

# God Over All

*Building a Christian Mind*

By Don Green

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**Truth Community Church**

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Well, after a week away, on Sunday anyway, it's a delight and a privilege to be back with you and to return to our series that we've titled "Building a Christian Mind." As we've considered this series over the course of this calendar year, we've established plainly that we live in a realm in which God exists and has made himself known. God is there, and he is not silent. Those are simple words, it seems, but they contradict the spirit of the age in which we live and it's important for us to realize that. As we've continued on and seen the authority of Christ and the authority of Scripture, we've seen that there is truth in the universe in which we live. There's truth in the realm of our existence. We're not left to our fleeting feelings to determine what's true, but there is real and actual truth that is absolute and transcends time and circumstance. And in more recent weeks, as we've considered the decree of God and the creation by God, there's a very basic reality that we need to understand and let it filter through all that we think and all that we say and all that we live for. We live, beloved, in a realm that God planned. We live a life that God has planned for us. We live in a realm that God created and established according to his wisdom. And now, as we pivot into a new aspect of our doctrinal consideration here today, we're going to see that we live in a realm that God sustains and that God directs in every single detail, and the implications of this are massive for everything, and they're very massive for the living of your Christian life. There is nothing more practical than the doctrine that we are about to consider over the next several weeks. All of our building of a Christian mind through the past several months has led us to this very critical point that is absolutely essential to a right living of the Christian life. If you are not clear on the matters that we're going to be considering today, you will struggle, you will stumble, you will be discouraged and anxious and fearful, and there's no need for that. The Christian life does not have to be that way. And I know that, and I say this with complete sympathy, I know that some of you live in a realm of constant fear and agitation, fear over what's going to happen, regret over what's happened and what you've done in the past, and fear of what's going to happen in the world around us, what's going to happen to our country, what's going to happen to my children, what's going to happen to my grandchildren. You know, we all live in that realm but, beloved, we don't have to live in a state of fear and agitation. In fact, Jesus said, stop being anxious in Matthew 6. All of our building of a Christian mind and all of those things that weigh on each one of our hearts lead us to an extended consideration of the doctrine known as divine providence. Divine providence. If that term is new to you, you're in for a blessing over the next few weeks. And I can say this honestly, and those that are around me would say the same things, few

things in my life have changed me like the doctrine of divine providence. Don't always live consistently with the way that it's changed me, but it's changed me, what we're about to see. Few things in life have daily sustained me like the doctrine of divine providence, of getting beyond the realm of emotional manipulation and religious services and just living from a false spiritual sugar high from week to week in emotionally driven services while you collapse during the week and wait for the next spiritual energy drink to down and keep you going for another week or two. Just like living off sugar and caffeine, that stuff wears you out eventually, and it destroys your body in time, even though for a day it may seem to give you a stimulant. Well, in a similar matter, the doctrine of divine providence gives you the real strength, real genuine power to live in the knowledge of the God who is there, the God who is not silent, the God who has expressed his authority in Scripture and in the Savior, the God who decreed things, the God who created things, all of these things come together now in a way that we see impacts every moment of every detail of every day of our lives.

Few things have changed me or sustained me as this blessed doctrine and I have no fear of overstating, over-promising things, and I can only pray that the Spirit of God would help you as he's helped me through the truth of God's word on this point and so today, if you are weary in life, you need to sit up. You need to sit up and pay attention because the Lord has brought you to a place of help and the time for spiritual lethargy and checking the watch, when's this going to be over, that's over. We have something more important than a clock and personal comfort to consider here today. If you're discouraged, if you're weighed down, let me in sympathy encourage you to pay heed. The help that your heart longs for is here and here over the next few weeks. If you're anxious, controlled by fear, as I say, I know some of you are, help has arrived if only you will give heed to the word of God, submit to him, and ask his Spirit to help you apply it to your life because there is no weakness in what we're about to see, there is no defect in what we're about to see. These are the things that are the answer to the problem of daily life for the believer.

