

# Against All Odds, God's Providence

An essential element in man's relationship with God is *providence*.

## Man's Provision vs. God's

But what exactly does providence mean? Noah Webster described it as the act of *providing* for future use or application. Making provision for the future involves both foresight and timely care.

Can man provide for his own future? Yes, but only in limited ways. To provide for a future contingency, you need to be able to see a ways down the road ahead. To the degree you're able to see clearly, you can make adequate provision, based on what little knowledge or wisdom you may actually have. But that's it. You don't know everything and you don't see everything. Omniscient foresight in this world is reserved for God alone.

You may have heard the proverb "Man proposes, but God disposes." That is true with regard to providence. Man can provide a little ways into the future. In some instances, he may even be able to make an impact that extends beyond his lifetime. But ultimately, only the great Provider — that is, divine Providence, by means of His only-begotten Son, man's Redeemer — can supply all that's needed for all mankind for all time.

## The LORD Who Sees and Provides

We see this vividly illustrated in the record of Abraham's sacrifice in Genesis 22. Obeying God's command, Abraham takes his son Isaac with him to Mount Moriah to offer him up as a burnt offering. As he

raises the knife, the angel of the Lord stops him and affirms Abraham's reverence for God. A ram caught in a thicket behind him is provided as the substitute, and God renews His covenant promises to Abraham.

Genesis 22:14 (AMP):

So Abraham named that place The LORD Will Provide. And it is said to this day, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be seen and provided."

Note the two actions mentioned: *seen* and *provided*. This mirrors realities in life. True provision or providence involves both *foresight* and *care*. Combining the two makes for *preparedness*. God is the quintessential Prepared One.

## The LORD Our Provider

Abraham named the place "The Lord will provide" because the Lord both *saw in advance* what would be needed (a substitute sacrifice), and He also *made provision* for it (where and when it was required). Abraham was prepared in the present, in his heart; the Lord God was prepared in the future, with the plan.

The title "The LORD Will Provide" highlights *God's active foresight in preparing the means of man's redemption*. Abraham didn't have to go out and look for a substitute sacrifice; God made sure it was right there for him. Just look at how this foreshadowed what God would provide by sending His only begotten to die in man's stead.

We can think of "The LORD Will Provide" as *the LORD our Provider*. Another modern equivalent would be *divine Providence*.

As we consider [what God's providence means for man](#), we'll examine two key aspects as they relate to mankind: [eternal providence](#), and [daily providence](#).

## Eternal Providence

First, let's consider [eternal providence](#).

The most unlikely and most improbable of all provisions ever made was God's plan for man's [eternal salvation](#).

Scripture clearly portrays [man's dilemma](#). Man in his lifetime could not repair the breach between himself and God, for his sin nature made him [irredeemable](#) so long as he lived, consigning him ultimately to death.

Psalm 49 makes this very clear.

Psalm 49:7-9:

Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life,

for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice [nothing man himself could do could save him, or anyone else],

that he should live on forever and never see the pit.

Salvation was quite simply unachievable. [The roadblocks to man's redemption included:](#)

- [His heart;](#)
- [His guilt; and](#)
- [His condemnation to death.](#)

Jeremiah 17 laments [man's incurable heart](#).

Jeremiah 17:9:

[The heart is deceitful](#) above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Ecclesiastes 7 highlights [man's unpurgeable guilt](#).

Ecclesiastes 7:20:

Surely there is **not a righteous man on earth** who does good and never sins.

Psalms 49 speaks woefully of *man's condemnation to death*.

Psalms 49:14:

Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; **death shall be their shepherd**, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell.

Yet the next verse affirms that **Providence will step in where no man could**.

Psalms 49:15:

But **God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol**, for he will receive me. Selah

What a merciful and loving God, to have foreseen and taken care of a problem we could not have possibly resolved on our own. How magnanimous our gracious Provider truly is!

## Daily Providence

Second, let's consider **daily providence**. By daily providence, I mean *reliance on divine Providence for our daily needs*.

What is divine Providence?

**People often speak of divine Providence as a reference to God Himself**, and that is not at all incorrect, for **He is the great Provider for His creation**.

The very notion of [providence encompasses all that the Creator does to watch over and care for His creation](#) in all its multi-faceted aspects. He doesn't skip a beat! He is so constantly and absolutely reliable that we can [count on Him to provide everything we will ever need](#), be it past, present or future. He has no limits! He is, was and will be everything we ever need Him to be. Doesn't that put your soul at rest?

