

THEOLOGY I: Doctrine of Man - Creation and Providence (Part 2)

Session 2 - Dr. Jeremy Kimble

God - Triune - Transcendence - Creator -----	Providence
Incommunicable Attributes	- Preservation
	- Governance (sovereignty)
Immanent	- Freedom
Communicable Attributes	- Compatibilism

*Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the **hope** that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect. 1 Pet 3:14b-15*

THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

- God created all that is in a **purposeful** manner, with man as the **pinnacle** of His creation.
- God is **distinct** from His creation, though He is very **involved** in it.
- The God who has the power to **create** also has the power to **save** (Isa 43:1; 46:4; Col 1:16).
- All things were made by Him and for His **glory**.

BIBLICAL VIEW OF PROVIDENCE

- We must affirm **paradox** in Scripture.
 - God is one. God is three.
 - God is transcendent. God is immanent.
 - Jesus Christ is fully God. Christ is fully man.
 - Jesus is a lion. Jesus is a lamb.
 - We are sinners. We are saints.
 - We should enjoy God through feasting. We should enjoy God through fasting.
 - We should know God accurately with our minds. We should love God deeply with our hearts.
 - We should weep with those who weep. We should rejoice with those who rejoice.
 - God is sovereign over our actions. We are responsible for our actions

- Scripture speaks over and over again of God's purpose: to **glorify Himself**, to **defeat evil**, to **redeem a people** who will give Him eternal praise.
- God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he:
 - keeps them **existing** and **maintaining** the properties with which he created them; (preservation)
 - **cooperates** with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do (concurrence); and
 - **directs** all things to fulfill his purposes. Eph 1:11
- **Preservation**
 - Scripture speaks at least twenty times of God's oversight of creation in the sense of providing for the needs of **animals**, **humans** and even the **land** itself (Ps 36:6-9, 65:9-13; cf. Col 1:17 and Heb 1:3).

Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O Lord. How precious is your steadfast love, O God? The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light. Ps 36:6-9

You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy. Ps 65:9-13

- Preservation can take very **natural forms** (common grace), such as providing the rain (Matt 5:45), the growing of crops (Acts 14:17), even the establishment of civil authority (Rom 13:1-7). It can also take what we regard as **miraculous intervention** (sparing Daniel's friends in the fiery furnace, Dan 3:17, 28-29).

- Preservation does not mean of course that people do not **die**, or even that God's people are not **afflicted**. We do suffer and we often find that God's greatest provision to us in those times of trial is His own **presence** (Rom 8:35-39, Ps 23:4).

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom 8: 38-39

God is not always as interested with getting me out of a hard circumstance as He is in being my sufficient grace and growing me in Christ's likeness.

- God's providential sustenance of this world also means that the creation never becomes **independent** of its creator. On a more positive note, it means that God never **leaves** or **abandons** us (Col 1:17; book of Esther).

- **Governance**

- Scripture also affirms that God providentially works in history, guiding all events to his **intended ends**. His attribute of sovereignty is reflected in the influence His government extends over all areas of life, and all persons, though he has a special care for His own people. He controls the **forces of nature**.

*For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. **Whatever the Lord pleases, he does**, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; who makes the lightning for the rain, who brings forth the wind from His treasuries.* Ps 135:5-7

*I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; **I am the Lord, and there is no other**. I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things.* Isa 45:5-7

- He directs **human history** (Dan 2:21)

*At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, (most powerful man on planet earth) lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and **none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"**" Daniel 4:34-35*

- He even uses **bad acts** for **good purposes** (Acts 2:23, Rom 8:28).

*Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants." Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, **you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good**, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Gen 50:18-21 (Joseph sold into slavery - sinful)*

Isa 10 - God used Assyria as a hammer to come against Israel with. God used them but their pride brought them down.

- Proverbs says humans may plan and scheme, but it is the Lord that controls the **final outcome** (Prov 16:1, 33; 19:21). He can shape hearts and implant thoughts, guiding individuals unknowingly to His purpose for their lives.

If God is willing but not able, He is not omnipotent. If He is able but not willing He is malevolent. (evil) If He's willing and able... Why does evil exist?

David Hume

(Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, historian, economist, librarian and essayist who is best known today for his highly influential system of philosophical empiricism, skepticism, and naturalism).