And so, just to set the stage here, we've looked at the divine decree. God had a plan before he created the world. God planned everything out. In a single act of his omniscient mind, he determined what would happen throughout the course of all known history and to bring it to a culmination that brings him glory. That decree, beloved, we saw just two, three weeks ago, that decree was comprehensive we said. The plan was comprehensive. We saw that it was a decree that encompassed the course of nations. It is a decree that encompasses all the details of life and existence. It's a decree that included redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so at the macro scale of the greatest course of nations, in the details of minute things in the animal kingdom and our personal lives, and in the glories of salvation by redemption through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, God planned all of that before Genesis 1:1. When there was nothing, God determined it. Before time began in eternity past, God determined it all and established that decree. Then, as we've seen in the last couple of weeks when I've been here, he created the world in six 24-hour days, a short time ago, comparatively speaking, 5,000, 10,000 years ago, not billions of years. He had a comprehensive plan, he created things, and now things are happening, you could say. Since creation, things have been happening. That's the simplest way that I know how to put it. And what you need to understand is this, is that the doctrine of divine

providence teaches us that the things that have been happening, the things that have happened, the things that are happening, the things that will happen, all of them are under the oversight and direction of the God who planned it all. God planned it, God created it, and now everything that's happened since then and is happening now, God is providentially directing everything that happens in order to accomplish his purposes.

That's the doctrine of divine providence and this doctrine, beloved, will deepen your reverence for God, it will steady you in your trials and give comfort to you in your affliction, and it will give you confidence as you face an uncertain future. The Christian should not fear the future because the Christian, by profession, by reality we trust, is someone who is a child of God, is a child of the God who planned it, who created it, and is now directing it. And God, as a loving Father, has not lost sight of us in the midst of the infinite complexity of everything that's happening. He knows us by name. He knows the number of hairs on our head. He determined the days in which we would live. We have a fixed course of days that we are living out. And so the God who is great is a God who is good, who has created us, and who is sustaining us in every single detail. This is just by way of overview to introduce you to what we have ahead and the knowledge of that, therefore, causes us to revere him, it causes us to fear him, and it causes us to trust him. If God is so good that Christ would leave heaven above to come to earth, and if God is so good that Christ would live a faithful, obedient life for 30-some years, and then willingly offer up that life as a sacrifice to God to pay for the sins of everyone who would ever believe in him, those who deserve judgment instead receive divine grace through the work and the person of Jesus Christ, if God's so good to do that, so good to do the greater thing, then it's obvious that God is being good in the lesser things, the smaller details of life as well. He wouldn't give us the greater thing and then withhold the lesser things, and so this doctrine of divine providence can give you confidence in the future as well. And beloved, mark this really carefully: this doctrine enables you to let go of all of the regrets of your past, every single one of them, every single one of them. It's not right and proper, it's not good for people, especially for Christians, to talk about, "Oh, I need to forgive myself, or I just can't forgive myself for what happened in the past." That's not biblical thinking. God is the one that we've sinned against. God is the one who must grant forgiveness. But I understand the mindset that says, "I live with regret over what I've done in the past. You know, how I ruined my first marriage, how I ruined my second marriage," things like that, "the people that I sinned against, the way that I've been sinned against myself." All of these things and all of that junk, all of that junk, beloved, that, and you know, people like this, I know that you know people like this, people that live in perpetual introspection, or people that perpetually portray themselves as the victim of what others have done to them; whether they're Christians or not, we don't need to worry about today, but it's clear they're not anchored in the doctrine of divine providence. To the extent that you feel like, "I've been wronged so many times," it's time to come to the doctrine of divine providence and I say this graciously and with a spirit to help you, beloved, it's time to get over that. It's time to get over that and to live in light of the fact that there is a sovereign God directing everything that's happened and it's time for us not to live as a victim, but to live as a victor, to live as one who's triumphed in Christ, that Christ has saved, delivered, loved, and has a great future for us. It's time to live in light of those realities and all of the details instead of in this psychological, introspective junk

that holds people in bondage and makes them, frankly, a pain to be around. You don't want to be a pain, do you, to the people around you? Why would you want to be a pain to everybody? Why not be a blessing to everybody around you? It's possible if you embrace, if you understand and embrace the doctrine of divine providence.

