

ABATT
The Mystery of Providence
 Christian Life Assembly
 Jim Hoffman

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The Mystery of Providence

- We left off last week trying to make some sense of Genesis 50:20 where it is evident that one event, a sin, was “meant” for two competing purposes.
- “But as for you, **you meant evil against me**; but **God meant it for good**, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”
- How can it be that God can ordain the use of sin for His purposes without commanding it, or approving of it?

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- Romans 8:28 And we know that **God causes all things to work together** for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. NASB
- Words matter whether they happen to fit into our self-constructed doctrinal boxes or not.
- God “causes all things to work together” does not mean some things, it means all things.

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- Eph 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated **according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.** NASB
- Here again we see it – God works “all things after the counsel of His own will”.
- This means that God uses all of the activities in the universe to achieve His purposes.

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- Please do not recoil at this because you cannot understand it. ☺
- Yes, it will make you seem small and out of control – and yes, you are guilty on both counts.
- For whatever reason many of us have been convinced that all things are to work together for our comfort, according to our will, and in our time. ☺

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- “Divine providence is the governance of God by which He, with wisdom and love, cares for and directs all things in the universe.” (gotquestions.org)
- “Divine providence is God's capacity to bring about the purposes and promises of God with 100 percent certainty—for individuals, for humanity, indeed for the cosmos as a whole.” (unknown)

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•All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them. (from the Westminster Confession)

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- So while the absolute essentials for salvation are so plain that they cannot be missed, that same standard does not extend to all of the biblical texts.
- The providence of God is one of those things that will first stretch you, and then perhaps tie you into a knot, before showing itself to be the “soft pillow” God intends it to be.

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“Providence is a soft pillow for anxious heads.”

E. Paxton Hood



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- Prov 16:9 A man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. NKJV
- “Providence is that continued exercise of the divine energy whereby the Creator, 1) preserves all His creatures, 2) is the author of all things that come to pass in the world, and 3) directs all things to their appointed end.” Louis Berkoff

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- Nebuchadnezzar seemed to have a deep understanding of who God was after having experienced his discipline.
- Nebuchadnezzar had two dreams interpreted by Daniel, and he was an eyewitness to the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
- God even warns him in a dream to humble himself, but he refused and as a result God caused him to go insane for seven years.

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- When Nebuchadnezzar’s sanity was restored we read the following words that he said.
- Daniel 4:34 And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. 35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; **He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?”** NKJV

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- After regaining his sanity, this king who had seen the power of God, who had seen the wisdom of God, and had now experienced the chastening of God is now in a profoundly better place.
- So much so that he now sees God, not himself, as the Sovereign of the universe and so far above all others that not only can God do whatever he wants, but no one even has the right to question Him.
- Whatever God does is right whether we understand it or not. (Gen 18:25b Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?)

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- Col 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—**all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.** NASB
- Rev 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: **for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.** KJV

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- Nature does not run on its own – in the puny minds of men we often think, or at least act as though, we are the center of all things.
- If we believe the scriptures are the word of God, then we need to take them at face value when they declare God as supreme, and the center of all things.
- God is anything but a watchmaker who constructs a thing, winds it up, and then departs. (Deism)

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- All things were made by Him – there are some that might contest this, but not nearly so many as there are who resist the notion that **“all things were made for Him”**.
- We want to imagine that God made the universe for us when such a thought is no where written in the bible.
- If we believe that the universe and everything in it are made for God, then it should follow that He ordains things to be as they are - and they are!

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- The affairs of men and nations are ultimately in the very capable hands of God – it could not be more clear that God is heavily involved in the details of life.
- God seems to be on a nearly endless quest to save those who have no interest in, and have no meritorious claim upon the gift He has for them.
- According to Paul, God has setup the world in a way that draws and even causes mankind to seek Him.

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• Acts 17:23 Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 **so that they should seek the Lord**, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ NASB

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- We do not live in a chance universe – God has declared that His creation is both by Him and for Him, so He will not leave the arrangements of events and things to chance.
- Chance is defined as, “something that happens unpredictably without discernible human intention or observable cause”. (Websters)
- From the vastness of the stars, to the DNA in our bodies God has left nothing to mathematical probability.

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- Does God really care about and superintend the small matters of life in the universe?
- Matt 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.
- A sparrow does not fall without Him noticing and God even keeps track of the hairs on your head – should we take these words literally?

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- Should we take these words literally? Yes, and not just literally, but seriously!
- Sparrows, hairs on our heads? This level of detail employed by God in managing the universe speaks far more about Him than it does sparrows and hairs.
- What kind of a mind must God have if he is to keep track of all sparrows, and all hairs, plus, plus, plus all other creatures and things that exist?

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- Job 34:14 If God were to take back his Spirit and withdraw his breath, 15 all life would cease, and humanity would turn again to dust. NLT
- God is the creator and sustainer of all that exists – **“He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”**
- Words matter and as we study the scriptures it becomes increasingly evident that God means every single word that He gave us.

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- “in Him all things hold together.”
- What is to the right is the cell adhesion molecule called laminin.
- Even the cells of our bodies are “held together” by Christ.



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The poem that follows was written by William Cowper the night before he was institutionalized for reasons related to his mental health.

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Light Shining out of Darkness

By William Cowper

1
God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

2
Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sov'reign will.

3
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

4
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

5
His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding ev'ry hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flow'r.

6
Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

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Questions

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