

The Providence of God

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[0 : 0 0] Start five after the hour. Five after the hour. Yeah, and then five to or whatever. Five till the end so that give people a little bit more time to come in.

... ..

... ..

Yeah, I know, I know. I've been one of those people.

... ..

[0 : 5 3] singing. Oh really? Yes. So there's going to be a rehearsal after that, before that. Wow. Is it between services or after? It's after the second, actually way after the second, maybe around 3 p.m. Oh God. All right. Good morning. Good morning. Good morning everyone.

Let us start with a word of prayer. Father in heaven, we thank you because you are good, you are wise, you are all powerful, Lord. And that is a foundation of how you act in the world, oh God. Your loving kindness and your tender mercy towards all of us in the little and the big things, Lord. And thank you that we get some time this morning to reflect on the way you act and deal with us, Lord. We pray that as we dive into mysteries, oh Lord, that in many ways, God, in a number of ways too big for us to know, we pray you will illuminate our hearts, God, and our minds to hear what your word has to say to us, to hear, oh God, how sort of those who walk before us have wrestled with these things, God. That we may be illuminated, oh God, not just in our heads, but in our hearts, God. We see how the truth of your providence, oh Lord, Father, is a reality in which we can rest in our day to day. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

All right, everyone. Good morning. Thanks for coming. Deb, is Matt coming? Okay, great. I am looking. All right, so today we will be talking about the doctrine of providence. And simply put, the doctrine of providence is the theology of pretty much how God acts in the world. In many ways, this doctrine is related to the topic or the attribute of sovereignty that we discussed several weeks back, which focuses on the nature of God's authority over creation. However, in some sense, you could think about sovereignty as capturing the normative oppositional relationship of God in the world. That is, God is the supreme final ruler of all things, everywhere for all time. Providence would describe how that sovereignty is experienced by creation. Sovereignty in some way captures the noun form of this attribute. And the doctrine of providence captures the verb form of it. So don't be surprised. There are a number of things, and I've spoken to Tyler about this. There are a few things that would echo in between, across both, because in some way they are two parts of a whole. Give me one second. I need to wear my glasses so I can see the smiling and frowning faces. And get live feedback. It's like, what did you just say?

All right. All right. So yeah, so in many ways, this would be a bit, some of it will sound like a recitation. We will cover some of the same things, some of the problems echo. I hope to highlight some of the more practical differences. I mean, I think Tyler covered quite a bit of it. It may be worthwhile, if you weren't at Tyler's class, to go listen to it, because I think in many ways there's like some elements of it that he covered, like election in particular that I don't cover, because there's no point, and we have a limited time, and I think he does it already in detail. All right. So what is then the doctrine of providence? Now, maybe I will summarize, like this has been a doctrine that has arisen historically in the classical reformed theology of God, and there are a few definitions that might be helpful to have us start. I have this outline here, by the way, just so that you can follow how I am going to walk through this topic. We will indeed start with definitions, then look at characteristics, kind of what does God acting in the world, what does it look like? What are, how does it, not how does it differ, but what are the key attributes that mark or characteristics that mark God's working in the world? Then we will spend quite some time talking about some of the tensions.

[5 : 19] In it, because I think oftentimes that's where you could say the abstractness of the doctrine, or the seeming abstractness of the doctrine, meets the reality of our everyday lives, and the conversations, and the things we wrestle with. And then finally, we'll end with some implications.

So what does it mean for us, and how we live? Depending on time, I think we will have an opportunity to break out and talk among ourselves around some of these tensions, and the nature of the problem, examples in scripture, and how scripture actually responds to some of these. And then we will come back to get, we will come back and share some of those thoughts before we land on implications.

Cool. So hopefully helpful to follow as I go along. All right, I was at the definition of providence. So the Heidelberg Catechism defines providence as the almighty everywhere power of God, whereby, as it were by His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth with all creatures, and so governs them, that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty. Indeed, all things come not by chance, but by His fatherly hand. The Belgic Confession says, we believe that this good God, after creating all things, did not abandon them to chance or fortune, but leads and governs them according to His holy will, in such a way that nothing happens in this world without God's orderly arrangement. And even shorter from the Westminster Larger Catechism, says, God's work of providence at His most holy, wise and powerful, preserving and governing all His creatures, ordering them and all their actions to His glory.

So, in other words, or very simply, this is my own, Kunle's summary definition would be, even after God created the world, He's still very active in it.