I have a dear family member struggling on the edge of death about an hour and a half north; some of you have met him, kind of a distant cousin by marriage. But I think of him in light of this simply because the doctrine of divine providence enables you even to face your deathbed with a sense of serenity and confidence, a sense of resignation, a peaceful resignation that I can resign myself to the will of God come what may and live without fear, that the God who decreed my life, who created my life in my mother's womb, who has sustained my life through years and decades, and now has brought me to the point of leaving this life and crossing the river and entering into the next, I can trust him for even that. Beloved, this is utterly comprehensive in its meaning and significance for all of life. I hope that you're anticipating that there's a sense of anticipation, "Hey, this sounds like something that could help." Well, yeah, because it will.

And so let me give you a definition of the doctrine of divine providence, and as you're getting ready to write, the title for today's message is "God Over All." God over all. God ruling over all is the idea. And the doctrine of divine providence, I've defined it this way in the past, and I'll define it this way again today. God, when we say God, the God that we've been talking about for all these months, the God who has made himself known in creation, the Canon, conscience, Christ and in conversion, that God who has revealed himself in Scripture, that God who has revealed himself in Christ, that God who decreed the way that all would take place in the universe, that God who created by the power of his spoken word, that God is the one that we're talking about. Not the false god of Islam, not the crazy god of charismatic theology, not the legalistic false god of Roman Catholicism, not the false gods, the true God, the true God of the Bible that we've been talking about all these months, that God is the God we're talking about. God continually upholds his entire creation. I'm going to say this slowly. I'm going to say it several times. I want you to write it down and get it right. God continually upholds his entire creation and sovereignly works in absolutely everything that happens and thus directs all creatures and events to accomplish his will. Period. God continually upholds his entire creation and sovereignly works in absolutely everything that happens and thus directs all creatures and events to accomplish his will. That's the doctrine of divine providence.

Now, let me just say something by way of clarification and help you understand the scope of today's message. There are difficult questions that come up in relationship to the doctrine of divine providence. We're going to address them in the future. We're not going to deal with the hard questions that this doctrine creates today. Today our goal is different. Before we deal with all the questions and all of the objections and all the foolish things that men rise up and speak against the sovereignty of God, before we deal with those and answer those and refute the objections, today we have a more limited, a very joyful, task in front of us. Today we're just going to see what Scripture says and let this doctrine rise up for us from the pages of Scripture so that we can understand the fullness of what the doctrine is. Only when you first understand the doctrine and what it

means and what it covers can you then be in a position to deal with the difficulties that it raises. Deal with the first principles first and then deal with the subsidiary difficulties that it might seem to raise in the mind before we understand.

I'll give you the definition one more time as we reset here and transition from the introduction to the content. God continually upholds his entire creation and sovereignly works in absolutely everything that happens and thus directs all creatures and events to accomplish his will. Nothing happens outside the determined will of God, which he established before the foundation of the world. Now another way to think about today's message is this, is that we're laying a foundation that we're going to build on for the next seven or eight weeks. I'm very excited about what lies ahead. Even this morning, I was doing work on these future messages, and I'm just so excited about what we have ahead. I know it's going to help you. But today's the foundation. We want to lay a level, square, solid foundation to build upon things in the future.

So think about it this way, I've compared it this way in the past, think about preparing a piece of ground in order to plant a garden. You go, there's rocks, there's weeds, the soil is hard, all of that and so you've got to do work in order to prepare for the garden, in order to enjoy the fruit of the garden and the harvest of the garden down the road. You don't throw the seed in the ground in the morning and then eat the corn at night, do you? Now, if we can understand that in a physical realm, then we should have the patience to deal with the truth of God's word, knowing that even if we don't see immediately all of the ways that it affects us, that we just patiently do the work and let God bring the fruit and the increase in time in our hearts. And he will. He will. God always accomplishes what he intends through the preaching of his word. So in some ways, the preacher of God's word should be the most confident person in the world in the task that's ahead of him. His word does not return void, and, beloved, it will not return void in your life if you just pay heed, you're here, and you absorb these things and consider them repeatedly over time. So when you think about preparing a piece of ground for a garden, you move rocks. You dig, you plant, you water, you weed, you sweat, and it takes hard work over time to get the benefit, but it's worth the effort. It's worth the effort to enjoy that fruit later on. It's worth the effort to have canned goods in the winter when the storm is raging outside. It's worth the effort and so you gladly invest in it knowing that there's hard work to do. Well, beloved, studying divine providence is like that. It takes some heavy lifting at first. And if you've never studied the doctrine of divine providence, it's a privilege for me to introduce it to you because these are things that are going to, these are things that are just going to expand your mind and give you a view of God that you've never had before and that view of God enables you to live in the midst of a cursed, wicked, fallen world with confidence, not the victim, the victor.

