

Divine Providence

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Introduction

How does one define providence? No single Hebrew or Greek word expresses the idea of God's providence.

The Greek word *pronoia*, describing God's purposeful foresight, was frequently used by the ancients, but occurs only 2x in the NT, denoting not God's care, but man's (Acts 24:2; Rom. 13:14).

- Thomas defines πρόνοια [pronoia] as from *prnoeō* [to foresee], meaning “foresight, forethought” [4307].
- BDAG say it refers to “thoughtful planning to meet a need, forethought, foresight, providence; (a) of God especially with reference to divine beneficence; (b) of humans.”

*Acts 24:1-5 (NASB95) — 1 After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with an attorney named Tertullus, and they brought charges to the governor against Paul. 2 After Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying to the governor, “Since we have through you attained much peace, and since by your *providence reforms are being carried out for this nation, 3 we acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 “But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing. 5 “For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.*

*Romans 13:13-14 (NASB95) — 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no *provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*

The root verb *prnoeō*, used by Philo, Josephus and others to describe divine foresight, is also used in Scripture – but only of man, although in certain instances, such men were divinely-empowered (Acts 2:25, 31; 21:29; Gal. 3:8).

- Thomas defines προνοέω [prnoeō], a compound of *pro* [before] and *horaō* [to see, perceive, attend to], meaning “to foresee” [4306].
- BDAG say it means “(1) to see in advance, foresee, with an eye to the future; (2) to see at a time prior to the present, see previously; (3) in the middle voice, to have before one's eyes, see before one.”

*Acts 2:25 (NASB95) — 25 “For David says of Him, ‘I *saw the Lord always in my presence; For He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken.*

*Acts 2:31 (NASB95) — 31 he *looked *ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.*

*Acts 21:29 (NASB95) — 29 For they *had *previously *seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.*

*Galatians 3:8 (NASB95) — 8 The Scripture, *foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations will be blessed in you.”*

Definition

Divine providence is often assumed rather than asserted in Scripture, being implied or inferred in many passages. Whenever God’s plan and purpose are pronounced, when deliverance is discussed, when prayer is prescribed, the concept of providence hovers in the background.

Providence is the ongoing activity of a benevolent Creator in upholding His creation in ordered existence. Guiding events and governing circumstances, He constantly works toward His desired goals. Employing Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Omnipresence, God provides and protects, punishes and penalizes, promotes and pursues His eternal purpose. Yet, all the while, He respects the free moral agency of mankind, holding us each accountable for our individual choices.

Distortions

Pantheism absorbs the world into God. Deism cuts it off from Him. Dualism divides control between God and another power. Indeterminism affirms the world is under no control. Determinism imposes a control that destroys man’s moral responsibility. Chance denies this controlling power to be rational. Fate denies it to be benevolent.

- Pantheism affirms that everything is God and God is everything. “God is all and all is God.” This view both diminishes God, and deifies nature.
- Deism views God as an “absentee landlord” who is too remote to be involved in the day-to-day events of His creation.
- Dualism proposes two gods, one good and one evil. Attempting to avoid imputing evil to the Lord, this philosophy diminishes Jehovah, robbing Him of His uniqueness, and exalts Satan, making him far more powerful than he really is. (Zoroastrianism)
- Indeterminism is the concept that events are not deterministically caused by prior events or outside forces. In other words, there is no guiding force in the universe. (Materialism)
- Determinism is the philosophical view which affirms that every type of event, including human behavior (thoughts, words, deeds, etc.) is causally determined by previous events. In other words, the guiding force in the universe (God) is absolutely sovereign, and everything happens because of Him. (Calvinism)

- Chance is a philosophy, closely akin to indeterminism, which affirms that life is unpredictable, impersonal, and purposeless.
- Fate affirms that events are outside a person's control, predetermined by supernatural powers. In Greek and Roman mythology, the Fates, (i.e., the goddesses Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos) preside over the birth and life of humans.

Providence in the Natural Realm

God is good, blessing both man and beast (Psa. 104:24-30).

Psalm 104:24-30 (NASB95) — 24 O Lord, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions. 25 There is the sea, great and broad, In which are swarms without number, Animals both small and great. 26 There the ships move along, And Leviathan, which You have formed to sport in it. 27 They all wait for You To give them their food in due season. 28 You give to them, they gather it up; You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good. 29 You hide Your face, they are dismayed; You take away their spirit, they expire And return to their dust. 30 You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the ground.

He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous (Matt. 5:42-45).

Matthew 5:42-45 (NASB95) — 42 “Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. 43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

He provides for the birds of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:25-33).

Matthew 6:25-33 (NASB95) — 25 “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 “Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? 27 “And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? 28 “And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! 31 “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ 32 “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Christ the Creator is before all things and through Him all things hold together (Col. 1:16-18).

Colossians 1:16-18 (NASB95) — 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

The Son of God made the world, and upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:1-4).

Hebrews 1:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

Providence in the Spiritual Realm

Messianic prophecies foreshadowed the coming of Christ (Gen. 3:15; 12:1-3; 49:8-10; 2 Sam. 7:8-17).

Genesis 3:15 (NASB95) — 15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Genesis 12:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Genesis 49:8-10 (NASB95) — 8 “Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father’s sons shall bow down to you. 9 “Judah is a lion’s whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up? 10 “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

2 Samuel 7:8-17 (NASB95) — 8 “Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. 9 “I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. 10 “I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, 11 even from the

day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The Lord also declares to you that the Lord will make a house for you. 12 “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, 15 but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.” ’ ’ 17 In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

In the fulness of time, God sent forth His Son to fulfill his promise of redemption (Gal. 4:4-5; cf. Mark 1:14-15).

