

# The Extent of God's Providence

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[ 0 : 00 ] 1 Kings, chapter 22. Pastor John has begun a series on the providence of God, and so as we read this, look to see if you can see it happening.

! You can see God at work. 1 Kings, chapter 22. We're going to read the first 38 verses. 1 Kings, chapter 22.

I am as you are. My people are as your people. My horses as your horses. But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, first seek the counsel of the Lord.

So the king of Israel brought together the prophets, about 400 men, and asked them, shall I go to war against Ramoth-Gilead, or shall I refrain?

Go, they answered, for the Lord will give it into the king's hand. But Jehoshaphat asked, is there not a prophet of the Lord here whom we can inquire of?

[ 1 : 30 ] The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, there is still one man through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad.

He is Micaiah, son of Ammiah. The king should not say that, Jehoshaphat replied. And so the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, bring Micaiah, son of Ammiah, at once.

Dressed in their royal robes, the kings of Israel and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them.

Now Zedekiah, son of Kinana, had made iron horns, and he declared, this is what the Lord says, with these you will gore the Arameans until you are destroyed, or until they are destroyed.

All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. Attack Ramoth-Gilead and be victorious, they said, for the Lord will give it into the king's hand. The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah, son of Micaiah, said to him, look as one man the other prophets are predicting success for the king.

[ 2 : 48 ] Let your word agree with theirs and speak favorably. But Micaiah said, as surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what the Lord tells me.

When he arrived, the king asked him, Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth-Gilead, or shall I refrain?

Attack and be victorious, he answered, for the Lord will give it into the king's hand. The king said to him, how many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?

Then Micaiah answered, I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd. And the Lord said, these people have no master.

Let each one go home in peace. The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, didn't I tell you that he never prophesied anything good about me, but only bad?

[ 3 : 49 ] Micaiah continued, Micaiah continued, therefore hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the hosts of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left.

And the Lord said, who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth-Gilead and going to his death there? One suggested this and another that. Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the Lord and said, I will entice him.

By what means? The Lord asked. I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets, he said. You will succeed in enticing him, said the Lord.

Go and do it. So now the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The Lord has decreed disaster for you. Then Zedekiah, son of Canaan, went up and slapped Micaiah in the face.

Which way did the spirit from the Lord go when he went from me to speak to you? He asked.

Micaiah replied, you will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room.

[ 4 : 56 ] The king of Israel then ordered, take Micaiah and send him back to Ammon, the ruler of the city, and to Joash, the king's son, and say, this is what the king says. Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.

Micaiah declared, if you ever return safely, the Lord has not spoken through me. Then he added, mark my words, all you people. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, went up to Ramoth Gilead.

The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, I will enter the battle in disguise, but you wear your royal robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle.

Now the king of Aram had ordered his 32 chariot commanders, do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel. When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, surely this is the king of Israel.

And so they turned to attack him. But when Jehoshaphat cried out, the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel and stopped pursuing him. But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor.

[ 6 : 09 ] The king told his chariot driver, wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I've been wounded. All day long, the battle raged and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans.

The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot. And that evening he died. As the sun was setting, a cry spread through the army, every man to his town, everyone to his land.

So the king died and was brought to Samaria and they buried him there. They washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria where the prostitutes bathed and the dogs licked up his blood as the word of the Lord had declared.

Only God writes stories like that. Amen. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

And the reason we know that all things work together for good is because our God upholds and controls all his creatures in all their actions all the time.

[ 7 : 43 ] Ben, if we could have the overhead, we have found that no small part of a Christian's comfort grows out of God's providence. And last week we embarked on a study of this Bible doctrine and we began with the definition.

So read it with me. I'm hoping we can memorize this. It's a very abbreviated definition but it catches the gist of it. Let's read it together. The providence of God.

God upholds and controls all his creatures, all their actions, all the time. And I want you to notice the first seven letters of the word providence.

What does it spell, kids? Provide. You see, God does provide. He upholds all his creatures. He opens his hands and satisfies the desires of every living thing.

He's provided life and breath and everything for you this week. That's the providence of God.

Upholding, providing for, but also controlling. And what is this government, this controlling, this upholding?