Three principles for today, and let me just give them to you at the start as we're defining God's providence today and giving you biblical evidence for it. Biblical evidence to understand the doctrine. First point will be God's providence is broad. God's providence is broad. You could say God's providence is comprehensive. Secondly, God's providence is detailed. It's in the small things as well as the big things. God's providence is broad. Secondly, God's providence is detailed. Thirdly, the sweet part for believers, God's

providence is personal. It's personal. It's broad, it's detailed, and it's personal. There is nothing, beloved, that you can possibly think about that is outside the providence of God as it is revealed in Scripture. Anything you think about, anything that's happened in life, anything that's happening in the world, in history, nothing, nothing is beyond the doctrine of divine providence and because of that, you cannot begin to have a properly functioning Christian mind until you understand the doctrine of divine providence because everything around you is being directed by him to accomplish his will and until you understand that, you haven't begun to understand the nature of the life that you're living.

So let's dig into it now. First point, God's providence is broad, and you can turn to the book of Ephesians for a starting point here. God's providence is broad. It covers everything in the universe. Let's look at Ephesians 1:9 through 11. Ephesians 1:9 through 11, where it says that God is "making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him," here it is, "who works all things according to the counsel of his will." Beloved, look at the plain words of Scripture there. God has predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

Now, in verse 10, you see that word "to unite all things in him," that word "unite" is a word that has the idea of a summary. If you think of a public speech or an attorney's argument at the close of a jury trial, that the point of that argument is to bring everything together into one place and to summarize it, speaking as, you know, from the perspective of an attorney, to summarize all of the evidence that has been presented during the course of the trial, to summarize it and bring it to a point where the jury sees that the only rational way to respond to all of that evidence is to come to this conclusion, "You need to rule in favor of my client." It brings everything to a focal point. It shows how each part relates to the complete argument and what we see here as Paul speaks about the counsel of the will of God, the purpose of God, the singular purpose of God, as an infinite number of details have been working themselves out in the five or ten thousand years since creation, every detail of that unfolding of creation, every detail of it fits with the purpose that God established and will fulfill the intent of God and the design of God when it's all done in the end. It's a summary. It's all united together. It's all part of one plan. That's what you need to see. Nothing that has ever happened in the world or in you, nothing has happened apart from the plan of God. Every part relates to the overall purpose of his will and God moves everything by his power so that what he decreed to be the end, the purpose of it all, would be accomplished, and the end of his purpose is the glory of his own name, the glory of Jesus Christ.

Look at Ephesians 1:6. Start in verse 5, "he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace." In verse 11 we saw things were "according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory." Verse 14 that we would receive "the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory." Beloved, there's

so much more at stake in the universe and in your life than how things affect you individually and personally. There's a greater purpose at work; that greater purpose, that goal, that end to which everything is moving is to the praise of the glory of God.

Romans 11:33 to 36, "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." All of it moving to a purpose. All of it, each individual part, like a jigsaw puzzle, each piece having a part to play in the entire mosaic that's presented that when it's all said and done, the redeemed and the holy angels will look at the full mosaic and in wonder say, "Praise God. He deserves glory for that." And God, to make certain of that, moves everything to that end. God works all things so that nothing thwarts his plan. Let me say that again. God works all things so that nothing thwarts his plan. As R. C. Sproul says, there's not a speck of cosmic dust anywhere in the universe that is beyond the sovereignty of God. He created it all, so obviously he has power over it all. And because he's a wise, infinite God, he has a plan for what he's doing. He doesn't do things haphazardly. He's an intelligent, purposeful God, so that everything that comes into existence in the realm of his creation is serving the purpose that he established before the beginning of time. This introduces you to a great and high, lofty view of God, and that's what you should have, a great, high, lofty view of God. Not simply as though he were some kind of cosmic vending machine that you put a quarter in and pull the lever or push the button so you can get what you want in your time of need and then move on in disregard to it. God works all things so that nothing thwarts his plan.

