

The Providence of God (1) The Mystery of Providence

Please turn with me to Job 1. We wish to read the entire chapter before us.

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. ²And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. ³Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.

⁴And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly.

⁶Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?"

So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

⁸Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

⁹So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

¹²And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person."

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

¹³Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house; ¹⁴and a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵when the Sabeans raided them and took them away-- indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

¹⁶While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

¹⁷While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

¹⁸While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁹and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

²⁰Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. ²¹And he said:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
And naked shall I return there.
The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;
Blessed be the name of the LORD."

²²In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. (Job 1:1-22, NKJV)

We are beginning today a study of the biblical teaching regarding God's providence. This is an important subject in that it addresses how and to what degree our God is actively working in His world, and more specifically, in our lives. It is a biblical teaching (doctrine) that relatively few understand or believe rightly. It is a biblical teaching that fewer still take to heart. Just by way of illustration, if you are a Christian, if and when you murmur about any event or anything that is irritating that transpires in your life, you are acting as though you did not believe in the biblical teaching of God's providence, as we will attempt to show. The doctrine of God's providence, if understood and believed, would have a consolatory effect on your soul. It would engender in you joy, peace, and a sound mind. It would also enhance in you faith, hope, love, and patience. Knowledge of God's providence would prevent you from falling into some forms of sin, for example, the kind of sin that Job avoided committing even after experiencing all that he experienced on that day when all things were stripped from him. It is said of him, "In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong." Job had a much better understanding of God's providence than did his friends, but Job's knowledge also, was simply too inadequate to assess properly what God had been doing in his life.

I. The Definition of Providence

Now in order to get us started in the right direction on this subject, we will posit a briefly worded definition of providence. We might use the short but accurate statement found in the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

Question #11: 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, and all their actions."

This is the "short" definition and is a good definition, as far as it goes. Providence speaks to the nature and manner of God's active involvement in His world. God preserves all that exist. Moreover, He governs all that exists according to and for the purpose of achieving His will that He has purposed for His creation. **J. I. Packer** described God's providence in this way:

If Creation was a unique exercise of divine energy causing the world to be, providence is a continued exercise of that same energy whereby the Creator, according to His own will, (a) keeps all creatures in being, (b) involves himself in all events, and (c) directs all things to their appointed end. The model is of purposive personal management with total "hands-on" control: God is completely in charge of his world. His hand may be hidden, but his rule is absolute.¹

Now, when we say that God is governing all things, we are saying that He is doing so according to His plan and purpose which He had determined He would perform in history, a plan and purpose He established in eternity, prior to creation. Providence is the unfolding of God working out His eternal decree. In eternity past God determined in an instant every event from the greatest to the most minor of details that transpires in history. This includes God's ordering of every thought that courses through your consciousness, to the flight of a mosquito into a collision with the windshield of your car, to the election of the man or woman that God has decreed from eternity would govern others, to the outcome of every role of the dice, to every placement and timing of a traffic light as it changes from yellow to red. The biblical doctrine of God's providence declares that God is working in history to accomplish everything that transpires according to His decree made in eternity.

It is the duty of every Christian, and we would say, every person whether Christian or not, to reflect on the providence of God throughout every day of one's existence in God's world. The puritan **John Flavel** expressed it this way, "It is the duty of the saints, especially in times of straits (i. e. difficulty), to reflect upon the performances of Providence for them in all the states and through all the stages of their lives."² And so, since our God is at work in the world and in our lives, it is incumbent upon us to search His ways out, as best as we are

¹ J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Foundation for Reformation, 1993), p. 54.

² John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1998, orig. 1678), p. 20.

able, to better understand and to better value God's gracious and just dealings with us and within the world in which we live.

II. The Mystery of God's Providence

Now our reflection on God's providential dealings in our lives is not an easy matter. In fact, in some ways it is an impossible task. We should recognize that in assessing God's works in providence, there is an element of mystery that cannot be penetrated in this life. We read Job 1. I trust that you know somewhat the story of Job, why God tried Job in the manner that he did. God was demonstrating that He was worthy to be worshipped for who He was, not for the good things he gives or does to His people or the bad or evil that He withholds from them. We read that it was God that directed Job to the devil's attention. Job was a man of integrity and conviction. He would not accuse God of wrong-doing when all these events occurred in his life in a single day. You and I know why God did what He did, for we have the opening chapters of Job that tell us things that Job had no way of knowing. But though you and I as readers of the story have some clues to what was happening and why it was happening, Job or his friends never did get it right as to why God was dealing with Job in this manner. Job and his friends did not have sufficient information to make a right assessment regarding God's providential dealings in Job's life. Job's friends were right in many respects when they were describing what God is like and how he governs his world. But when they attempted to reflect upon and assess what Job had experienced, they were incapable of drawing right conclusions. And so recognize, that although we are to reflect and attempt to assess the reasons for God's providential dealings with us, there will probably occur events to you for which you will never discover a satisfactory explanation in this life why God had done what He has done in your life.