[7 : 23] He's working in a good, wise and all-powerful way to preserve, sustain and govern all His creatures, and ordering them and their actions to bring about His purpose.

God is actively at work in the world today. That's the doctrine. And it's not, God did not, as opposed to like a deist idea of God essentially creating the world, setting laws in motion and go. God is actively working in the world across dimensions.

We will talk about them, both big and small, in achieving His purposes today. In providence, we see how God's attributes of goodness, wisdom, and supreme power work together in creation to achieve His purpose.

Now, one thing these definitions do not highlight, and I think if you read some of the references I consulted, and the big sort of works that I read in preparation for this, where it's some of like John Frame's Systematic Theology and Wayne Grudem, and then John Piper has a book on providence, and I think there was like a few others.

I think there's Faith Seeking Understanding by Migliore, I think is his last name. And I can talk to some of those references at the end. But some of the things I think it was framed, I discussed, is how some theologians try to make a distinction between miracles and providence.

[8 : 52] Because if you think about providence being essentially God's acts in the world, or the doctrine rather, or the theology of how God acts in the world, some theologians make categorical distinctions between miracles and providence, and ascribing miracles to His, in some ways, supernatural interventions, and then providence to His more natural means interventions in the world.

However, Scripture doesn't often make these categorical distinctions. Many Psalms that talk about God and God's engagement in the world highlight in the same way, if you think about the grand miracle being, well, there are many grand miracles in Scripture, the grand miracle of creation, ex nihilo creation, is a miraculous act.

But pull that thread into His regular sustaining and preserving the world, and don't make seeming categorical differences.

So, in some sense, it might be easier to think of it along a spectrum of, like, miracles being at one end, and in general providence, being at the other end. And so here will be our first exercise, that in the Bible, there are actually books of the Bible that tend to lean one or the other, or describe one versus the other.

So, maybe think about it. What's an example of a book that highlights a lot on the miraculous end? And one book, there's actually a unique book in the Bible that is almost entirely about providence.

[10 : 34] All right, so soon. Job. Job? Hmm. That's interesting. In what way? Job is about... Not exactly, I would say.

I think it is... It is... Job is a tricky one. I would say. Because I think Job shows up in a different way in the context of this book. But I would say if I had to put Job in the spectrum, Job is actually, yes, to your point, more on what end, actually?

Yes. Providential end. Yes. Debbie? Exodus. Exodus. On the miraculous end. Absolutely. Like, the plagues are just... You know, act after act, plague after plague, is God just supernaturally intervening in the affairs in the land of Egypt to demonstrate his power.

And some would say, looking at those plagues, was God trying to prove his sovereignty over many of the gods that they worshipped, some of which were represented in those plagues themselves.

All right. So, that's miraculous. I was thinking of 1 Samuel. Uh-huh. You know, David and Goliath.

Yeah. Some of the miraculous things of God giving David the victory over the battle.

[11:48] And a lot of these wars that are happening, God seems to be intervening on behalf of the people. Yep. Drawing his hands. Yeah. Historical. Yeah. One more.

Is this? Genesis. Absolutely. Ha ha. Absolutely. The first few chapters, Ex nihilo creation of the world. One of the, yeah, pretty supreme creation acts and miraculous acts of God.

There's the Gospels that talk about Jesus Christ in demonstrating his power and his authority and essentially trying to make them realize who he was by some of the things that he did and the signs that he performed to point them to who he truly was, not just man, but God himself in flesh.

The providence end. Maybe one more. Like, there's one book that is almost entirely providential. I'm thinking of Ruth. Uh-huh. Oh, yes, actually. Ruth is just, you know, God is, I don't explicitly mention him.

I mean, I don't know if he's intervening. I think God is mentioned in the book of Ruth. Is he like, okay, his acts. Okay. Yeah. But Ruth is, you're right. Ruth will be very close to the providence end. There's one book still to the left of.

[12:58] Exactly. Esther is the providential book. God is not mentioned in the book of Esther. And yet, in the stories of Esther, the night before Mordecai, I mean, was it Mordecai?

I don't remember. Maybe. That thing that's. No, Esther's. Esther, yeah, it's Mordecai, right? Yeah.

The night before he was killed. That night, the king could not sleep.

Interestingly, and the king asked for the books of remembrance. And at the same time, Haman happens to be walking in. The person who wants to kill Esther. And there's so many situations that the book talks about without mentioning God.