Now, several passages affirm God's control in this unqualified sense. Write down this first reference, in addition to Ephesians 1 that we just looked at. All things means all things. You know, you don't need to be a great exegete to understand that. All things mean everything. In Psalm 103:19, we read this, "The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all." The sovereignty of God rules over everything that has ever happened and ever will happen.

You're in the book of Ephesians, turn to the right a couple of pages to the book of Colossians. Skip over Philippians and come to the book of Colossians now. Colossians 1. Speaking of Christ in verse 15 we read that, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." Firstborn there meaning he has the highest rank. Christ is the highest ranking one in all creation. Then he goes on to explain why that rank is so massive. Verse 16, "For by him," by Christ that is, "all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things," he picks it up again for emphasis so you wouldn't miss it. He started by saying all things were created. He explains what he means by all things and then he comes full circle and says again, "all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." All things. All things. All things. Christ created it all, and in Christ it all holds together. Stated differently, in Christ everything is being directed according to the purpose that he intends. It's not simply a physical description that things don't disintegrate because he's holding them together. I think that's true. But the whole plan of God is being held together in Christ as he advances his purpose through everything that ever occurred.

Look over at the book of Hebrews 1 and here today, we're just touching on things so lightly and superficially in some ways and leaving a lot of things unsaid for the sake of getting the big picture in a single message. In Hebrews 1, beginning in verse 1, we read this, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son," or as the original says, "in his Son whom he appointed the heir of all things," there's that phrase again, "through whom also he created the world." We've covered those first two verses in our prior messages and now in verse 3 we see something about the firstborn of all creation, something of the most glorious one in all of the universe, the one before whom every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Who is this one who commands such universal submission and worship, forced or willing, either way, all will bow before him, who is he? Verse 3, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs." Publishing will go in cycles, and people will write books about angels, or TV shows about angels, and angels are great, angels are this. Look, whatever you think about angels, angels have a place in the purpose of God. They're not to be the focus of our attention. Christ is, because he's superior over all of them. He made them. He rules over them. And by essence, he is infinitely more excellent than they are and so we don't give our attention to angels the way that we give our attention to Christ. And what Scripture is saying here is that Christ upholds the entire universe by the word of his power. By the exercise of his power and his mental ability, he upholds it all.

And so God's providence, as we've seen it in Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1 and Psalm 103 and Hebrews 1, multiple, multiple places, all things, all things, all things, beloved, God's providence is as broad as you can possibly imagine and beyond your imagination. The stars orbit because God established them and keeps them there by his power. Your arms stay attached to your body because God, by his providence, makes sure that happens. Your chair holds you up because God sustains it. That's how broad things are. From the orbits of galaxies around one another in places that the most distant and powerful telescope has not yet penetrated, God's providence operates there. As you sit in your seat, God's providence operates there, all of it being upheld by his power. And so his providence is broad as you could possibly imagine.

Now secondly, God's providence is detailed. God's providence is detailed. You know, it's one thing to say God's providence is broad and just assert it like we just did in the past few minutes. It's one thing to say God controls everything. That's one thing to say that and to understand it at that abstract level. You need to establish that but, beloved, it is another matter altogether, it is another realm of comprehension and spiritual growth for your heart to go to Scripture and take the time to list out all of the different matters that Scripture says is directed by the hand of God. God's providence is detailed. Scripture doesn't just simply say this in a broad, overarching sense. It details it and so what we're going to see are four little subpoints here in the detailed providence of God. You can write these out ahead of time. God's providence is detailed over nature. God's providence



is detailed over the animal kingdom. God's providence is detailed over seemingly chance events. And fourthly, God's providence is detailed over nations. Nature, animal kingdom, chance events, nations. Let's run through this rather quickly here now.

God's providence is detailed and his providence is over nature and you could go, I don't know how many places. I'm just kind of randomly choosing texts, the themes of which could be repeated in multiple places in Scripture. Let's go to Psalm 147 for today. Psalm 147. God rules over the world that he created. God rules over the world that he created. In Psalm 147:7, we read this, "Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre! He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry." God covers the heavens with cloud. He prepares rain. He makes grass to grow. He gives beasts their food. This is comprehensive. Drop down to verse 16, "He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes. He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold?" Verse 18, "He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow."