Actually, we might understand the entire book of Job as an explanation of God's providential dealings with man and the mystery of His work that is impenetrable to us. We just cannot be absolutely sure about what and why God does what He does in history, yet alone in our individual lives. Now thankfully, the day will come when we stand before the Lord when all of God's dealings with us in His providence will be clear to us. Again, **Flavel** wrote:

O how ravishing and delectable a sight will it be to behold at one view the whole design of Providence, and the proper place and use of every single act, which we could not be understand in this world! What Christ said to Peter is as applicable to some providences in which we are now concerned as it was to that particular action: 'What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter' (John 13:7). All the dark, intricate, puzzling providences at which we were sometimes so offended, and somewhat amazed, which we could neither reconcile with the promise nor with each other, nay, which we so unjustly censured and bitterly bewailed, as if they had fallen out quite against our happiness, we shall then see to be to us, as the difficult passage through the wilderness was to Israel, 'the right way to the city of habitation' (Psa. 107:7).

But though we are incapable of knowing fully and completely why God does what He does in our lives and many of His dealings with us are past finding out, nevertheless, there is benefit brought to us through our contemplation of His works of providence in our lives. Again, **Flavel** wrote:

And yet, though our present views and reflections upon Providence are so short and imperfect in comparison to that in heaven, yet such as it is under all its present disadvantages, it has so much excellence and sweetness in it that I may call it a little heaven, or as Jacob called his Bethel, 'the gate of heaven.' It is certainly a highway of walking with God in this world, and a soul may enjoy as sweet communion with Him in His providences as in any of His ordinances. How often have the hearts of its observers been melted into tears of joy at beholding of its wise and unexpected productions! How often has it convinced them, upon a sober recollection of the events of their lives, that if the Lord had left them to their own counsels they had as often been their own tormentors, if not executioners! Into what and how many fatal mischiefs had they precipitated themselves if Providence had been as shortsighted as they! They have given their hearty thanks for considering their interest more than their importunity, and not allowing them to perish by their own desires.³

³ Ibid, pp. 22f.

There is, therefore, difficulty in interpreting God's specific works of providence. Sometimes it is impossible for us. We are left only with the responsibility to "trust and obey" because we simply cannot see clearly through many works of God's providences. And so, we need to recognize there is "The Mystery of Providence" (the title to Flavel's book), to which we must acknowledge and yield.

Again, recall the story of Job. You know the story of Job's friends. They first came to Job and were astonished at his appearance. They sat down next to him in silence for seven days. We read of this in **Job 2:11-13**:

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place-- Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. ¹²And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. ¹³So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

The time that Job's friends sat in silence for 7 days was the time of their greatest help and comfort to their "friend." For when they began to instruct Job as to why they thought that God had brought all of these events to pass in Job's life, not one of them "got it right." Oh yes, they said many good things and right things about the nature of God and about the manner in which God deals with people, but they all were wholly wrong regarding their assessment of why God was doing what He was doing in Job's life. And so, there is a measure of mystery in contemplating God's works of providence.

But even though Job or his friends did not understand specifically why God was doing what he was doing, Job had confidence in God whom He knew would bring him to the place of blessing on day, delivering him through all that he had encountered and would continue to have to endure. We read in **Job 23:10-12** his words of faith:

"Look, I go forward, but He is not there,
And backward, but I cannot perceive Him;
⁹When He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him;
When He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him.
¹⁰But He knows the way that I take;
When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.
¹¹My foot has held fast to His steps;
I have kept His way and not turned aside.
¹²I have not departed from the commandment of His lips;
I have treasured the words of His mouth
More than my necessary food.

III. The Nature of Providence Respecting Evil

Now we would classify the things that happened unto Job and his family as "evil." We have an advantage over Job, in that we see the role that satan played in the whole affair. But even though satan was the immediate cause of all the evil that befell Job, it was God that ultimately gave satan the opportunity and permission to afflict Job. But even before Job 1, it was God who had decreed from eternity that satan would afflict Job and his family in the manner that transpired. It is noteworthy that Job and all of his friends assumed throughout all of their speeches that God was the sovereign ruler of all that had taken place. To them all the evil that Job experienced was due to God's will in his dealings with Job.

