

## THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE (PART 2)

### I. **Review:** Providence is God's Ongoing Relationship with Creation.

1. Preservation
2. Concurrence
3. Government

### II. **Three Propositions**

1. God is absolutely sovereign.
  - a. *Ps. 115:2-3; 135:6; 139:16; Isa. 14:24-26; 46:9-11; Dan. 4:34-35; Jer. 23:20; Zech. 1:6; Eph. 1:11*
2. Human beings are morally responsible creatures.
  - a. *Acts 17:30-31; Josh. 24:14-15; Rom. 10:9-11; Ex. 16:4; Ex. 19:4-6; Det. 4:5-8; Isa. 30:18; Ezk. 18:30-32*

3. The Bible insists that God is perfectly good.
  - a. *Dt. 32:4; Hab. 1:13; 1 Jn. 1:5; Rev. 15:3-4*

### III. **Compatibilism**

D.A. Carson offers the following definition of compatibilism:

*The Bible as a whole, and sometimes in specific texts, presupposes or teaches that both of the following propositions are true:*

*God is absolutely sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions in such a way that human responsibility is curtailed, minimized, or mitigated.*

*Human beings are morally responsible creatures—they significantly choose, rebel, obey, believe, defy, make decisions, and so forth, and they are rightly held accountable for such actions; but this characteristic never functions so as to make God absolutely contingent.*

*These two propositions are taught in Scripture and are mutually compatible.*

First, let's take a look at the story of Joseph as an example that God is sovereign over all things (sin, evil, Satan, etc.) and human beings are completely responsible for their sinful actions.

## JOSEPH

*Genesis 45:4-8* 4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please, come near me," and they came near. "I am Joseph, your brother," he said, "the one you sold into Egypt. 5 And now don't be grieved or angry with yourselves for selling me here, **because God sent me ahead of you to preserve life.** 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there will be five more years without plowing or harvesting. 7 **God sent me ahead of you** to establish you as a remnant within the land and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. 8 **Therefore it was not you who sent me here, but God.** He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household, and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

*Genesis 50:19-21* 19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people. 21 Therefore don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your children." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

## JOB

*Job 1:8-22* 8 Then Yahweh said to the satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil."

9 The satan answered Yahweh, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 Haven't **you** placed a hedge around him, his household, and everything he owns? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and strike everything he owns, and he will surely curse you to your face."

12 "Very well," Yahweh told the satan, "everything he owns is in your power. However, do not lay a hand on Job himself." So the satan left the Lord's presence.

13 One day when Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 14 a messenger came to Job and reported, "While the oxen were plowing and the donkeys grazing nearby, 15 the Sabeans swooped down and took them away. They struck down the servants with the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

16 He was still speaking when another messenger came and reported, "God's fire fell from heaven. It burned the sheep and the servants and devoured them, and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

17 That messenger was still speaking when yet another came and reported, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, made a raid on the camels, and took them away. They struck down the servants with the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

18 He was still speaking when another messenger came and reported, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking

wine in their oldest brother's house. 19 Suddenly a powerful wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on the young people so that they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

20 Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground *and worshiped*, 21 saying:

*Naked I came from my mother's womb,  
and naked I will leave this life.*

*Yahweh gives, and Yahweh takes away.*

*Blessed be the name of Yahweh.*

22 Throughout all this Job did not sin **or blame God** for anything.

against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, *to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*"

## JESUS

*Acts 2:22–24* 22 "Fellow Israelites, listen to these words: This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know. 23 Though he was delivered up **according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge**, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him.

24 **God raised him up**, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by death.

*Acts 4:24–28* And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed"— for truly in this city there were gathered together

## Eight Things to Do with Evil

Knowing that God is sovereign over evil and is using evil even now for our good, know that you can do eight things with evil ...

1. *Expect* evil. “Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you” (1 Pet. 4:12).
2. *Endure* evil. “Love bears all thing, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor. 13:7; cf. Mark 13:13).
3. *Give thanks* for the refining effect of evil that comes against you. “Give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20; cf. 1 Thess. 5:18). “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance . . .” (Rom. 5:3–5).
4. *Hate* evil. “Let love be genuine. *Abhor* what is evil; hold fast to what is good” (Rom. 12:9).
5. *Pray for escape* from evil. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13).
6. *Expose* evil. “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them” (Eph. 5:11).
7. *Overcome* evil with good. “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21).
8. *Resist* evil. “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7).

## Four Things Never to Do with Evil

And, furthermore, because we know that God is sovereign over evil in the world and is working for our good, we can know what NEVER to do with evil and the temptations that Satan raises in our minds ...

1. *Never despair* that this evil world is out of God’s control. “[He] works all things according to the counsel of his will” (Eph. 1:11).
2. *Never give in* to the sense that because of seemingly random evil, life is absurd and meaningless. “How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! . . . For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever” (Rom. 11:33, 36).
3. *Never yield* to the thought that God sins or is ever unjust or unrighteous in the way he governs the universe. “The Lord is righteous in all his ways” (Ps. 145:17).
4. *Never doubt* that God is totally *for you* in Christ. If you trust him with your life, you are in Christ. Never doubt that all the evil that befalls you—even if it takes your life—God loves you. “He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He together with Him freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). The cross is the eternal pledge of His love for us. In Christ, God is forever for us and not against us.