Beloved, nature runs its course under the hand of God, under the direction of God, not from the independent power of impersonal biological or climatological processes. God is intimately involved in it all and so the regular cycles of nature and astronomy can be measured, they can be observed, they can be predicted because God has chosen to keep them in order and this is the way that he operates the universe. No other explanation could explain the fact that we can determine when cosmic events happened millennia ago because of the predictable nature of the way that God orders the stars in the heavens. And how we can know when the sun is going to set tonight. It's not because the sun just chooses to do that on its own. It's because it's what God has established in his providence over nature. The very field of science itself, beloved, is only possible because God upholds things in a systematic, predictable way. Science has to assume the certainty of the providence of God in order to exist, even if they don't honor God in the process because on what basis can you predict that tomorrow will be like today unless there is something making sure that that happens, someone that makes sure that that happens? They have to borrow from our worldview in order to do their secular work.

So God's providence is detailed over nature. Secondly, God's providence is detailed over the animal kingdom. Look at Psalm 104. Psalm 104, beginning in verse 24. Psalm 104:24, "O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it. These all look to you," all the creatures in the sea, they all look to you "to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust." Beloved, the testimony of Scripture is that every animal, every bird, every creature of every kind lives, eats, and dies in the providence of God. Matthew 6 says God feeds the birds of the air and makes that an argument for why we should not be anxious in

life. If he cares for the birds, he'll care for us. Matthew 10 says that sparrows die at his command.

Now, beloved, you might wonder why God would care about such seemingly insignificant creatures. Why does he care about that? Well, he does because it pleases him, because he's a God of order, because he's a God of detail, because he's created everything, and in the massive complexity, the infinite complexity of his mind, it pleases him to set all of these things into motion, to rule over all of it, and to direct it to accomplish his will. And ours is not to second guess. Well, you know, I mean, God forgive the blasphemy of what I'm about to say, but just to make the point, you know, someone might say, "Well, if I was God, I wouldn't care about that." Well, you're not God, and I'm glad you're not. God is pleased to rule over the infinite complexity of the universe and to guide every detail of it, to guide all things to accomplish his will. That pleases him, and it pleases him because he's so much greater than we are. We may not care about details even in our own personal life, but God's not like us. His ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts higher than our thoughts and it pleased him to rule over nature, to rule over the animal kingdom in complete, perfect detail.

Thirdly, we mentioned seemingly chance events. Think about the roll of a dice, for example. The classic text on this is Proverbs 16:33. Proverbs 16:33, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." Some people think that the high priest in the days of Israel had, that he had, they had means of ascertaining the will of God, that they had two disks, black on one side, white on the other side and when you would cast them, either of the three possibilities come up. Double white meaning yes. Double black meaning no. If it's split, the answer is wait. The simplicity of that. Well, what Proverbs is talking about is that when something like that is done, the outcome of that was determined by the Lord. It seemed random and by chance from our human perception, but the outcome was in the hands of the Lord. Our equivalent, like I said, would be rolling dice or flipping a coin.

The Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck, some pronounce it Bavinck, Herman Bavinck says this, this is where your mind needs to go and grow into, beloved. A great statement and I quote, "The Christian surveys the whole of existence and the entire world and discovers in all things, not chance or fate, but the leading of God's fatherly hand." I'll say that again. "The Christian surveys the whole of existence and the entire world and discovers in all things, not chance or fate, but the leading of God's fatherly hand." And we know this, we know this because we believe Scripture. We believe Scripture on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, we talked about that. That's why all of these things are so critical and vital for us to know and understand. Why do we believe the Bible? We believe the Bible based on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we read the Bible and know that it's trustworthy in everything that it affirms, we find these things, and so we believe the doctrine of divine providence based on the testimony of the word of God, which is certified to us by the firstborn, the highest ranking in creation, Jesus Christ himself. What you think about these basic fundamental things has massive consequences for all of thought, all of life. I trust that's becoming more and more clear to you as we go along.