[ 8 : 53 ] What's its purpose? That was our second point. What's its aim? And we saw that it was to bring to pass all things according to his plan for them.

The Bible reveals that all things that happen in the world, on the stage of history, were planned, decreed, before the beginning of time.

And it is God who ensures that what he planned comes to pass exactly like he planned it, without exceptions.

He's the God most high who works out everything, everything being worked out in conformity with the purpose of his will.

And so that's the purpose of his providence. It's to bring into pass the things that he has planned.

So this week, some of you found out more of those eternal purposes of God for you, didn't you?

[ 9 : 59 ] Whatever you did this week. That's what was on that eternal purpose, that eternal plan. Nothing that was there that is not brought forth into reality here.

And nothing here that comes into your life, but that he planned it there. And that for his glory and for the good of his people.

And then we saw one application of God's providence. There's dozens, but last week from Psalm 135, we saw that we should praise and worship a God that is this great. If he is so great that he does whatever pleases him in the heavens, on the earth, in the seas, in all their depths, then he is great and greatly to be praised.

Now we come today to the fourth point and it is simply to examine more closely the extent of God's providence. The extent. How far does God's control reach?

What all does it include? Now, we looked last week at Hebrews 1-3 that tells us that the Lord Jesus is upholding all things by his powerful word.

[11:16] It extends to all things. We saw in Psalm 103-19 that the Lord has established his throne in heaven, his kingdom rules over all.

That word, all kids, is a short word, but it has long arms and it gathers into his arms everything that exists.

God's providence is all-inclusive. That's the lesson for today. How far does it reach? It is all-inclusive.

Indeed, Psalm 135 taught us last week that God does as he pleases in the heavens, on the earth, in the sea, in all their depths. That's the universe. That's the way the Bible describes the universe sometimes.

And so it's saying God does whatever he pleases everywhere. Everywhere. Without exception.

R.C. Sproul used to say there's not one maverick molecule in the entire universe out there doing its own thing apart from God's control.

[12:20] Not one atom, not the smallest division of matter doing its own thing. God controls it. And so our definition says that. It's all his creatures, all their actions, all the time.

So we're going to unpack this suitcase called all this morning. I'm glad the Bible doesn't just say all. It does say that. But then it unpacks it and it shows us some of the particular things, some of the specific things that God upholds and controls.

And I say I'm happy that he does that for us because that's where we live. We don't live in generalities. We live in specifics, don't we? And so as we see these specifics, some of the specific things that God controls, it should help us to develop an eye for God's providence that we might see it where it is, where it's operative, how it's acting, that we might stand with greater awe before him and give him the praise and worship that is due to his great name.

greater thankfulness, greater trust. So, the extent of God's providence. It includes things that are living and things that are not living, things without life.

So, we want to look first of all then at things without life, that God controls things without life. Kids, if you say to your dog Fido, come, and he comes, will not be impressed, especially if you have a biscuit in your hand.

[14:02] But if you say to that rock in your backyard, come, and it comes to you, we will be impressed because the rock does not live.

It's not alive. And yet, God's providence extends to non-living things. like rocks. Listen to Psalm 148.

Lightning, none of these things have life. Not as we define life. Lightning, hail, snow, clouds, stormy winds do his bidding.

Now, let's just unpack that. Lightning. You read in the Bible there are some times that God shot great bolts of lightning as arrows with which he scattered his enemies and routed them.

Psalm 18:14. Hail. There was one battle in Israel's history where more soldiers of the enemy died from huge hail stones that God hurled at them from heaven than died by the sword of the Israelites.

[15:09] Israelites. you see, the hail does what God wants. but that's also true when it dings your car and your house.

God's providence. All things, all the time, you see. We've got to accept it all, folks. Snow. There was a time Charles Haddon Spurgeon was invited into the country to preach and just being in the country and the time of year, it was winter and it was starting to snow, he didn't expect to find much there and he confessed that, that his expectations were low, but when he got there, he found this huge barn-like structure and it was just packed with thousands of people.

They had a wonderful service and God blessed and then they went home and three hours later the whole structure collapsed on itself due to the weight of the snow upon the building.

And Spurgeon was giving praise to God for his providence in commanding the snow as to when it should start. Not three hours earlier, they could have all been dead.

