

## **The Providence of God (7) Toward a Christian (biblical) Worldview**

Today is the seventh Lord's Day in which we have addressed the subject of God's providence as taught in the Holy Scriptures. Providence speaks of the manner in which God manages His world, accomplishing His purposes that He had determined in eternity would come to pass in history. The idea of God's providence is not to be confused with God's sovereignty. Sovereignty speaks of God's ability to rule absolutely; it speaks of His infinite authority and ability to bring to pass whatever He purposes. Providence speaks to the fact that God indeed governs His world. God in providence overrules all events and all of His creatures from the smallest detail to the greatest of world events. God's providence is His working out through history His pre-planned purpose in and for all things. God's providence is God bringing to pass in history His eternal decree.

Now we have addressed our subject of God's providence from a number of perspectives. Today we want to underscore this truth regarding God's providence: It is necessary to understand and embrace the biblical teaching of God's providence in order to form a Christian worldview. In other words, what the Holy Scriptures teach us concerning God's providence enables us to have a worldview in which we discern order, purpose, and rationality in the manner that history unfolds. Scripture teaches us to see God's hand in much that takes place before us. And to some degree the ability to God's hand may be increased in us, to the degree that we observe the world about us and interpret what we see according to God's Holy Word. And so, although we are to be governed by Holy Scripture alone, the acts of God's providence in the world support and reinforce for us Scripture truth. As we observe and reflect upon God's acts of providence we see the truth of Scripture validated before us. In other words, an informed observation of God's works of providence, as interpreted by Scripture, confirm the truth of Scripture, which is to be our sole rule for faith and practice, even as it shapes our thinking toward a true Christian worldview. Let us first reinforce for us...

### **I. The absolute authority and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to govern all of life.**

I would like us to begin by reading two portions of God's Word. The first is **2 Peter 1:6ff**, which reinforces the sole authority of the Word of God to govern our lives.

<sup>5</sup>For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup>and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup>For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>9</sup>For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, brothers, ***be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure***, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. <sup>11</sup>***For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.***

<sup>12</sup>Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. <sup>13</sup>I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, <sup>14</sup>since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. <sup>15</sup>And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

<sup>16</sup>For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup>For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My

beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,<sup>7</sup> we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

And let us pay close attention to the following verses:

<sup>19</sup>And *we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts*, <sup>20</sup>knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:6-21)

The apostle Peter would soon depart from this world to be with his Saviour. He desired to assist and strengthen these young Christians. He desired to assure them that they would continue to grow in grace and that they would continue to persevere in their faith unto their full and final salvation, which would be realized at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Each of us as Christians must be diligent in these matters. This is the way and nature of true Christianity. We are to be sanctified by our God through obedience to God's Word that He has given to us. Future entrance into “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” is gained only by those who follow this course of life. This is the life of true and saving faith. Our desire and commitment to this end is the manner in which we are to assure ourselves that God has effectually called us unto salvation, assuring ourselves that we are numbered among the elect of God.

This was in some ways the same message that Peter had taught in His first epistle—the need to persevere in faith and obedience unto our full salvation that is received by true believers upon the return of Jesus Christ. We read in **1 Peter 1:3ff** these words:

<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup>*to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you*, <sup>5</sup>who are kept by the power of God through faith *for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*. <sup>6</sup>In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup>that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, <sup>8</sup>whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup>*receiving the end of your faith-- the salvation of your souls*. <sup>10</sup>*Of this salvation* the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, <sup>11</sup>searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. <sup>12</sup>To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things which angels desire to look into. <sup>13</sup>Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and *rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*; <sup>14</sup>as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; <sup>15</sup>but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup>because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Pet. 1:3-16)

Let us look again at the 2 Peter 1 passage. In 2 Peter 1:16ff, the **Apostle Peter** spoke of the authority of the written Word as greater than personal revelation or experience (2 Pet. 1:16ff). Peter describes his own experience of having been an eyewitness of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (cf. Luke 17). He did this to show his readers that what he had taught them was the truth. Verses 16ff reads,

“We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup>For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son,

with whom I am well pleased,<sup>7</sup> we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

Peter could bear witness of the truth that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior of His people. Peter and others had heard the voice of God the Father endorsing and commending His Son to them, through the Father glorifying Him on the Mount of Transfiguration.