Simple answer to the problem of evil: To those who know Christ, this slight momentary affliction is preparing for you an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

God and the Problem of Evil

- If God is the author of all, and all is done according to His sovereign plan, is God the author of sin?
 - Many maintain that God somehow ordains the evil acts that sinners do, yet because they do it willingly, God is not the author of it. This is called God working through **secondary causes**, or working **concurrently**. They point to numerous verses that say God indirectly brought about some kind of evil:
 - Gen 50:20, the sin of Joseph's brothers:
 - Ex 9:12, God hardening Pharaoh's heart:
 - Josh 11:20, hardening the hearts of the Canaanites;
 - 2 Sam. 24:1, inciting David to sin by numbering the people (through the agency of Satan, 1 Chron 21:1);
 - Acts 4:27, the action of God and wicked men in the death of Jesus.

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (God's sovereignty ordained), you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men (men are responsible for his death). Acts 2:23

- But in all these cases, God is not **morally culpable**, for he never does morally evil acts.

*For **God is not** tempted by evil, and He Himself doesn't tempt anyone. Js 1:13*

Many of these verses speak of God's **judicial action** (discipline), in sending **chastisement** or **punishment** for previously committed sin.

Others speak of how God marvelously uses sinful acts for **righteous purposes** (Joseph, the death of Christ).

Still, even when God is said to incite David's sin, David sees himself as responsible (2 Sam 24:10), and Paul, in his strongest statement of God's sovereignty (Rom 9:19-21, see also Rom 3:5-6), refuses to allow God's sovereignty to cancel human moral culpability.

- A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology author, minister & theologian, sees a fourfold way in which God relates to evil:
 - **Preventative** (God prevents evil from happening)
 - **Permissive** (God lets evil happen)
 - **Directive** (God directs evil acts to accomplish good ends)
 - **Determinative** (God sets boundaries for evil)

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN FREEDOM

- God is **absolutely** sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions in Scripture to **reduce** human responsibility.
- Human beings are responsible creatures – that is, they choose, they believe, they disobey, they respond, and there is moral significance in their choices; but human responsibility never functions in Scripture to **diminish** God's sovereignty.
- Incompatibilists (i.e. libertarian free will) believe that determination from **outside sources** is incompatible with genuine freedom. This is the freedom to be able to do otherwise.
- Compatibilists (i.e. freedom of inclination) believe that genuine freedom is compatible with God's sovereignty. We are free in that we act according to our **character** and **desires**. (Isa 10:5-19)

Assume you go with Dr. Kimble on a 22 mile bike ride to Young's Dairy to get ice cream. Instead of the normal 30+ flavors, there are only 2.

Do you want Peaches & Cream or Cow Patty? You choose Peaches & Cream but could just as easily have chosen Cow Patty, We're always free to choose otherwise. (*Cow Patty: double dark chocolate loaded with cookie pieces, toffee pieces & chocolate chips*).

Vs... You love chocolate. You choose (desire) chocolate every single time.

Our nature is sinful. That constrains our choices. As a believer you're free to not sin, free to live for Christ, to fight for obedience and godliness.

The Compatibilist version of freedom makes sense in that... I'm free to do what I most want to do in accordance with my character. If you're outside of Christ your desires are sin and sinfulness.

- Libertarian free will is **arbitrary** in that one has to make a choice eventually in the **deliberative** process. Also, if humanity is totally **unconstrained** in their freedom, God cannot know all things future (and He does). Finally, in salvation no one of their own free will chooses God, we need God to call us and make us new (Rom 3:10-18; Eph 2:1-4).
- Our character defines us, we act **freely** according to our **character**. We must have a robust doctrine of sin and understand the ways in which God defines justice (Rom 9:1-29).

THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

- God exercises **meticulous** sovereignty (Deut 32:39; Ps 135:5-6; Isa 45:5-7, Dan 4:34-35; Ro. 9:6-26; Eph 1:11).
- There is **compatibility** between divine sovereignty and human freedom (Gen 45:4-8; 50:20; Isa 10:5-19; Hab 1:6-17; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Rom 9:6-26).
- We possess a freedom of **inclination**, not **indifference** (libertarianism).
- There is an **asymmetrical** divine agency in regard to **good** (causative-directive) and **evil** (indirect-permissive).
- God possesses **compatibilist middle knowledge** (counterfactuals).
God knows all things that would be.
- The glory of God alone is the **ultimate** purpose for **God-world** the relationship.