



# WHAT WE BELIEVE

## Lesson 3: WHAT WE BELIEVE ... ABOUT PROVIDENCE

*“The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command”*

*Hebrew 1:3*

### Introduction

**Meaning of “providence”:** God “seeing to” the universe

#### **Doctrinal Statement: Providence**

*God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any wise to be author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of people. (Isa. 46:9-11; Prov. 16:33; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Jam. 1:13-15)*

### **I. The extent of Providence**

- *Doctrinal Statement: God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events.*

- *Heb 1:3, The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command.*
  - The word "sustain" has the sense of "active, purposeful control over the thing being carried from one place to another" (Wayne Grudem)
- *Ps. 135:6, Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps*

## Providence and Nature

- *Ps 147:8, He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills*
- *Matt 10:29, Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father*
- *Prov 16:33, The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord*

## Providence and history

### Providence and personal circumstances

- David says, *"in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them"* (Ps 139:16)

## II. Providence and Evil

- *Doctrinal Statement:* yet so as not in any wise to be author or approver of sin

## God's Nature

- *1 John 1:5, God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*
- *1 Peter 1:16, You shall be holy, for I am holy*
- *Psalms 22:3, Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel*
- Crucial question: If God ordained, or decreed all things, then didn't God, in the end, create evil?
  - In order to answer this we need to distinguish between decree and create

## Did God create evil?

- We need to understand the nature of sin to answer this question
- Technically speaking sin is not something created

## Did God will or decree evil?

- Once again we need to clarify further and understand the difference between the decreed will of God and the desired will of God
- Decreed Will
  - *Eph 1:11, God works all things after the counsel of His own (decreed) will*
- Desired Will
  - *1 Thess 4:3, For this is the (desired) will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality*

## How to reconcile these two wills?

- You don't. John MacArthur says that there is a "humanly unreconcilable tension between God's sovereignty and man's will."

- *Doctrinal Statement: nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of people*

## God's will and evil

- While evil is not part of God's desired will it is part of His decreed will
- God brings about evil deeds through the willing actions of moral creatures
- **Example 1:** Joseph and the salvation of Israel
  - Ps 105:16-17 affirms this truth, *He [God] called down famine on the land and destroyed all their supplies of food; and he sent a man before them – Joseph, sold as a slave.*
  - Gen 50:20, *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives*
- **Example 2:** Job and His unwavering belief (Job 42:10-11)
- **Example 3:** The death of Christ (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28)
- **Augustus Strong,** *While man makes up his evil decision independently of God, God does, by his natural agency, order the method in which this inward evil shall express itself, by limiting it in time, place, and measure, or by guiding it to the end which his wisdom and love, and not man's intent, has set.*