But God perfectly planning and governing the snow that is not alive. Clouds, they carry water, don't they, and feed the earth.

[16:31] But sometimes God shuts the clouds off and they drop no rain. Stormy winds that do his bidding. Numbers 11, 31, now a wind went out from the Lord and drove quail in from the sea into the desert to feed two million hungry Israelites.

A wind. God sent that wind to drive the quail to feed his people in the wilderness. But another time the stormy wind smashed the house where Job's ten kids were feasting and killed them all.

God's providence. water. Water's not alive but God controls it. And one time he divided it, didn't he? He made it congeal like jello.

It turns hard and it stood up like walls so that his people could pass through the Red Sea. Another time he caused water to come forth from a rock so Israel could drink in a dry desert.

Another time he turned it into blood so the Egyptians could not drink it. Another time he caused so much water to come upon the earth that it killed everyone, flooded the whole planet and killed everybody but eight people.

[17:50] No one is family. God's providence. Water is under his control. Even that water that floods your basement. God's providence.

When God visited us in the person of Jesus Christ, his eternal son, he walked on it. He commanded its waves to be quiet and to be still.

Take rocks. They're not living. Mountains. They're just big rocks. Volcanoes, earthquakes.

Job 9, 5, he moves mountains and overturns them. He shakes the earth and it trembles.

Iron axe heads. Usually his providence has them sink, but you know that one time he made an axe head swim. It's not alive, but it swam. You read it in the Bible.

[18:55] The sun, he speaks to the sun, Job 9, and it does not shine. Now usually it shines because of his providence, but there was a time, there were many times when it, in answer to God's voice, the sun knew the voice, the language of God and obeyed.

It did his bidding and it did not shine. Another time, God made it stand still. Each night he brings out the stars, those massive balls in the sky, the lights that God has given us.

They were glorious last night and he calls them out each night, one by one, each by name, because of his great power and mighty strength, not one is missing.

And sometimes he even has a star lead some wise men to see the baby king that had been born. to save us. God causing non-living things to do whatever he wants because they're all under his control everywhere and always.

[20:07] But then there's every living thing and I'm not sure if that's easier or harder to control because living things have a mind of their own and yet God controls them as well.

No problem for him. There's a couple, many different kinds of living things but let's consider non-human life and then we'll get to human life. So living things that are not humans like animals and insects.

You can remember the ten plagues can't you kids? And there we saw living flies and gnats and locusts and frogs doing exactly what God wanted.

He controlled where they went, who they bugged, and when they left. They did his will. They did his bidding. He controls angels.

They're his servants who do his will. Psalm 103. He controls demons. We just saw it in the scripture reading. He sent a lying spirit to be a lying spirit in the mouths of the prophets to lure Ahab into battle where he would be killed.

[21:21] God's in charge of demons. The devil himself can't touch Job unless God says it. God decrees it.

God in providence sends him. Yes, devils, demons, and even donkeys. Usually they bray, but he did make one speak one time, didn't he?

Just again showing his control over the animal kingdom. Remember what he did with the lions. He shut their mouths so as to not eat Daniel.

They were hungry. You say, how do you know they were hungry, pastor? Because as soon as they threw Daniel's enemies in, they devoured them before they hit the ground. God controls. He shuts their mouths and he opens them.

They're animals. But they obey the will of the God of providence. Think of all the non-human things that God is said to control in the little book of Jonah.

[ 22 : 26 ] I give this as an example because you're familiar with the story. So Jonah is sent to Nineveh. Instead he gets a boat to Tarshish. And then we read, God sent a great wind on the sea and it whipped up a violent storm to hunt down his runaway prophet.

And when the sailors chucked him overboard into the sea and he began to sink, God, it says, prepared a great fish and he sent it on a deep sea mission of mercy to swallow his drowning prophet.

And he did. And then three days later God commanded that fish to vomit Joseph or Jonah. Did I say Joseph? Jonah up on dry land. And again the great fish did the bidding of the God of providence.

And then God provided a vine to grow up as Jonah made his way to Nineveh. And he's sitting outside to see if God's judgment is going to fall on the city.