Etymologically speaking, providence is derived from the Latin *provideo*, literally, to see before. That alone tells us so much about our God! Man scans the horizon and only sees so far. When God looks out, He sees everything in all dimensions for all time, all at once.

God has His domain and man has his. Man's sphere of influence when it comes to his own life is the present. God is not so limited. Because He inhabits eternity, all time is a single continuum to Him. He sees our past, present and future in a single glance. He knows our future even though we haven't got a clue, at least by our senses.

This has important implications for God's providence. He didn't put creation together haphazardly. When He did it, He knew everything that would ever go right and everything that would ever go wrong. That is why [as Provider-in-Chief, He made sure to provide for every aspect in creation that would ever be needed to right the wrongs and salvage the whole](#).

## Providence and Trust

Let me ask you a personal question. [Do you ever get impatient with God?](#) Be honest, I think all of us have experienced this at one time or another. But perhaps all we need is a change of perspective on God's timing in order to better deal with our human frustrations in this category.

Man, being anchored in the present, tends to see everything from an immediacy viewpoint. You're hungry, and you want food is a good illustration. You just can't wait. You want food, and you want it RIGHT NOW. *I'm hangry!*

Now think for a moment about God's viewpoint on this matter. Did God know that you were going to be hungry at a certain point in the day today? Of course He did. He knew long before you felt those hunger pangs. When your stomach first began to growl, you were thinking that this feeling was a fresh stimulus, when in reality, your body was just catching up with a situation that God already knew would develop before it ever caught your gut's attention.

It's the same thing with any temporal need you may have. Because you're experiencing it in the now, the temptation is to think that God just needs to catch up with the circumstances and pay closer attention. But think how illogical this reasoning is. In reality, God knew this need would arise in your life long before you ever did. So who's really the one who needs to get clued in? You! And when you do, you'll realize that God may have already been working on a solution to your issue way before you ever lifted your voice in prayer to Him about it.

Why can't we just do our job and let God do His? Why not admit that He can do a far better job of supplying our needs than any senses plan we can devise, having the all-knowing ability to anticipate situations long before they ever arise? And not only that, with His foresight into the future He perceives all eventual outcomes in such a way as to be able to structure the perfect sequence of events that will facilitate the realization of your desired end. Try that with an imperfect knowledge of the future like ours!

So then, to enjoy the abundant provision of God's providence for your daily needs, *trust is essential*. This is not limited to temporal needs, but can extend even into needs of the heart, such as the ability to rise above self-condemnation.

1 John 3:20,21:

for whenever our heart condemns us, [God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.](#)

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

Did God know that a circumstance might arise on a given day causing you to feel bad about yourself and start judging yourself? Sure, He did. But He no more wants you to condemn yourself than He wants to relitigate the grounds of your redemption and salvation. When it comes to condemnation, He simply says, “Stop! I’ve taken care of it, child.”

And herein lies a fundamental truth: because God knows everything, there is no future impediment or hindrance He cannot deal with. Because He sees and knows all, He can provide a way for us to escape from any temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13:

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation [he will also provide the way of escape](#), that you may be able to endure it.

So, in many ways, these affairs of the heart are one of the greatest avenues to experience God’s daily providence in your life.

## Providence and Praise

We’ve come to appreciate a little more all that God has done and is doing to provide for our every need. What then should our response be to keep enjoying this good thing called providence? [Praise Him.](#)

The Book of Psalms is a good place to start. Did you know that the Psalms are organized in five different sections, each corresponding to one of the first five books of the Bible? When studying the subject of providence, the Exodus section (Psalms 42-72) is particularly à propos. These psalms speak of Israel's exodus from Egypt as they were led out by Moses their deliverer. With future reference to the Messiah, they emphasize the work of redemption that Jesus Christ would accomplish.

What are some of the themes of praise that recur in the Exodus section of the Psalms?

- God's rescue of mankind from death
- God our refuge in the midst of evil
- God our stability, so that our hearts are fixed and steadfast
- God our defense and high tower, to deliver us from our enemies
- God our rock and salvation
- God our deliverer, who parts the waters for us to cross
- God the Father of our Messiah, he who led captivity captive
- God our refresher, help and deliverer in times of trouble
- God the author of the Messiah's enduring work

Every one of these divine characteristics highlight His regular provision for us in all things. Why would we look to any other?

Ephesians 3:20,21:

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Or, as the final psalm in the Exodus section exults in conclusion, "Amen and Amen!"