

WEDNESDAY EVENING (November 20th) • Prayer & Providence

What Exactly is Providence?

It's not uncommon to hear people say, "It's a miracle!" even under very non-miraculous circumstances. Providence and miracles are sometimes confused. A *miracle* could be defined as a deed or event that is impossible under the ordinary circumstances and limitations of the universe. When we talk about providence, we are not talking about miracles.

Providence is a force that does not violate certain things:

- The freedom of the human will.
- The nature or laws of God.

Our English word *providence* stems from the Latin *providentia*, a term that literally means "to foresee, to see before." Two parallel Greek words express the principle of providence:

- *Pronoeo* – "to have regard for" (Rom 12:17; 2 Cor 8:21; 1 Tim 5:8).
- *Pronoia* – "forethought, foresight, care, to make provision" (Acts 24:1-3; Rom 13:14).

Providence as it relates to God presupposes certain things:

- His creation of the universe and his government in and over that which he created.
- This Creator is eternal in his being, absolute in his attributes, and sovereign over all.
- The Bible is his infallible revelation concerning himself and his plan for his creation.

From his revelation to mankind and our own personal experiences, we learn:

- We live under a natural order; we are subject to natural laws and consequences. Within the scope of this natural order, we experience blessings, accidents, suffering, and death.
- God has the power to guide and influence us without interfering with our freedom.
- God can directly alter the course of events if he wills, in answer to human prayer, or without it.

A key word to remember as we wrap our minds around providence? **PURPOSE**. Read and meditate on Ephesians 1:7-12, Romans 8:18-30, Ephesians 3:8-12, and 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. What is being revealed in these passages of Scripture concerning God's providence?

Can you think of some examples of God's providence that have been preserved in the Bible?