And it's hot. And God provided a vine to grow up over Jonah and shield him from the sun. And Jonah was happy about that. And then the same God is said to have provided.

[ 23 : 40 ] Again, that's our word, providence. God provided a worm to enter into the root of that vine and so that it withered and his umbrella was gone and Jonah was not happy.

And then God prepared a scorching east wind so that it would not only be the scorching sun but a scorching wind bringing in hot air from the desert to make Jonah grow faint.

All of these things, God showing his control over non-living things and then yes, even the worm, the vine, the great fish as well. But then we come to what is often the troublesome thing.

God's providence extends to human life human beings, boys and girls, men and women, God controls. Again, many balk at this doctrine but the Bible could not be plainer.

Let me just give you a few texts. Daniel 4:35, this sovereign Lord in heaven does as he pleases with the powers of heaven, the angels, the demons, but also with the peoples of the earth.

[ 24 : 54 ] God's providence includes the actions of good men and bad men.

Now, usually we have no problem with God's control over the actions of good men. It's usually the wicked men and their actions that we don't like to think of this God having control and governing. But Proverbs 16:4, nonetheless, hits us like a rolling pin and starts stretching our view of God a little bigger than our puny minds have made him.

and it says the Lord works out everything for his own ends, even the wicked for a day of disaster. He works out everything including the wicked for a day of disaster that he has planned and he brings on the stage of history.

Men like Nebuchadnezzar, men like Pharaoh, men like Judas, men like Pilate and Herod and Nero and Hitler, all to do what he had planned from all eternity.

[ 26 : 13 ] Everything for his own ends to bring to pass his ends, even the wicked for a day of disaster. But never as the author of sin, never as the one who makes them sin as being the author of it or as removing their responsibility.

And if you don't understand that, you'll have to ask God how he does that. but both small and great men. He brings princes to naught.

He reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. Think what he did to Nebuchadnezzar, great king of the whole empire. He made him graze like cattle, eating grass.

Psalms 75, 7, God is the judge. He brings down one and exalts another. Did you read about any men in any country of the world this week where one leader, he's demoted, he's no longer leading, and maybe somebody else took their place.

There's always some election and some contested election going, that's God's providence. He's putting one down and he's bringing up another. He's going to do it here if the Lord carries another year in November.

[ 27 : 35 ] But not just the kings and the great somebodies of the world, the small insignificant people. You know, God saves some of them, poor in things, but rich in faith, and he makes them his children.

He raises the poor from the dust, and he lifts the needy from the ash heap, and he seats them with princes, with the princes of his people, and he settles the barren woman in her home as the happy mother of children.

This is our God. There's a housewife, nobody knows her, nobody knows her tears and her problem, but God does, and he gives her a child. God's providence over the great, over the small.

He can change a king's mind without destroying the man's own will. Proverbs 21.1, the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, and he directs it like a water course wherever he pleases.

Now, just think for a moment of God directing the king however he pleases to do whatever God wants. He says it's like a farmer, and he's got a spring and a pond full of water, but his crops are over here, so what does he do?

[ 28 : 57 ] Well, he gets a shovel and he starts digging a little trench to bring the water over to where his plants are. That's the way God changes the heart of a king.

Just that he directs it, directs it like the water, wherever he wants it to go. That involves the king's thoughts, that involves the king's desires, the king's will, the king's choices, the king's decisions.

Amazing. What our God controls? He controls all of men's plans. You made any recently? Plans? Proverbs 16, 9, In his heart, a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

So here are you, and you make your plans, but they don't always go as planned, but they always go as God planned. You plan, and God directs your steps.

always, all the time. It's happening when your plans come to fruition and when they are thwarted.

And so the Lord thwarted King Herod's plan to kill baby Jesus, didn't he?

[ 30 : 11 ] But in so doing, he fulfilled his own plan to get him into Egypt so that Hosea 11, 1 would be fulfilled, that out of Egypt I have called my son. Well, Pharaoh's plan was clear as he's chasing the Israelites into the Red Sea.

Exodus 15, we get to hear Pharaoh's plan. I will pursue, I will overtake, I will destroy. And God says, oh no you won't, I'm in control here.