<sup>19</sup>And *we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts*, <sup>20</sup>knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:6-21)

But then Peter declared that we have something even more certain and clear that reveals to us the glory of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. This is an amazing statement of the authority and sufficiency of Holy Scripture. Peter declared that we have, a more solid and certain authoritative word than even when he heard the voice of God with his own ears. He affirmed that this authoritative source of understanding the will of God is the Holy Scriptures. And so, let us take note what he had written:

1. We have a more sure (authoritative) Word from God than even seeing and hearing with our own eyes and ears (“*we have something more sure, the prophetic word*”)
2. It has abiding authority over Christians (“*to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place*”, or in the KJV, “whereunto ye do well that ye take heed”)
3. This authoritative written Word has binding authority over us from now until Jesus returns (“*until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts*,”)
4. And you are not to allow anyone to lead you differently from that Word that you have received (Cf. 2 Peter 2:1, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you”).

And so, just before Peter was martyred he wrote this epistle affirming the abiding authority and sufficiency of the Written Word of God to guide the people of God in the will of God.

But what we want to affirm today is because of what the Word of God says about God’s providence, *the Word of God enables the Christian to have a worldview whereby he sees God working in everything about him*. And we would argue that this is true for those of the Reformed faith, not those who are Arminian in their theology. We spoke of this several weeks ago. Arminians, in their efforts to assure that man has a “free will”, that he be the determiner of his own destiny, must believe that God is withdrawn from His world, or at least from a significant part of the world. The world operates on its own, for God created it to be self-sustaining. They therefore believe that God only intervenes now and then when He needs to do something special on behalf of people. Arminians believe that God, in order to retain for man his free will and therefore his moral responsibility, has withdrawn from active involvement in every area of life. They divide the “world” into the physical sphere and the moral sphere. They try and argue that while God is in control of the physical sphere, He does not control the moral sphere of mankind. This must be so if man is to be regarded as a “free” moral agent. The result of this is that most people who are Arminian (or Pelagian or semi-Pelagian) only see God at work when He intervenes, when He does something remarkable or miraculous. They do not see God or His Son “working” continuously governing His creation according to His decree unto its appointed end. These “Christians”, indeed most Christians, have a worldview in which God is largely outside of history. People are acting out their lives according to their own free will and God is sitting back passively, watching and letting them do their thing. These Christians believe that God intervenes from time to time in the affairs of mankind to do a miracle or perform some act to accomplish His purpose. Since

this is the case, miracles are longed for and looked for. They are consequently easily deceived by false teachers and pseudo miracle workers.

But in contrast to them, through the teaching of the Word of God, we who are reformed understand that God is in absolute control of all that transpires in our lives and in the world about us. Therefore, *if we are careful to observe what happens in the world about us, we are able to draw conclusions about what God is doing, not infallibly so, but we may thereby have our experience in life confirm for us what the Word of God teaches us.*

## **II. The Book of Proverbs reflects a Christian worldview that assumes God's providence.**

In order to show how this is true, let us look at another passage of Holy Scripture. Let us turn to Proverbs 22. Here we read various instructions about ordering life in God's world. These proverbs, yes, even all of the Book of Proverbs, reflect and reinforces a biblical (Christian) worldview. Because God governs His world, because God controls the history of His world according to His providence, there is meaning and order in all the events that take place in His world. There are causes and effects that take place in the world over which God rules His creatures. Let us read **Proverbs 22:17** through **23:11**

<sup>17</sup>Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise,  
And apply your heart to my knowledge;

<sup>18</sup>For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you;  
Let them all be fixed upon your lips,

<sup>19</sup>So that your trust may be in the LORD;  
I have instructed you today, even you.