It's almost purely providential, but no less miraculous. And how God, in that period, was able to sustain and preserve his people. All right.

So, that is the definition of providence. God does work in creation in both miraculous and, say, through normal means to preserve, sustain, and govern his creation.

[13:58] Now, how does the Bible see the realms of this providence? Still under the definition. Where? I think, first of all, God's providence is over animate and inanimate creation. And I think there is an extended passage I want to read because, for me, it's one of the, it captures both the spirit and the nature and extent of God's providence, which would be Psalm 104 from verse 10.

It says, You make springs gush forth in the valleys. They flow between the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field. The wild donkeys quench their thirst.

Besides them, the birds of the heaven dwell. They sing among the branches. From your lofty abode, you water the mountains. The earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth, wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man's heart.

He made the moon to mark the seasons. The sun knows its time for setting. You make darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep about. The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.

[15:14] When the sun rises, they still away, and lie down in their dens. Man goes out to his work, and to his labor until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are your works!

In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great.

There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it. These all look to you to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up.

When you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed. When you take away their breath, they die and return to dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. God is describing many things that we would naturally ascribe to, physical, natural processes. [16:15] But it doesn't act like, oh God, you sort of sit remotely, and then you just direct them. God is actively doing these things, is the way the Bible teaches us to think about it. The lions, it says, look to God for their food.

Of course, they are prowling around for prey, but it reminds us here that it is God who provides the food to them. It talks about, there was another one I said about how, you know, when they look, they all look to God for their food, and when God takes away their breath, they die.

It's not like they fall sick or they get attacked. God chooses to take away breath, and they die. I mean, and so it's, this passage is, in some way, there are many passages, but I just thought we'll focus on, or at least pick a few that I will read, that just highlight sort of God's, the realms or the domains of God's providence, and how far does it reach.

So animate and inanimate creation completely. Bible talks in Matthew, I think when Jesus was saying that, like, you know, no spiral falls to the ground without God knowing it.

As tiny as pyros were and as almost invalid, like, relatively low value, God is aware when they fall. It talks about the hairs of our head being numbered.

[17:29] Not counted, numbered. Meaning every one of them has a number that is known to God. And so it's the extent of his detail over animate, inanimate creation.

Next is about kingdoms and nations. And I think some of these, Tyler, again, I can mention, spoke about, but I will summarize. At the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me.

This is in Daniel chapter 4, I think it's 3 to 5. I didn't write it down, but I think that's where it is. 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 counted as nothing, and He does according to His will among the hosts of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

And none can stay His hand or say to Him, What have you done? God is sovereign over both the minutest detail of spirals falling to the ground, and His providence extends to how kings and nations, the ones He raises up and the ones He casts down, because He chooses to.

[18:45] And no one can question Him and say, What have you done? There's over our individual decisions. The Lamentations 3.37 says, Who can decree a thing and have it come to pass unless the Lord has commanded it?

And in Proverbs 16, verse 9, it says, In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord orders the steps. There's another verse I didn't find a reference now.

It says, The lot is cast into the lap, but every decision is from the Lord. So God is sovereign over what we would call even randomness, like tossing a die.

The decisions that come out, the die is the equivalent of the lot in those days. The decisions that come from it are ordered by God. Okay. That is the definition and the scope of God's providence. It is thorough. It's complete. It pervades all of nature and creation, from the least to the greatest. And God does so in a way that is good, wise, and powerful.

[19:56] All right. So the characteristics of providence. I'm looking at the time. So within sort of like classical reform theology, the three, in some sense, characteristics.

So what defines the nature. We've talked, these passages highlight them, and I think hopefully the definitions will sharpen them in your minds. The first is, I would call it preservation.

Preservation is just an idea that the things that God has created, they maintain their properties, or like they continue to exist because God sustains them.

So God keeps things acting in the way he has created them. And then a second related one is concurrence, which is that God also, these things continue to, these things act, or God acts with these things or together with these things in line with the way he created them.

So preservation and concurrence sort of in many ways go hand in hand, especially when we talk to how we understand God's action within nature. And I think the final one would be government.

[21 : 07] Government just being that God's providence is teleological. It has a purpose in mind. In all he does, directs.