And he caused their chariot wheels to go sluggish and get stuck. And once God's people were all through, he closed up the waters on them and they sank like lead to the bottom.

He frustrates Pharaoh's plan and fulfills his own because many, Proverbs 19, 21, many are the plans in a man's heart, but it's the Lord's purpose that prevails.

Always in all things. What else does God's providence control? Well, it controls every person's birthday and death day.

[ 31 : 23 ] All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

And so therefore, by his providence, he brings to pass what he put in the book for you, for me, for little Job, just 17 weeks.

No one can exceed the limits that God has sent. And God's providence brings it about in his purpose. He's in control of your good health, your sickness, your diseases.

In the Bible, it's interesting, we find God striking some with leprosy while healing others of leprosy.

We find him striking some with blindness and healing others with blindness.

he's in control of these things. He controls people's finances, blessing the works of some people's hands and not so much the hands of other men.

He blessed the work of Job's hand, but in one day he lost it all, providence, in bringing him to wealth and in emptying him of his wealth.

[ 32 : 36 ] he's in control over prosperity and disaster. He feeds the planet. Did you eat this week? You ate because providence was active in your life.

Acts 14, 17, God has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons.

He provides you with plenty of food. He provides providence, provide dense.

He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy. He's in control of the outcome of wars. Sometimes the Lord was fighting for Israel and it didn't matter how bad they were outnumbered, they always won.

Other times God was fighting against Israel and handed them over to their enemies. God determines the outcome of wars, our wars as well.

Remember, it's all, all, all. Beware of an exception, exception, exception. Some, some, some, some view of providence.

[ 33 : 37 ] It's not what the Bible's teaching us. It's not just over big things like global floods and destinies of nations. It's also over insignificant things. Jesus said, are not two sparrows sold for a penny?

And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your father. And your hairs,

they're all numbered as well. Not one of them will fall to the ground when without your father's will.

Little things. What's what's smaller than the fall of the dice when it's thrown? Proverbs 16, 33, the lot is cast into the lap.

But it's every decision is from the Lord. Every time you roll the dice, it's from the Lord. And yes, he has secondary means and laws of probability and things that he works so consistently in this world by his providence that things turn out a certain way.

And yes, we can even predict certain things. But it's never chance. It's always ordered by the God of providence. And sometimes very large things hinge on very little things.

[ 34 : 51 ] And we'll see that as we proceed. God's providence extends over even those things that appear to be chance. And that's I don't have time to say much, but we read it in 1 Kings 22.

King Ahab, the word of God's been pronounced. You're going to die. And he tries to dodge God's judgment. And he goes into disguise mode and puts on armor and dresses up the king, lets the king of Israel go out in his royal robes and all the chariots take off after him.

But one enemy guy just takes a bow and an arrow and lets her fly towards the general area of the enemy. And it wasn't a lucky shot.

It was a providential missile that God directed right between the chinks in his armor. Have you thought about all that God had to be in control to get it to its mark?

just where the man was standing, where King Ahab and his chariot were going, how fast they were going, how he was positioned in the chariot, how smooth the arrow had been polished, how true it flew, the strength of the wind to carry it one way or another, and off it goes.

[ 36 : 20 ] And it's like a laser missile. It's God's providence. God had a word to be fulfilled. And it found the chink in his armor.

And God's word was fulfilled even down to the dogs licking up his blood. That too had been determined. And God brought it to pass. He saw to it that the chariot with his blood in the floor got to that place where dogs would lick it up.

Such a story tells us God is over all things. Even those things that appear to be chance. You can see hundreds of specific examples as you read your Bible.

And as I said, there's no stories so glorious as these that are found in our Bibles. They're truth. They're historical fact. So God's providence extends to all his creatures, all their actions.

But we also want to just pause for a moment and see that it's all the time. All the time. It's not a sporadic control.

[ 37 : 29 ] It's not like every once in a while God gets involved in his world and does something spectacular or does something at all. Usually he's just kind of wound up.

That's deism. Wound up. The universe just lets it go. And then every now and then he intervenes and does something. That's not the providence of God in the Bible. Not at all. No, there's never a moment when his powerful word is not upholding.

His power is not controlling and directing all things. He never takes a vacation. He never slumbers or sleeps. He never relaxes his grip on the controls.