Now, we said God's providence is detailed over nature, over the animal kingdom, over chance events, and finally, God rules over nations. You think about flipping a coin. Say, how small and insignificant is that? A micro view of the providence of God. Well, it goes from a micro view to a macro view and becomes absolutely comprehensive. God rules over nations. Daniel 2:20 and 21. I'm just going to read it. Daniel 2:20 and 21 says this, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings." You know, and if you do any superficial reading of world history, you realize how magnificent that statement is. First there was Egypt, and then there was Israel, and then there was Assyria, then there was Babylon, then there was Persia, then there was Greece, then there was Rome and on into our day. Scripture says that those rise and fall of nations over centuries, over decades, they flourish for a while and then they fade away, all of that by the hand of a sovereign God who changes the times and epochs, who removes kings and establishes kings. Beloved, world rulers rise and fall at the command of God and God is at work even in the electoral processes or whatever measure, whatever means a country uses, a state or jurisdiction uses to establish its rulers, God works through those and determines what the outcome will be.

Now, that has implications. Beloved, you may or may not like the fact that Joe Biden is president of the United States, and I don't really care what you think about that because we've got more important things to talk about, but just understand that Joe Biden became president because it pleased God to give that authority to him. God determined before time began that that would be part of the outworking of his purpose. And so what you and I have to do as Christians, this becomes very important and practical for us, we have to trust God no matter what the changing politics of the world around us is. Whatever we think about it, whatever you want to think about the involvement of individual Christians in politics, I don't care about talking about that today, that's not our point. Our point is to be able to look at the world and interpret it properly, to realize that there are leaders who have power because God has given it to them, and I may not like the direction things are going, but I'm going to trust the God who established a decree and included that ruler as part of his process. I may not see where it's going, I may not like where it's going, and that's not the point. The point is God rules over all, including nations, including leaders, and we trust him no matter what. We trust him no matter what. We trust him no matter what.

You can think of the providence of God on a continuum in light of what we've just said. God's providence is over details that do not concern you. What do I care about an elk that falls dead in Colorado? I don't care about that. God's providence is at work in it. What do I care about a sparrow that gets hit by a windshield on the drive home today? I don't care about that. It's not important. But God's providence rules over that. God's providence on the left hand of the continuum covers even details that are insignificant to you and me. On the other end of the continuum, these massive world geopolitical things that happen that you have no control over and yet affect your life, you have no control, you have no concern over birds, you have no control over international affairs and God rules there and

on every point in between. Details that don't concern you, world events that you can't control, God's in charge. God rules over it all.

Now that brings us to our third and final point here this morning. We'll have more to say about this very practical and personal aspect of it in future ministries but now this all gets very personal, practical, and helpful in your personal life because point number three, God's providence is personal. God's providence is personal. God is a personal God. He is a living, thinking being who knows each of us by name. For those of us who are Christians, Jesus Christ knows us personally by name, and he died for us by name when he suffered on the cross. Not just giving us a blob of a sacrifice for a mass of humanity and then leaving it to someone else to figure out who would believe in him. No, when Christ died on the cross, he thought of his people. He thought of us individually. Somehow, in a way that I can't understand, he personally appropriated, or better stated, our personal sins were imputed to him on the cross, and he suffered and died for them as a substitute in our place. He knew us by name even when he was on the cross. It's that personal. It's that intimate. And now we come to providence and the things that affect our daily lives, and we realize that God's providence is operative there also.

Turn to Psalm 139. Psalm 139. Beloved, we've got to stop being afraid of men. We've got to stop being worried about the course of events and occupy our mind with the greatness of this God, the greatness of his plan, and the greatness of his providence. If we would spend a fraction of the time, some of you, I say this in love, beloved, if some of you would spend a fraction of the time thinking about these matters of providence and thinking theologically, instead of filling your mind with the Fox News channel, you'd have a whole different perspective on life. It'd be far more pleasant for you to live by.

