

Grace Guide

Esther Lesson 1

Providence

I was introduced to theatre back in 2010. I had seen plays and musicals before, but I watched them in the same way I watched movies. I was simply there to enjoy the final product. The thought that months of painstaking preparation had gone into these performances never crossed my mind...until 2010; when I was introduced to theatre.

Our pastor in Idaho had majored in theatre before going to seminary and it was a tremendous passion of his. In 2010 he started a church-sponsored theatre group as an outreach tool. It was a great success, but along the way I got pulled into the process. It was only then that I began to realize that dozens of people don't just show up and **do** a musical. There are costume designers, there are stage designers, there are audio/visual people, there are choreographers, there are stage-hands, there is a director....oh yeah, there's also actors and actresses.

Perhaps the most underappreciated people (at least in my mind) are the stage hands. They have to know the script just as well as the actors so that they can open curtains, close curtains, switch sets, move props, etc. They are the ultimate behind-the-scenes people. They are constantly looking ahead to what happens next so that they can make provision and allow the show to go on. I share that with you to get you to consider what happens "behind the scenes." While you won't see the name of God mentioned in this book, it is impossible to read through it and not consider the work that He is doing in the background.

I've never been one for acting, but I have wondered if those who are lighting it up on the stage with every performance are anxious as to whether or not the behind-the-scenes people will come through in the way that they are supposed to. As we live day in and day out, trusting in God's providence frees us up from having to worry about what MIGHT come because He's already there.

The word "**providence**" is found only once in the Bible, a usage which refers to human providence ([Acts 24:2](#)), and yet, **Divine Providence** permeates the pages of Scripture all the way from Genesis to Revelation. This great truth ought to elicit from all God's children a shout of "Hallelujah! Our God Reigns!" Indeed, a healthy understanding of God's providences should produce praise from His people, for as John Piper rightly said...

**In all the setbacks of your life as a believer,
God is plotting for your joy.**

William Graham MacDonald observes that **providence** is...

*God's activity throughout history in providing for the needs of human beings, especially those who follow Him in faith. **Providence** occurs because God cares about the universe and everyone in it. All through the centuries of human existence there have been those who took great comfort in the fact of providence. It means realizing at certain places in life that God has been there before. It is the evidence that God has not left this planet alone in the vast universe or forgotten for a moment the human situation. God visits, touches, communicates, controls, and intervenes, coming before and between man and his needs. Providence is ground for thankfulness.*

Ray Pritchard writes that **providence** is...

“God’s gracious oversight of the universe.” Every one of those words is important. God’s providence is one aspect of his grace. Oversight means that he directs the course of affairs. The word universe tells us that God not only knows the big picture, he also concerns himself with the tiniest details. Here are five statements that unfold the meaning of God’s providence in more detail.

He upholds all things.

He governs all events.

He directs everything to its appointed end.

He does this all the time and in every circumstance.

He does it always for his own glory.

The **doctrine of God’s providence** teaches us several important truths: **First**, God cares about the tiniest details of life. Nothing escapes His notice for He is concerned about the small as well as the big. In fact, with God there is no big or small. He knows when a sparrow falls, and he numbers the hairs on your head. He keeps track of the stars in the skies and the rivers that flow to the oceans. He sets the day of your birth, the day of your death, and he ordains everything that comes to pass in between. **Second**, he uses everything and wastes nothing. There are no accidents with God, only incidents. This includes events that seem to us to be senseless tragedies. **Third**, God’s ultimate purpose is to shape His children into the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). He often uses difficult moments and human tragedies to accomplish that purpose. Many verses in the Bible teach these truths, including Acts 17:28 (“in him we live and move and have our being”), Colossians 1:17 (“in him all things hold together”), Hebrews 1:3 (“sustaining all things by his powerful word”), Proverbs 16:9 (“in his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.”), and especially Psalms 115:3 (“Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him”).

In the words of R. C. Sproul, “God doesn’t roll dice.” Nothing happens by chance. Ever.

One thing I believe you’ll hear me say more and more during this study is the phrase “...at just the right moment.” All of these things we read about in the book of Esther happen at “just the right moment” and “just the right way” so that the *right* people would be in the *right* place and in the end everything would come out the way God had ordained in the beginning. God never violated anyone’s free will, yet everything happened as he had planned. That’s the providence of God in action.

Clear as mud? I thought so.

Discuss how you’ve seen God’s providence in your own life.

How have you seen, or perhaps, how are you seeing the truth of Romans 8:28 in your own life?