When we read in the Scriptures of the presence of evil, we know that God in His providence is using that evil for the furtherance of His purpose and for the good of His people. However, when we consider the evil that takes place in the world and in people's lives, we must distinguish God's purposes through His use of that evil. **First**, there are those evils that occur because God is executing His justice in bringing punitive judgments upon people. He deals with the unsaved who are ungodly and wicked by "sending" evil upon them. **Second**, there are

evils that take place in peoples' lives because God is chastising them for their sin, but His purpose through these "evil things" is for their good and is born from God's love for them. In this way God uses evil in order to instruct, reprove, and correct His people with view to their sanctification. *Third*, there are those evils that God brings upon those that He is not punishing, but rather His purpose is to vindicate their faith and their integrity, that they worship God not because of "the good" that he does for them. And *fourth*, there are those evils that God brings upon His people in order to further the cause of the gospel and to bring salvation to His people. Often times through observance of the manner in which Christians endure suffering that the validity of their Christian faith is confirmed before unbelievers.⁴

Job's trial of experiencing evil was of the third kind listed above. God turned satan loose upon Job in order to show the genuine and pure nature of Job's faith. Job did not believe God simply because in doing so he received good things from God or preservation from evil things occurring. Job believed and served the Lord because God was worthy to be served.

Not everyone who claims to have faith in God or in Jesus Christ would be able to pass this test. Oh yes, they serve God when God does wonderful and blessed things for them and to them. They "believe" on God because of what they seem to perceive as God's works of mercy and kindness shown to them. But would they continue to believe on the Lord if God did not answer their prayer in the manner that they had hoped and the deliverance from some evil did not take place as they had prayed. Would they serve God then? I heard a testimony recently of a wonderful answer to a Christian man's prayer for his seriously ill wife and her premature baby. It was touch and go for some days. The man prayed long and hard and God was very gracious in that both recovered. The man testified how this event impacted his life of faith and his commitment to live for God. The response of the "Christian" crowd was applause. And yes, it was a wonderful thing. But what should have been the response if his wife had died and the baby had died? Job lost all of his sons and daughters in one day. The same day he lost his wealth and health. (We did not read of satan's second round of afflicting Job in chapter 2.) The response should be the same in either case: a life of faith in God and a commitment to serve Him.

But we can understand further in Job's story the manner in which the three friends wrongly assessed the nature of God's dealings with Job. This provides us the lesson that we should be cautious and even reluctant to assert that some people are encountering their suffering because God must be punishing them for sins that they are committing. God would later say to these three friends:

And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. ⁸Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."

⁹So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD commanded them; for the LORD had accepted Job. ¹⁰And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. ¹¹Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold. (Job 42:7-11)

God's purposes in His use of evil vary from person to person, from family to family, from nation to nation. And therefore a full and accurate assessment of God's providence may be elusive to us.

IV. The Extent of God's Providence

When we consider the providence of God, we know and confess that His providence encompasses all existing things. God's providence in the life of Job included God's sovereign use of the evil done by the Sabeans invaders (Job 2:15), lightning that came from the skies (Job 2:16), the raiding Chaldeans (2:17), and a great wind

⁴ These four uses of evil in God's providential dealings with people is put forward by John Murray in *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 3 (Banner of Truth, 1982), p. 162.

that fell upon the house in which Job's sons and daughters were killed (2:19). But elsewhere in Scripture we read of the far greater extent to which God's providence reaches. Consider the teaching respecting God's sovereign and providential control over happenings in the world.

1. God's providential control over the universe at large.

Psalm 103:19. "The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all."

Ephesians 1:11. "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will..."

2. God's providential control over the physical earth

Job 37:5, 10. "God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend.
¹⁰By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast."

Psalm 104:21, 28. "The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. ²⁸When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things."

Matthew 5:45. "For He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

3. God's providential control over the animals in creation

Psalm 104:21, 28. "The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. ²⁸When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things."

Matthew 6:26. "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

Matthew 10:29. "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father."

4. God's providential control over the affairs of nations

Job 12:23. "He makes nations great, and He destroys them; He enlarges nations, and leads them away."

Psalm 22:28. "For kingship belongs to the LORD, and He rules over the nations."

Psalm 66:7. "Who rules by His might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations-- let not the rebellious exalt themselves."

Acts 17:26. "And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place."

5. God's providential control over man's birth and lot in life

1 Samuel 16:1. "The LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.'"

Psalm 139:16. "Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."

Isaiah 45:5. "I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me..."

Galatians 1:15f. "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, ¹⁶was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone."

6. God's providential control over outward successes and failures in life

Psalms 75:6, 7. "For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, ⁷but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another."

Luke 1:52. "He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate."

7. God's providential control over things accidental or insignificant

Proverbs 16:33. "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD."

Matthew 10:30. "But even the hairs of your head are all numbered."

8. God's providential control in the protection of the righteous

Psalms 4:8. "In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety."