He never lets go of the steering wheel. He never suspends his providence. It is active 24-7. Not just in your life but over everything.

All the time. Just two lessons from that and we're done. The first is this. That God's providence is at work not only when the miraculous extraordinary things happen but also on the most ordinary humdrum days of our lives.

[ 38 : 33 ] Sometimes people exclaim about an event in their life, Pastor, Pastor, it was providential. And of course it was. Because everything's providential.

That's the point. Everything is providential. that truth was known by Dr. John Witherspoon. He was one of the signers of our Declaration of Independence and was also president of the College of New Jersey, which is now Princeton.

He lived a couple miles away from the college at Rocky Hill and drove a horse and rig each morning to his office. One day one of his neighbors burst into his office saying, Dr. Witherspoon, you must join me in giving thanks to God for his extraordinary providence in saving my life.

For as I was driving from Rocky Hill, the horse ran away and the buggy was smashed to pieces on the rocks, but I escaped unharmed. And Witherspoon calmly replied, why, I can tell you a far more remarkable providence than that.

I've driven over that same road hundreds of times. My horse never ran away, my buggy never was smashed, and I was never hurt. You see, it was as much providence that kept Mr.

[ 39 : 51 ] Witherspoon safe all those days from any incident as it was God's providence to spare his neighbor when his horse flew and his buggy was smashed.

God's providence covers your safety every time you get into the car, every time you go anywhere. It's God's providence that keeps you safe. Just as much as his providence is active when you have a close call and you're made aware of, oh, there is a God in the universe and he just protected me. I'm aware of it. He's protecting you every day and unless we see his invisible hand of providence, we won't give him the praise and the thanks like we ought. One of the reasons we often miss God's providence in our lives is simply because it's so ordinary, so regular, so consistent.

We need to understand that most often God's providence makes use of ordinary means, secondary causes, natural causes, natural laws. So kids, why do you thank God for your food?

[ 41 : 03 ] food? How does God's providence usually feed you? How does he get food on your table, kids? Is it that you all sit down at the table and it's empty and you bow your head and you close your eyes and you thank God for the food and then when you open your eyes, there's food on the table.

You say it doesn't happen. If it does happen that way, please invite me for supper. But that's not the way it usually happens. You know how it usually happens. Dad goes to work or mom goes to work. They both go to work. They make money and they take that money and they go to the store and they buy some food. Well, how'd the food get there? You know, produce doesn't grow in the store. Well, somebody trucked it there. Where'd they get it? Probably at an airport. Maybe melons from Mexico and bananas from Honduras. Oh, well, how'd it get to the airport?

How'd it get on? Somebody on the other side of the world even might have trucked it to the airport. Well, where'd they get it? Well, somewhere there on the mountains of Honduras. There's a farmer.

[ 42 : 13 ] He's got a bunch of trees. trees. And God rains on his trees and makes the sunshine ripen them. And then at just the right time he picks them and ships them off and on it goes till it comes back to the grocery store and your mom and dad buy it and bring it home and mom fixes it.

And God provided it. That's what the Bible says over and over again. God provides you with food. Now, he uses secondary means, but don't lose sight of him because of the secondary means he uses.

That's something that we fall into that trap. We only see the man. We only see the person. And we fail to see the God who sends his word and the rain falls and it waters the earth and gives food to the eater.

Yes, our most ordinary days are as much the providence of God as our extraordinary days. You know, there were days when God didn't use those kind of means to bring food to the table.

For the children of Israel, 40 years in the desert, he provided fresh bread every morning, didn't they, except for one day of the week. Without them sowing and reaping, just down it came.

[ 43 : 42 ] Without means. So God does not need to use means. Sometimes he does. Most of the time he does. But however God gets the food to your table, it's his providence.

It is as much the providence of God. You know, when they got into the promised land, the bread quit arriving because now it came to their tables through sowing and reaping, harvesting, baking bread.

But it is no more the providence of God when he makes the bread fall from heaven than when he makes it come up out of the ground. God's providence. We need to develop the eye for the ordinary that he might be praised.

The second lesson is that God's work, God's providence is at work not only when good is the result but also when evil and bad is the result. I don't have time for that point today.

