

**The Major Themes of the Bible Applied to Everyday Life:
Providence**

Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 18

What are God's works of providence?

Answer: God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures; ordering them, and all their actions, to his own glory.

Heidelberg Catechism Question 27

What do you understand by the Providence of God

Answer: The almighty everywhere present power of God, whereby, as it were by His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth, with all creatures; and so governs them, that leaves and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, and everything else, come not by chance, but by His fatherly hand.

1. How would you define the Providence of God?
2. How would the beliefs of an atheist differ from this? A deist? The average modern evangelical?
3. How is this doctrine a comfort to believers?

Romans 8:28 *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,¹ for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

Matthew 10:28 *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.¹ ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?¹ And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.*

4. If we fully believed this in our daily lives, how would our lives be different?
5. How does God ordinarily bring about his providence?

(WCF 5.2) Although—in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause—all things come to pass unchangeably and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he orders them to occur according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.

6. If we believe that God is sovereign over all things, what must we believe about salvation?

Predestination (WCF: God's Eternal Decree, The Fall, Effectual Calling)

T- Total (Comprehensive) Depravity: The intellect, will, and emotions are corrupted by sin in every person. This doctrine does not teach we are as bad as we could possibly be. It means that due to our corrupt nature we are unable, of ourselves, to turn to Christ to be saved. (Rom. 3:10-18; 5:12; II Tim. 2:25; Mk. 4:11; 1 Cor. 2:14)

⁹ *What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. ¹⁰ As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." ¹³ "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Romans 3)*

7. Why do many often have difficulty with this doctrine?
8. What are some misconceptions commonly held concerning "total depravity"?

Parenthesis: The Fall and "free will"

9. What is the problem for the unbeliever when faced with the choice of the Gospel? Does he have the “free will” to choose God?

1 Corinthians 2:14 *“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*

Romans 8:7-8: *“The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”*

“If we mean by free will that fallen man has the ability to choose what he wants, then of course fallen man has free will. If we mean, by that term, that man in his fallen state has the moral power and ability to choose righteousness, then free will is far too grandiose a term to apply to fallen man.” (John Calvin)

Conclusion: Man's will is free according to his nature. He will act and make choices in a manner consistent with his nature. Unregenerate man would never choose God; it is an impossibility.

9. What are the 4 states of man?

10. How does this affect your view of evangelism?

U- Unconditional Election: God's choice of certain persons to salvation is not dependent upon any foreseen virtue or faith on their part. (Dt. 7:7; Rom. 9:11-13)

⁷ The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸ But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Dtn. 7:7-8)

11. Why did the Lord choose YOU? Implications for your life?

12. Why should there never be an arrogant Calvinist?

L- Limited Atonement (Particular Redemption): Christ's atoning death was effectual only for the elect. These are those whom God, by His grace, chose to be His own from eternity past. Christ's death truly and actually propitiated God's wrath against them. (John 17: 9; 20-26)

⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours...²⁰ "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: ²³ I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ²⁴ "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.” (John 17)

13. For whom does Jesus pray? Implications? (John 17:1-11, 20, 24-26)

14. What are the implications of the notion that Christ died for every single person?

15. Many people struggle with this doctrine because they feel that it evokes the idea that there are these “secret elect” for whom Christ died. How do you know if you are one of the elect for whom Christ died?

I- Irresistible Grace: All those whom God has chosen for eternal life will come to faith. (Jn. 6:37, 44-45)

(WCF 10.1) *All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away*

their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.

15. Jesus, as the good shepherd, lays down His life for His sheep. How do Christ's sheep respond to His voice? Implications? (John 10:11,14-18, 24-29)

¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-- and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-- only to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." (Jn. 10)

16. How does this encourage evangelism?

P- Perseverance of the Saints: Genuine believers will persevere in the way of holiness until glorification. True Christians cannot lose their salvation because it is based on the finished work of Christ. (Rom. 8:27-ff; Phil. 1:6; Jn. 6:39)

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified... ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8)

17. What about people who we know who used to profess faith, but now say they are no longer Christians? Did they lose their salvation?

Final questions

18. Can you be a Christian and disagree with the five points?

19. So, what does it matter?

- a. How does believing this doctrine affect our worship?
- b. How does it affect our evangelism?
- c. How does it affect our view of God? Of man?
- d. How should it affect our pride?
- e. How should it affect our measure of gratitude?