Psalms 5:12. "For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield."

Psalms 63:8. "My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me."

Psalms 121:3. "He will not let your foot be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber."

Rom. 8:28. "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose."

9. God's providential control in supplying the needs of His people

Genesis 22:8, 14. "Abraham said, 'God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.' So they went both of them together. ¹⁴So Abraham called the name of that place, 'The LORD will provide'; as it is said to this day, 'On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.'"

Deuteronomy 8:3. "And He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

Philippians 4:19. "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

10. God's providential control in answering prayer

1 Samuel 1:19. "They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her."

Isaiah 20:5, 6. "Then they shall be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and of Egypt their boast. ⁶And the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, 'Behold, this is what has happened to those

in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria! And we, how shall we escape?”

2 Chronicles 33:13. “He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God.”

Psalms 65:2. “O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come.”

Matthew 7:7. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

Luke 18:7, 8. “And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will He delay long over them? ⁸I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?”

11. God’s providential control in the exposure and punishment of the wicked

Psalms 7:12, 13. “If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; ¹³he has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts.”

Psalms 11:6. “Let Him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.”

V. God’s Providence considered Covenantal

It is very important that we close on this note. Job’s friends were at fault because they explained wrongly to Job that the evil that God “had brought” upon him was due to God’s judicial wrath upon Job for his sin or sinfulness. If there is a fault of many evangelicals that occurs very often today is when they explain wrongly to ones outside of Jesus Christ that the evil that God “has brought” upon them should not be regarded as His judicial judgment, but rather they are actions of God’s love. In other words, they take the nature of God’s dealings with one of his people who is in covenant relationship with Him through faith, that being Job, and they wrongly apply the same teaching to those who are strangers to God, who are unbelievers in Jesus Christ. I hear Christians telling non-Christians, “After all, God will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able to overcome” (although that itself is a twisted meaning to 1 Corinthians 10:13). No, that is only true for Christians. Or I will hear a Christian say to an unbeliever who is in deep difficulty,

“The Bible says, ‘Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus’ (Phi. 4:6f).

But that is a promise to the child of God, the believer in Jesus Christ, not to the one who refuses to believe on Jesus the Lord. No, the best we can say to the one outside of Jesus Christ is something along the lines of this:

“I don’t doubt you are distressed and anxious. I would be too if I were you, having no God, no Savior to resort to whom You know will uphold you and deliver you. I would urge you to repent of your sins, come to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, then you be able to count all of the precious teachings and promises of Scripture as your own. But until you do so, you are on your own. I will pray that God will have mercy on you.”

The reason that Job could have confidence in his God and had a basis of knowing that God would deliver him through all of what afflicted him, was because he was a man of faith who had a confidence he had a Redeemer who represented him before God. We read his words in Job 19. After he laments his condition and describes his abandonment by all around him, he expressed his confident faith in God his redeemer, due to Him

Job had confidence that he would endure and come out the other side of this terrible “valley” the victor. Job wrote:

- ¹⁹All my close friends abhor me,
And those whom I love have turned against me.
²⁰My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh,
And I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.
²¹“Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends,
For the hand of God has struck me!
²²Why do you persecute me as God does,
And are not satisfied with my flesh?

²³“Oh, that my words were written!
Oh, that they were inscribed in a book!
²⁴That they were engraved on a rock
With an iron pen and lead, forever!
²⁵***For I know that my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;***
²⁶***And after my skin is destroyed, this I know,
That in my flesh I shall see God,***
²⁷***Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.***
How my heart yearns within me!
²⁸If you should say, ‘How shall we persecute him?’—
Since the root of the matter is found in me,
²⁹Be afraid of the sword for yourselves;
For wrath brings the punishment of the sword,
That you may know there is a judgment.”

Ultimately God’s providence must be understood and interpreted through Jesus Christ. Those who are in covenant relationship with God through faith in His Son may be assured that the love, mercy, grace, and power of God will deliver them from every evil and will enable them to stand delivered and exonerated before Him on Judgment Day, on the day of the resurrection. As **Robert Reymond** rightly wrote:

... one must never sever any aspect of God’s providence away from the ἐν χριστῷ, *en Christo*, relationship that exists between God and his creation, since all of God’s dealings with his creation are mediated through Christ.⁵

And further, as Reymond quoted **T. H. L. Parker**:

The creation is the stage on which are enacted God’s dealings with mankind. Providence is God’s gracious outworking of his purpose in Christ which issues in his dealings with man. We... are saying that from the beginning God has ordered the course of events toward Jesus Christ and his incarnation. From the biblical point of view world history and personal life stories possess significance only in the light of the incarnation.⁶

Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift of Jesus Christ!

⁵ Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), p. 400.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 401.