

# *The Beauty of Providence*

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There are doctrines we think we understand because we can define them, defend them, and teach them to others, and then there are the seasons that reveal we had only known them on paper. Providence is one of those doctrines. We can fill notebooks with it, work it into our prayers, build our theology around it, and still not have tasted it in the way that turns a doctrine into a lifeline. The difference



between knowing about providence and knowing providence is the difference between reading about water and dying of thirst until you finally drink. And until the Lord has brought us low enough to need it, providence remains a concept we admire rather than a reality we cling to.

Providence is not prophecy. It does not announce itself in dramatic visions or spectacular signs. It does not shout. It works quietly, through the ordinary and the unnoticed, governing the smallest details of our lives with the same hand that governs the movement of galaxies. The same God who holds the stars in their courses is the God who is guiding your next breath, ordering the circumstances of your day, and weaving the events of your life into a pattern whose beauty you will only fully see when the weaving is complete. Providence is the quiet unfolding of God's sovereign will through means so ordinary that we often fail to recognise His hand in them until long after the moment has passed.

We see it threaded through the whole of Scripture. When Joseph's brothers threw him into a pit out of jealousy and sold him into slavery, they had no idea they were placing him on the road that would lead to Egypt, to Pharaoh's house, to the position from which he would one day preserve the lives of the very brothers who had betrayed him and the entire known world from famine. Years later Joseph saw what they could not see in the moment. "As for you you meant evil against me but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result to preserve many people alive" Genesis 50:20. The evil was real. The providence was deeper. And the same event that was meant for harm was being used by God for a good that no one involved could have imagined while it was happening.

When Ruth followed Naomi back to Bethlehem with nothing but loyalty and an empty future, she went out to glean in a field to keep them both alive, and the text says she "happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz" Ruth 2:3. Happened to come. But the Bible does not use that word the way we use it. Behind the apparent chance of that field stood the God who was weaving Ruth into the lineage of David and ultimately into the lineage of the Messiah Himself.

What looked like coincidence was providence, and the widow who had nothing became the great grandmother of a king and an ancestor of the Saviour of the world.

When Elijah sat beside a drying brook in a time of famine, God commanded the ravens to feed him bread and meat, morning and evening, day after day. 1 Kings 17:6. When the brook finally dried up, God sent him to a widow whose jar of flour and jug of oil did not run out through the entire duration of the famine, sustaining the prophet, the widow, and her son one day at a time until the rains returned. 1 Kings 17:14 to 16. The provision was not abundance. It was sufficiency, renewed each day, never running out, never more than enough, but always enough. That is the rhythm of providence. Daily. Sufficient. Faithful.

When Paul was shipwrecked on Malta, bitten by a viper as he gathered wood for the fire, and yet suffered no harm, the islanders first assumed he was a murderer being punished by the gods and then concluded he must be a god himself. Acts 28:3 to 6. Paul saw neither. He saw the providence of the God who had told him he would stand before Caesar and who was therefore preserving him through every danger until that purpose was accomplished, opening hearts to the gospel on the island through the very events that looked like disasters. The shipwreck that should have killed him became the means by which the gospel reached an island it might never otherwise have reached.

When Jesus told His disciples to consider the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, He was not speaking in poetry. He was pointing them to the real and present care of the Father who feeds the birds and clothes the flowers and who values His own children infinitely more than the creatures He sustains without their effort. "Look at the birds of the air that they do not sow nor reap nor gather into barns and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" Matthew 6:26. The same God who feeds the birds is the God who feeds His children, and the providence that sustains the sparrow is the providence that sustains the believer who has learned to trust the Father who never forgets His own.

And when the Lord taught His disciples to pray, He did not teach them to ask for riches, security, or abundance. He taught them to ask for the bread of a single day. "Give us this day our daily bread" Matthew 6:11. Not next week's bread. Not a year's supply stockpiled against every possible future. Today's bread, asked for today, received today, sufficient for today. This is the rhythm of how providence usually works. The Lord rarely gives us the whole supply at once, because the whole supply at once would teach us to trust the supply rather than the Supplier. He gives us enough for today and teaches us to come back tomorrow, and in the daily coming back we learn the dependence that is itself one of the deepest gifts of the relationship.

I once read these passages with admiration. I believed in providence. I taught it to others. But I had not yet been broken enough to need it the way I would come to need it. That breaking came in 2018, and the year changed everything I thought I understood about the doctrine I had been teaching.