God's providence is personal. Psalm 139. He's personally guided every detail of your life. Look at verse 13. The psalmist says, David says, "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. 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." God formed you exactly the way he wanted you in your mother's womb. Transgenderism is a sin against the purpose of God. Period. Full stop. God has determined the days that you would live. God established them beforehand. Why? Because he's a God of providence that's over all. He's a God that's over all of the details of your life. You're a man or a woman by the creation power of God, by his choice, and you don't get to alter that. You can try, you can mutilate yourself, but it doesn't change the reality of God. While you were in your mother's womb, he was guiding the growth of your bones and the length of your days so that Matthew 10, Jesus could say, the hairs of your head are all numbered. Every aspect of your life, every aspect of your being determined, directed, planned, carried out by a sovereign, great, good, gracious God.

The doctrine of providence is crucial to a Christian mind so let me just ask and answer a couple of questions here, and like I say, everything we've talked about here, there's a lot

more to come. This was just an overview message. First question: do you enjoy a good and comfortable life? Have you enjoyed a good, comfortable life? Have the lines fallen to you in pleasant places? You should realize that that's not by the power of your hand. It's by the goodness of God who has blessed you and helped you along the way. You should give him thanks and not take credit according to your own power like Herod did, and they called him a god, and he accepted the worship and was eaten by worms as a judgment from God. This humbles us. Those that have had prosperity and success, this humbles us and realizes it's only by the good hand of God that anything has been accomplished in my life. So we give him thanks. We give him all the glory.

Now, secondly, and here having the privilege to speak to you as a pastor: has life brought you hardship and sadness? You know something about rejection from people you love? Failure in business? Failure in life? You've known hardship? Came in here with a broken heart, tears just behind the eyelids, waiting for the right word to be said to cause them to come forth? Providence speaks really directly and personally to you. Beloved, God has ordered even those sad things in your life. Now, that may not at first seem to be like a very comforting thought, and it may make you want to say, "Well, then why would I want to, why would I serve a God who orchestrated this sorrow to come into my life?" Don't be in such a hurry. Don't judge it so quickly. Here's the thing that you need to see: God is working out a purpose that he established before time began and you and I are not able to judge his providence in the moment of what we see right now. Haman was planning to hang Mordecai. He had built the gallows in the book of Esther and was just about to send Mordecai to the gallows when providence intervened and it all turned around and Mordecai was blessed and Haman was hanged on his own gallows. You can't judge providence in the moment by what you see. You're not a reliable judge of the providence of God. Your job is to know God, to know his providence, and to trust him for it, and to let him work out his purposes over the course of time. And here's where providence helps you, beloved. Yes, God orchestrates and sends pain into your life. He sends pain into my life. And sometimes I, metaphorically speaking, I cry out, "Ouch! This hurts! And God, I don't know how much more of this I can take!" It hurts. Providence pinches and constrains us. So I get it, God sends pain but, beloved, here's what you must see in light of the doctrine of providence. First of all, providence means that your pain came to you by the hand of a good and gracious God. You may not see and understand, but there's a purpose in it that's good, even though it's not visible to you in the moment. That doesn't matter. Furthermore, providence is your hope that God will deliver you. Yes, God's over the sorrow that's in my life, this difficulty, this hardship, and it's hard, but you know what? God's sovereign over it, and he can change it in a moment. Jesus could stand on the shore after his resurrection and just say, "Breakfast," and breakfast was there. God can change it in a moment. The Assyrian army, he slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. God can change it in a moment. It doesn't mean he will but providence is your hope that God will ultimately deliver you and help you and make it better.

So, beloved, don't resent him. Seek him. Submit to him in trust. Give him time to unfold the fullness of his providence in your life and you'll be able to say with the Apostle Paul, 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. All things, beloved, he causes all things to work together. Even that pain, even that affliction, even that sorrow, he causes it all to work together for good in the end. He will keep his promise. He is true and he is over all.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we do honor you and we submit to you in this hour. We are utterly dwarfed by the greatness of your being, speaking of things sure and true from your word and yet so far beyond our capacity to comprehend that we can only bow in worship and we do. And I ask you, my friend, whether you know this God. You can find him through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Christ made an atoning sacrifice for sinners just like you who would turn to him in repentance and faith and receive him. I invite you to Christ. I invite you to repent and put your faith in him, and that you would enter in on the favorable side of the providence of God, and that the sorrow that he has sent you would become the means by which he draws you to himself. Father, do that for your glory, we pray, in the life of everyone outside of Christ under the sound of my voice. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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