) God is **all-powerful** (Job 9:12; 11:10; 37ff)



## **IV. Rest in Providence During Difficulty**

### **Knowing God's Reason(s) For Allowing Pain**

- **FOUR Principles** that help us understand the relationship between Pain and Providence

**1) God orders Pain & Providence for love, chastisement, and glory (Gen 50:20; Job 37:13)**

**\*Evil   \*Sovereignty   \*Contingency   \*2nd Causes**

☐ Illustrated in Psalm 105:16-22

☐ Understanding the providential use of nature in Job 37:13

**2) In Pain & Providence the innocent will sometimes suffer with the wicked (Matt 5:45; Luke 13:8)**



### **3) God uses Pain & Providence to develop the faith of His children (Rom 8:28; 2 Cor 12:7-10; Heb 5:7; 1 Pet)**

- It is often used to bring the elect to faith
- It is an opportunity to demonstrate compassion (Luke 10:30-37; 2 Cor 1:3-11; 2 Cor 8-9)
- It is used to build character (Rom 5:3-5)
- It is used to purify His church (Matt 13:20-22; 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Cor 11:27-30)
- It is used to spread the gospel (fleeing Jerusalem (Acts 8), churches in history)



It is used to create dependence (2 Chron 6:36-39; 12:1-8; Deut 4:29-30; various exiles; Heb 5:7-10 Christ's suffering and obedience)

- ❑ A revelation of the heart
  - Increasing faith
  - Removing idols
- ❑ An understanding of frailty
  - We are deficient without His help
- ❑ An increased communion with God



## **4) God uses Pain & Providence to Distinguish His Name (Exodus; Psalm 105:25-45)**

### **The Painful Contradiction Romans 9:1-5**

### **The Tension Resolved...vv.6-33**

- The necessity of faith vv.6-10
- The reality of sovereignty vv.11, 16, 18
- The reality of creative rights vv.19-21
  - The criticism v.19
  - The authoritative response v.20
  - The statement of authority v.21

### **The Reminder of Redemptive Purpose vv.22-33**

### **The Supreme Wisdom of the Creator 11:33-36**

- The vast nature of His wisdom v.33
- The inability of humankind to grasp v.34a
- The inability of humankind to provide v.34b
- The reality that God is not obligated v.35
- The restatement of creative rights v.36



## • **The Comfort of Providence**

- *It is the great support and solace of the saints in all the distresses that befall them here, that there is a wise Spirit sitting in all the wheels of motion, and governing the most eccentric creatures and their most pernicious designs to blessed and happy issues. And, indeed, it were not worth while to live in a world devoid of God and Providence (John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence*, 15).*