That year I experienced betrayal from relatives that cut deeper than I could have imagined. It did not merely break trust. It left my parents in crushing debt, and the weight of that debt fell on me. And in the same year, my father, who had stood like a pillar in my world, passed away. I am his only child. When he left, it felt as though the sky itself had fallen with him, and the debt and the grief pressed down on me at the same time with a weight I did not know how to carry.

Then 2020 came, and the world locked down, and my job locked down with it. Gone. What does a man do when every door shuts at once, when there is no fallback, when it is just him and his mother with no promises anywhere on the horizon? You have read about suffering in the Bible. You have heard about Job. You have quoted Romans 8:28 to other people in their pain. But when the rent is due and the creditors are knocking and the bills are piling up and your mother looks at you hoping you have a way forward, the doctrine stops being doctrine and becomes survival. I will not pretend otherwise. There were days when I had no words left for prayer. Only silence. Only heaviness. Only the weight of a life that seemed to have collapsed all at once.

And it was in those days that I began to understand something I had only read before. I began to understand what it means that God is called Jehovah Jireh, the Lord who provides. Genesis 22:14. Not as a phrase for prosperity preachers to twist into a promise of wealth, but as a reality I cried out to from the bottom of everything I had lost. And He answered. Not with abundance. Not with the restoration of everything that had been taken. But with enough. And enough, when you have nothing, is a miracle.

The verse from the Lord's model prayer, give us this day our daily bread, stopped being a line I admired and became a cry I prayed and a lifeline I clung to. And the Lord answered it the way He has always answered it for His people. Not weekly bread. Not a month's advance. Daily bread, one day at a time, never running out, never more than enough, but always enough. He gave me a small job, nothing close to what I had before, nothing glamorous, just enough. And that just enough became holy. The daily bread I prayed for literally became my reality. One month at a time. One grocery bag at a time. One rent cycle at a time. And it was enough.

There were days I felt like the widow of Zarephath, scooping the last of the flour for one final meal before the end. But the jar never emptied. The oil never ran out. The God who sustained her through the famine sustained me through mine, not by removing the famine but by providing within it, one day at a time, until the day had passed and the next day's provision arrived on the morning it was needed.

I am still not out of the debt. I do not have a tidy testimony with deliverance wrapped in a ribbon. I am still walking through it. But I am walking through it with Him, and that has changed everything. Every time I pay a bill, I thank God. Every time I have enough to care for my mother, I remember how far He has brought me from the year everything collapsed. Every morning that begins with peace and ends with a roof still over our heads, I know it is not luck and not chance. It is providence, the quiet faithful hand of the God who has not let go of me through any of it.

This is what the contemporary church often misses about providence. It is not always about deliverance. Sometimes it is about endurance. Sometimes the Lord does not put out the fire. Sometimes He walks with us through the fire instead, and the walking with us is itself the deeper mercy. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the furnace, the Lord did not prevent the fire. He met them in it, and the king looked in and saw a fourth figure walking with them in the flames. Daniel 3:25. The deliverance came eventually, but the deeper miracle was the presence in the fire itself, and the believer who has learned to recognise that presence has learned something that the believer who only ever experiences deliverance has never had to learn.

So when I speak about the sovereignty of God now, it is not a cold abstraction to me. It is the reason I am alive. The sovereignty of God is not merely that He rules. It is that He rules for the good of His people, that He provides not always what we want but always what we need, and that nothing in our lives is outside the gracious governance of the Father who numbers the hairs of our heads and notices the fall of every sparrow. Matthew 10:29 to 31. The God who governs the universe governs the details of my life, and the governance is not indifferent. It is the governance of a Father who loves the children He has purchased with the blood of His Son.

To anyone reading this who is in a season of uncertainty, sorrow, or loss, I want to say as tenderly and truthfully as I can that He sees you. Providence may not feel powerful in the moment. It may look like nothing is happening, like the doors are all closed, like the answers are all delayed, like the heaviness will never lift. But behind every closed door and every delayed answer and every tear there is a Father who never sleeps and never forgets, weaving your story into something whose beauty you cannot yet see from inside the weaving. "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" Romans 8:28. All things. Including the things that feel like the end of everything. Including the year the sky falls. Including the season when there are no words left for prayer.

Trust Him. The same God who guides the fall of the sparrow is the God who is writing your story, and He has not lost the thread of it even in the chapters that feel like collapse. He may not part your sea today. But He will walk with you through it, and the walking with you is itself the providence you have been praying for even when it does not look like the answer you expected. One day you will look back on the season that nearly broke you, and you will not merely say that God was there. You will say that God was enough. Because He is. He always has been. And He always will be.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear

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The Reformation Resurgence

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