Galatians 4:4-5 (NASB95) — 4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Mark 1:14-15 (NASB95) — 14 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

God’s eternal plan and purpose were accomplished, at least in part, through the agency of sinful men (John 11:47-53; Acts 2:22-36; 3:17-26; 4:23-31).

John 11:47-53 (NASB95) — 47 Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. 48 “If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.” 51 Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. 53 So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

Acts 2:22-36 (NASB95) — 22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— 23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 “But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. 25 “For David says of Him, ‘I saw the Lord always in my presence; For He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. 26 ‘Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; Moreover my flesh also will live in hope; 27 Because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, Nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. 28 ‘You have made known to me the

ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.’ 29 “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 “And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. 32 “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 33 “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. 34 “For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, 35 Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” ’ 36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Acts 3:17-26 (NASB95) — 17 “And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18 “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. 22 “Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. 23 ‘And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ 24 “And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. 25 “It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ 26 “For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

Acts 4:23-31 (NASB95) — 23 When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, “O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, And the peoples devise futile things? 26 ‘The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.’ 27 “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. 29 “And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, 30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

God's ability to work through the malicious intentions of men to accomplish His benevolent purposes is well-illustrated in the example of Joseph (Gen. 37:18-36; 50:15-21).

Genesis 37:18-36 (NASB95) — 18 When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. 19 They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer! 20 "Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!" 21 But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, "Let us not take his life." 22 Reuben further said to them, "Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father. 23 So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; 24 and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it. 25 Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt. 26 Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? 27 "Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. 28 Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt. 29 Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments. 30 He returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?" 31 So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood; 32 and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, "We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not." 33 Then he examined it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!" 34 So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. 35 Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him. 36 Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.

Genesis 50:15-21 (NASB95) — 15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!" 16 So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father charged before he died, saying, 17 'Thus you shall say to Joseph, "Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong." ' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18 Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? 20 "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. 21 "So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Providence in the Political Realm

God changes the times and the epochs, removing kings and also establishing kings (Dan. 2:19-23).

Daniel 2:19-23 (NASB95) — 19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; 20 Daniel said, “Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. 21 “It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. 22 “It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him. 23 “To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, For You have made known to us the king’s matter.”

The Most High rules over the realm of mankind, bestowing it on whom He wishes, setting over it the lowliest of men (Dan. 4:13-17).

Daniel 4:13-17 (NASB95) — 13 ‘I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven. 14 ‘He shouted out and spoke as follows: “Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit; Let the beasts flee from under it And the birds from its branches. 15 “Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, But with a band of iron and bronze around it In the new grass of the field; And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth. 16 “Let his mind be changed from that of a man And let a beast’s mind be given to him, And let seven periods of time pass over him. 17 “This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers And the decision is a command of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes And sets over it the lowliest of men.”

The Lord made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation (Acts 17:24-28).

Acts 17:24-28 (NASB95) — 24 “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’

Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, strikes down the nations, ruling them with a rod of iron, treading the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty (Rev. 19:11-18).

Revelation 19:11-18 (NASB95) — 11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” 17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.”

Providence in the Personal Realm

God provides for our physical needs (Matt. 6:11; Heb. 13:5-6).

Matthew 6:11 (NASB95) — 11 ‘Give us this day our daily bread.

Hebrews 13:5-6 (NASB95) — 5 Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,” 6 so that we confidently say, “The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?”

He provides for our spiritual needs (Matt. 6:12; 1 Pet. 3:10-12).

Matthew 6:12 (NASB95) — 12 ‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

1 Peter 3:10-12 (NASB95) — 10 For, “The one who desires life, to love and see good days, Must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. 11 “He must turn away from evil and do good; He must seek peace and pursue it. 12 “For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, And His ears attend to their prayer, But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

He provides for our spiritual deliverance (Matt. 6:13; 1 Cor. 10:13).

Matthew 6:13 (NASB95) — 13 ‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]’

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB95) — 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Qualifications

Divine providence is no guarantee against hardship or hunger (Deut. 8:2-3).

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 (NASB95) — 2 “You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3 “He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.

Divine providence is no guarantee against sickness or suffering (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 (NASB95) — 7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Divine Providence is no guarantee against persecution or peril (Rom. 8:28-39).

Romans 8:28-39 (NASB95) — 28 And 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. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, “For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Divine providence is a reality; yet, we must exercise caution in our expectations (Rom. 1:8-10; 15:30-33).

Romans 1:8-10 (NASB95) — 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. 9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, 10 always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

Romans 15:30-33 (NASB95) — 30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, 31 that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; 32 so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

We must also exercise caution in our assertions (Esth. 4:9-14; Phile. 10-16).

Esther 4:9-14 (NASB95) — 9 Hathach came back and related Mordecai's words to Esther. 10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and ordered him to reply to Mordecai: 11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live. And I have not been summoned to come to the king for these thirty days." 12 They related Esther's words to Mordecai. 13 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews. 14 "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"

Philemon 10-16 (NASB95) — 10 I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, 11 who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. 12 I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart, 13 whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel; 14 but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will. 15 For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever, 16 no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Conclusion

Divine providence does not remove human accountability (Matt. 18:7; Luke 22:21-22).

Matthew 18:7 (NASB95) — 7 "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!

Luke 22:21-22 (NASB95) — 21 “But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table. 22 “For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!”

Nor does it negate our responsibility (Acts 2:37-41; 3:17-21). Therefore, obey the gospel while there is time and opportunity.

Acts 2:37-41 (NASB95) — 37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” 38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” 40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!” 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

Acts 3:17-21 (NASB95) — 17 “And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18 “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.