<sup>20</sup>Have I not written to you excellent things  
Of counsels and knowledge,

<sup>21</sup>That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth,  
That you may answer words of truth  
To those who send to you?

<sup>22</sup>Do not rob the poor because he is poor,  
Nor oppress the afflicted at the gate;

<sup>23</sup>For the LORD will plead their cause,  
And plunder the soul of those who plunder them.

<sup>24</sup>Make no friendship with an angry man,  
And with a furious man do not go,

<sup>25</sup>Lest you learn his ways  
And set a snare for your soul.

<sup>26</sup>Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge,  
One of those who is surety for debts;

<sup>27</sup>If you have nothing with which to pay,  
Why should he take away your bed from under you?

<sup>28</sup>Do not remove the ancient landmark  
Which your fathers have set.

<sup>29</sup>Do you see a man who excels in his work?  
He will stand before kings;  
He will not stand before unknown men.

<sup>1</sup>When you sit down to eat with a ruler,

Consider carefully what is before you;  
<sup>2</sup>And put a knife to your throat  
If you are a man given to appetite.  
<sup>3</sup>Do not desire his delicacies,  
For they are deceptive food.

<sup>4</sup>Do not overwork to be rich;  
Because of your own understanding, cease!  
<sup>5</sup>Will you set your eyes on that which is not?  
For riches certainly make themselves wings;  
They fly away like an eagle toward heaven.

<sup>6</sup>Do not eat the bread of a miser,  
Nor desire his delicacies;  
<sup>7</sup>For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.  
“Eat and drink!” he says to you,  
But his heart is not with you.  
<sup>8</sup>The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up,  
And waste your pleasant words.

<sup>9</sup>Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,  
For he will despise the wisdom of your words.

<sup>10</sup>Do not remove the ancient landmark,  
Nor enter the fields of the fatherless;  
<sup>11</sup>For their Redeemer is mighty;  
He will plead their cause against you.

Proverbs is of a particular genre of writing that is commonly called *wisdom literature*. It is set forth commonly in the structure of Hebrew poetry, but the nature of the writing is wisdom literature. It is important to understand some features of this literary style in order to interpret the Proverbs rightly. What is the nature of wisdom literature? Here is a good description of the biblical books and portions of books characterized as wisdom literature:

What the books and outlooks (of Scripture) have in common, however, is a keen interest in the way the world works, humanity’s place within it, and how all this operates under God’s creative, sovereign care. Biblical “wisdom,” then, might be defined as *skill in the art of godly living*, or more fully, *that orientation which allows one to live in harmonious accord with God’s ordering of the world*. And “Wisdom Literature” consists of these writings that reflect on or inform that orientation.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words, wisdom literature reflects the observation and assessment of the world and happenings within history in the light of a Christian (biblical) worldview.

We should know that wisdom literature was common in the ancient world, and there are many extant ancient texts of wisdom literature recovered from ancient Egypt, Babylon, and elsewhere, as well as from ancient Israel. The books of the Bible that contain “wisdom” genre include Job, some of the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. But wisdom as literature genre is also seen elsewhere in Scripture.

In the Bible wisdom literature is of two main types. There is that which is “practical”, which counsels moral and pragmatic issues. The focus is on the right way to live life in God’s world. And then there is

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<sup>1</sup> *The ESV Study Bible* (Crossway Bibles, 2008), p. 866.

“theoretical”, which is in nature philosophical, speculative (Ecclesiastes). Theoretical wisdom literature focuses on the meaning of life, not the way of life.