We'll have to return to it. But I do want to return to Romans 8.28 because the only way that all things work together for good is if God works them together for good.

[ 44 : 53 ] They don't work out for good on their own. There's not some power in things to put themselves right. Evil is afoot in the world and things go wrong.

Yet some people cherish Romans 8.28 as their life verse and yet they would deny what the Bible teaches about God's providence. That's the very reason Romans 8.28 works.

It's because God's in control of all things that all things, in all things, he's able to work it together for the good of his people. Let me close with a story.

There's a made up story. There is a ship and it's called the Good Ship Providence.

It's a big ship. It's loaded with cargo, like comfort, like encouragement. And it heads out to sea and it comes upon a sandbar and beneath the surface they don't see it.

[ 46 : 05 ] There's an old rudder there that another ship that passed these waters earlier had dug bottom and broke off and sure enough that rudder pokes a hole in the ship.

Nobody hears it, nobody sees it. And they're miles into the depths of the sea, on out into the depths. And it's starting to fill.

It's just a small hole but it just keeps filling. And eventually that ship is, she's listing. She's going down deep in the water. She's in danger now but it's too late for anybody to dive down and fix it in the hull and sure enough the good ship Providence goes down.

And with it goes all of her cargo, her comfort, her encouragement. The Bible's teaching on Providence is that God upholds and controls all his creatures all the time, all their actions all the time.

Men want to shave that down. And if you make one exception to it, it's like that one little hole in the ship. And your ship's going to crash and all your comfort's going to go down the tubes with it.

[ 47 : 26 ] Because you see, if there's just one thing that God is not sovereign over and does not reign over, then when I get into my fears and my troubles, I'll wonder, is this it?

I have no comfort. Even if it's just one exception. I've seen exceptional things happen, folks, and maybe I'm the one that's going to, yes, lightning doesn't strike people very often, but it does, and maybe I'm one of those.

You see, there's no comfort. So, folks that would like to say, God's Providence reaches over, yeah, the weather will give him that.

Yeah, we'll give him the animals. But surely not men, or surely not bad men, surely not trouble, bad things. Romans 8, 28 is no longer true.

We know that all things work together for good because he controls all things. And apart from that, we have no comfort. I don't know about you, but it is the bad stuff that bothers me.

[ 48 : 33 ] I don't have any trouble with the good guys. No, it's the bad guys. It's those guys that are developing missiles that can reach my house. It's those super viruses and super bacteria that are developing that could wipe us all out like a...

It's the bad stuff that gives us heartache. And this is the glorious truth of the scriptures, that God controls it all. And there's a pillow for every tried saint to lay his head on.

There's a pillow to give peace in the midst of the storm. That my God is the God most high who fulfills his purpose for me. So while providence supports, let saints securely dwell.

That hand that bears all nature up will guide his children well. If you're not one of his children, I pity you. This God is not your God.

And he's not working all things together for your good. But you know, his providence has reached to you. He's given you breath today. He's gave you strength in your body.

[ 49 : 47 ] He's got you here. And Jesus is offering himself to you. You're a sinner. You've sinned against God. This kind God of providence who feeds you and blesses you every day of your life.

And you've said, no, thank you. I don't want him. And you've gone your own way. Oh, that's offensive to God. And yet he sent his son to die for the likes of us sinners.

And Jesus, through his preachers, is now saying, come to me. Bring all your sins with you. Lay it all down at my feet. Trust in me for the forgiveness of sins.

Turn from your way. Come and receive me and pardon in my name. God's providence has brought you. Will this be the day that you begin to live? Let's pray.

We thank you, Father, for every promise in the book. We thank you for Romans 8, 28, that assures us that all things are working together for the good of your people.

[ 50 : 57 ] And that because God is at work in all things. Thank you that we can rest in such a God. You are so great.

Let's stretch our puny thoughts of you. We repent of them. We confess them. We've not thought of you as the great God that you are. And we ask you to fill us with a sense of your greatness.

That we might delight in you, even in our hardest times. And draw those that are lost to come to the Savior and to know this sweet peace, that it is well.

all is well. That Jesus does all things well. We ask in His name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.