

### THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

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According to the dictionary, providence is “the foreseeing care and guidance of God or nature over the creatures of the earth” (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/providence?s=t>). It is not a word that the Bible student is going to find frequently in the Scriptures. In fact, it is used only one time in the King James Version of the Bible. The passage in which it is found is the same one where the famed orator Tertullus accused Paul of being “a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5). However, before he began his attack upon the apostle, he attempted to gain the favor of Felix, the procurator of Judea and persecutor of Paul, by taking advantage of his susceptibility to flattery. Tertullus began his adulation by saying, “Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, We accept *it* always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness” (Acts 24:2-3).

Most modern versions of the Bible translate the Greek word “*πρόνοια*” (*pronoia*) as “foresight” instead of “providence;” and it is notable that nowhere is it used in conjunction with God. Though it isn’t used to describe God’s care for people, it would be careless to say that God does not exercise providence over His creation. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “**Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith... (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you**” (Mt. 6:30, 32-33). He also said, “**That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust**” (Mt. 5:45).

Providence is often separated into two categories: general providence and special providence, both of which are found in the two previous passages. God’s providential care must not be confused with a miracle because it is presented to the world through the natural occurrence of events that He has set in order. Paul declared that once the completed word of God, which we now have, came to be that all miracles would cease (1Cor. 13). God has provided all the things required for life on earth to be sustained in the form of general providence such as the rain, sun, transition of seasons, proper atmosphere, and anything else that is required. Special providence is what God provides for those that are faithful to Him and have been obedient to His commandments which are in addition to the necessities of life. Remember the words of Jesus, “**But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you**” (Mt. 6:33). The Psalmist wrote, “The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way” (37:23). Paul declared to those at Rome, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose” (Rom. 8:28). David was convinced of God’s providential care when he said, “I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Psa. 37:25).

One must keep in mind that God blesses our efforts and doesn’t simply give us all that we want or need without effort on our part. Paul commanded “if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). It is important to understand that God’s goal for mankind is to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), not for all to become rich! It is man’s spiritual welfare with which He is concerned and not that we have the nicest homes and drive the latest cars.

Without doubt, God does work in the kingdoms of men (Dan. 4:17), but one will not be able to say with certainty whether he has benefitted from the special providence of God. Many things happen in the world simply by coincidence (Ecc. 9:11). Some claim special providence from God or blame God when events unfold simply because of choices that are made, whether good or bad. Ultimately we will not know if we enjoyed blessings because of special providence until we enter into eternity, when all things will become clear to us. However, we can be certain that, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Js. 1:17).