There are some features of wisdom literature that should be understood. First, wisdom literature tends to be universal in scope, rather than national which would have to do with Israel exclusively. Wisdom literature addresses the “human condition.” Second, wisdom literature reflects a theistic and moral worldview; God is concerned about how people live, that people order their lives according to what He has established as true, right, and good. Wisdom literature is very practical in that it touches on how people live. Third, wisdom literature presumes that there exists in the history of the world spiritual laws that are true to human experience everywhere. There are rewards for living rightly and there are consequences for living wrongly. Fourth, wisdom literature reflects primarily a nature motif, rather than say, a redemptive one. Wisdom addresses the creation and the creatures of the world, rather than atonement and redemption. Fifth, wisdom literature addresses how people are to think and live, not how they are to worship. In other words, there is no emphasis on religious ritual in wisdom literature (generally, but there are exceptions). Sixth, the emphasis is primarily, but not exclusively, on the individual. And last, seventh, there is recognition of God’s providence. And I would argue that this is essential. One could not write wisdom literature unless one believed in God’s providence<sup>2</sup>, that He orders life according to His purposes, and that His purposes involve moral attitudes and actions.

At the heart of wisdom literature in the Holy Scriptures is “the fear of the Lord.” This is at the heart of what it is to be a Christian living in God’s world as one of His people. The fear of the Lord should be the governing principle for life in God’s world. We read in Proverbs much regarding the fear of the Lord.

***The fear of the LORD*** is the beginning of knowledge,  
But fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Prov. 1:7)

My son, if you receive my words,  
And treasure my commands within you,  
<sup>2</sup>So that you incline your ear to wisdom,  
And apply your heart to understanding;  
<sup>3</sup>Yes, if you cry out for discernment,  
And lift up your voice for understanding,  
<sup>4</sup>If you seek her as silver,  
And search for her as for hidden treasures;  
<sup>5</sup>Then you will understand ***the fear of the LORD***,  
And find the knowledge of God. (Prov. 2:1-5)

***The fear of the LORD*** is to hate evil;  
Pride and arrogance and the evil way  
And the perverse mouth I hate. (Prov. 8:13)

***The fear of the LORD*** is the beginning of wisdom,  
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Prov. 9:10)

***The fear of the LORD*** prolongs days,  
But the years of the wicked will be shortened. (Prov. 10:27)

In ***the fear of the LORD*** there is strong confidence,  
And His children will have a place of refuge. (Prov. 14:26)

***The fear of the LORD*** is a fountain of life,  
To turn one away from the snares of death. (Prov. 14:27)

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<sup>2</sup> Or, in other nations of the day, their wisdom literature precluded belief that the “gods” influenced or controlled life.

Better is a little with *the fear of the LORD*,  
Than great treasure with trouble. (Prov. 15:16)

*The fear of the LORD* is the instruction of wisdom;  
And before honour is humility. (Prov. 15:33)

*The fear of the LORD* leads to life,  
And he who has it will abide in satisfaction;  
He will not be visited with evil. (Prov. 19:23)

Let not your heart envy sinners,  
But continue in *the fear of the LORD* all the day. (Prov. 23:17)

The “fear of the Lord” is the major theme or overarching principle that undergirds life in God’s world. It is what gives us a proper context in which to view ourselves in relation to our God. It gives us a proper motivation to order our lives according the will of God. Of the fear of the Lord in Proverbs it has been said:

This idea is the controlling principle of Proverbs, and is ancient Israel’s decisive contribution to the human quest for knowledge and understanding. The fear of the Lord is the only basis of true knowledge. This “fear” is not distrustful terror of God, but rather the reverent awe and worshipful response of faith to the God who reveals Himself as Creator, Savior, and Judge.<sup>3</sup>

Now as we look over the passage that we read—Proverbs 22:13ff—we read of these themes that touch on various aspects of life: First, verses 17 through 21 we read of the importance to be receptive to instruction. We are to be teachable, always watching and observing, listening and learning. There is value in being teachable. You will experience pleasantness in your life. You will learn to trust the Lord more fully. You will be able to see and assess issues that arise in your life. Beginning with Proverbs 22:17 we read instruction no not abusing those who are weak and vulnerable. The reason given is that the Lord will avenge them. The Lord is active in His world, punishing evil and rewarding good. Verses 24 and 25 speak of the importance of assessing one’s associates and to avoid being influenced by them. It says what Paul would later express in 1 Corinthians 15:33, “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’” Wisdom would have you not put yourself and your assets at risk by becoming surety for another’s loan. Here we have a very practical but important word of advice. The passage continues to address matters of honesty, decency, and propriety before those in authority. The reader is counselled to not live to acquire wealth, for that is an elusive goal and that will not bring fulfilment. We are to be attentive of the motives of those people we might regard as friends, but we would choose not to have them as friends if we knew better their character. The passage that we read concludes with warnings regarding one’s associations with the fool, or again, of the danger you place on yourself if you seek to take advantage of the less fortunate. The reason is that God is watching out for them and will avenge your wrong doing against them.

And so, here we have a sample of wisdom literature in Proverbs, which is practical, which assumes a sovereign God who is watching, assessing, rewarding and punishing. We see how we are to think and live in God’s world. We are to have a worldview, which incorporates God’s providence. God in His sovereignty is governing His world and does so according to principles of righteousness. Therefore, fear Him rightly and seek to be and do that which pleases Him.

### **III. Understanding the nature and value of Wisdom Literature in the Holy Scriptures**

Now when reading wisdom literature, and particularly the Proverbs, it is important to understand several matters in order to interpret rightly and apply correctly the truth of God reflected in this literature.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Reformation Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 925.

First, it is important to remember the nature of wisdom literature. The Book of Proverbs contains inspired assessments of what is observed in God's providential dealings with His world. Because God is sovereign, because God is holy and righteous, and because He is ruling over the history of the world according to His providence, generalizations can be made by observing happenings in the world about us. A proverb is therefore to be understood as a common and general occurrence in God's world. And please understand this, proverbs are not to be interpreted or viewed as promises of God, but rather they are instructions from God about life and how to order one's life. But ultimately God is sovereign and may "suspend" the realization of what is stated in a proverb if it is in His purpose to do so. For life to be lived in complete accordance to the many proverbs, it would be a life ordered by God according to "means." But let us recall what we have already learned regarding God's providence: "God, in his ordinary providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at his pleasure."<sup>4</sup> Proverbs reflect an inspired assessment of how God commonly governs His world according to means. But they are not promises.

Let me provide several examples of this. We read in **Proverbs 16:7**, "When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." Is this a promise of God to His people? No, it is an inspired and true conclusion drawn from the observation of life. Those who live in a manner that does not please the Lord, he will see all manner of difficulty in his relationships. He will have "enemies", it would seem, with whom He is always contending. But is this a promise of God that if you are living rightly before Him everybody is going to think well of you and hold you in high regard? Is there assurance that if you ways please the Lord you will not have any enemies, but they will be at peace with you? Can we conclude, therefore, if you have enemies that are not at peace with you, it must mean that your ways do not please the Lord? No, we cannot draw those kinds of conclusions.

Let us consider several "exceptions" recorded in the Bible to show what we are saying is true about the nature of proverbs as general descriptive maxims to guide us rather than promises to claim from God. What of Stephen? He was stoned to death by those who were filled with rage toward him. They were his enemies. Did not his ways please the Lord? Of course they did. But we read in Acts 7:55ff these words:

<sup>54</sup>Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup>But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup>And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

<sup>57</sup>But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. <sup>58</sup>Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup>And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." <sup>60</sup>And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

And then we can consider the Lord Jesus Himself. Of course all of His ways pleased His Father. But we do not read that His enemies were at peace with Him. Rather, we read that they were filled with rage toward Him. We read in Luke 4 of His instruction given to His hometown crowd in the synagogue,

But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, <sup>26</sup>and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. <sup>27</sup>And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." <sup>28</sup>*When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. <sup>29</sup>And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff.* <sup>30</sup>But passing through their midst, he went away. (Luke 4:25-30)

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<sup>4</sup> *The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, article 3, paragraph 3.

His enemies were not at peace with Him but rather they opposed Him and attempted to kill Him.

Another example of a proverb being an inspired observation rather than a promise of God, consider Proverbs 22:6, which reads, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Many view this as though it were a promise of God. The way it is worded we might conclude this. But again, it is an inspired observation. If you are a parent and you want your child to grow to be a godly man or woman, you will need to train up that child in the way he should go. Do not think that your child will turn out the way you would like him to turn out if you do not work it. What this proverb is saying is that commonly, normally, if your child is to turn out favorably, it will be through this means. But this is not a stayed and tried “rule” that is true in every instance. It is not a promise of God but an inspired observation of what commonly takes place. But ultimately God is sovereign and He must be looked to as imparting grace to children that they might grow up rightly, who purpose to live before God and for God.

Now we would argue that a reasonably intelligent person who believed in a theistic worldview as we have described, would be able to look at the unfolding of events in daily life and observe patterns of the manner in which God works in His world. This is what Solomon did. We read in 1 Kings 4:29-34 of Solomon’s wisdom.

<sup>29</sup>And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, <sup>30</sup>so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. <sup>31</sup>For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. <sup>32</sup>He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. <sup>33</sup>He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. <sup>34</sup>And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom. (1Ki 4:34 ESV)

Solomon’s wisdom is also described in Ecclesiastes 12.

<sup>9</sup>Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. <sup>10</sup>The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. <sup>11</sup>The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. <sup>12</sup>My son, beware of anything beyond these. (Ecc. 12:8-12)

Now, to show that these proverbs reflect conclusions that may be drawn from the careful observation of events that transpire in a world governed by God’s providence, let us recognize something quite remarkable about the passage that we have read, that being Proverbs 22:17 – 23:11. All of the proverbs recorded in our Book of Proverbs did not originate from Solomon’s own observation. Solomon was not only a writer, but he was a collector of proverbs that he acquired from other sources. This is suggested in verse 9 above, in that Solomon would arrange many proverbs with care. The passage that we read (actually, the section includes all from Proverbs 22:17 through 24:22) predated the time of Solomon, having been found in Egyptian literature, which goes by the name of the wisdom of *The Instruction of Amenemope*. This Egyptian writing dates to about 1250 BC, which was 250 years before Solomon. Clearly Solomon had acquired and restated the proverbs from this Egyptian writing source. It is not a word for word “borrowing.” “Clearly 22:17-24:22 did not slavishly copy *Amenemope*, but there are many affinities in content. The most significant difference between the two is the devotion to the Lord exhibited in Proverbs.”<sup>5</sup> The point we are making is this: God’s providential working in His world among all peoples is so clear and plain that even an “uninspired” Egyptian could look about his world and draw conclusions about the spiritual realm and how daily happenings in people’s lives is being directed and governed by God.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *The ESV Study Bible* (Crossway Bibles, 2008), p. 1173.

<sup>6</sup> For the Egyptian, he would have believed the world controlled by a plurality of gods.

In conclusion, let us recognize that although in the past, just a little over a generation ago, virtually everyone in our society believed in God's rule of daily events. They believed that they lived in a world in which God governed the lives of His creatures according to set spiritual laws. To live contrary to those laws incurred difficulty and forfeited blessing. But we no longer live in such a world. The worldview largely held by people today does not allow for God to be active and engaged in His world. They see no spiritual laws of cause and effect that suggest that there are consequences for wrong thinking or behavior. It is assumed that one can do as he pleases, when he pleases, without consequences to himself or to others about him. Let us not be as the world in which we live. Please be aware of the influence that the current worldview encroaches on your thinking. Do not be a Christian on Sunday and then on Monday slip into a world, which is wholly secular, practically atheistic, a world in which there is no God governing the affairs of man. Let us be Christians who always know and confess, "The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all" (Psa. 103:19), and let us each resolve that by God's grace, "I will purpose always to live in the fear of the Lord."

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The LORD will guide you continually,  
And satisfy your soul in drought,  
And strengthen your bones;  
You shall be like a watered garden,  
And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. (Isa. 58:11)