He has a purpose in all he does and directs all things to achieve his purpose. God's work in the world is not like a merry-go-round. It's not an endless cycle of life, like circle of life, like, you know, or as some religions or some philosophies will have it.

God's providence is directed. And the thing that God does in our lives is all aiming towards an end. An end, the grand end in some cases of, actually the ultimate grand end being his glory in all of creation.

The grand end of bringing all things under together, together under the unity and the lordship of Jesus Christ. So in small and big things, God is working towards an end.

Now, preservation and concurrence are sort of like, concurrence is probably where many of the tensions, some of the tensions in providence come up. But I'll probably, maybe to, I'll spend some time explaining that, because even for me, it's like an interesting idea.

[22 : 24] Think about the earth moving around the sun. I saw one who studied science and engineering. It's like, you know, the theory of gravity is what explains the movement of the earth around the sun.

It's, yeah, and how like the planets and most of space, at least the large scale, gravity explains the large scale, kind of, many of the large scale phenomena in the world, especially the interaction of masses.

The doctrine of providence will say, yeah, gravity is how we describe the way God works in keeping the earth around the sun. It doesn't say that there is no such thing, but it's that there is no, there is no final natural cause, is the way to understand it, that gravity is not the ultimate cause of things that, of the motion of the earth.

It is a description. God is the ultimate cause of the things that we observe. Yet God works such that it works in line with how he's designed these things to behave.

And so we can observe many secondary causes. And in some, because I don't, non-Christians can observe the motion of planets. They can describe what will happen.

[23 : 38] Yeah, and I think it's like, they can observe the secondary causes. And in many ways, God has designed it so that indeed, or God works consistently in that way, in such a way that enables science to be possible.

Because God works consistently in keeping the earth around the sun, we can predict eclipses, we can predict so many things far into the future, because it rests on sort of the way God works, but not to believe that gravity is in and of itself.

And John chapter one actually tries to make that point. When it says, in the beginning was the word, the word was the God, and the word was God.

And it says, you know, in him nothing was made. There is someone behind the phenomena that we'd observe. And I think that is what both preservation and concurrence try to highlight.

Let me pause. Any questions? Okay. All right. So those are the characteristics. Now, what are the tensions?

[24 : 49] Because I think these is where, some of the, in general, I think I would say we all kind of agree and celebrate the doctrine of providence.

But there are areas where, you know, it meets the reality of some of the questions. And many of these, some of the questions we have, and I would be first to say that many of these tensions, oceans of ink, have been spilled over centuries, not just decades, in trying to address these questions.

And yet some questions still remain. What I will try and do is to articulate what the tension is, why it is a problem. And I think we have time to then, like I said, in maybe little groups, I see one group, one group, and one group to discuss, in some way, examples of these problems in Scripture.

And maybe just discuss one way Scripture tries to address them, even if it may be incomplete. And we can come back together and discuss them. All right. So the first one, and the biggest one, is the problem of evil.

The problem of evil, which is simply that there are, bad things happen in the world, and the world that we describe as being created by a good, wise, and powerful God.

[26 : 10] And it's bad things that are often senseless, you know, earthquakes and tsunamis that kill hundreds of thousands of people, of innocent children who've been gone down in schools, like, for

no apparent reason.

many people suffer incurable diseases, some of them being genetic. It's not as though, like, it was as a result of, like, lifestyle habits. How do this work if we say God is good, wise, and powerful? Because if he is good, he wants to prevent these evils. If he is wise, he knows how to do so. If he's powerful, he can.

So if these things still happen, does God remain good, wise, and powerful? So, that's the first problem and why it's a problem.

The second one is the problem of judgment and moral responsibility. So, the providence, I talked in some way, maybe a little bit intentionally, and one area that God is sovereign, like I said, over our decisions.

[27 : 21] God is able to work, like, everything works with God's, in some way, God's providence. Our sins, our evil, even our, our, yeah, our sins and some of the bad things we do.

How does that work? And if God is sovereignly orchestrating everything for his purpose, how can he judge me? Why am I held responsible for my actions?

Because, I mean, am I not just carrying out the things that God has intended already to do? Do my actions not accomplish his greater purpose?

And so, if they do, why does he judge me? So, those are the two big tensions around the topic of providence. Like, how do you square that with evil?

If evil does happen, maybe God, does God have an evil side that we just don't know and we haven't seen? It's how some people try and resolve that tension. It's evil and illusion that doesn't really quite exist.

[28 : 31] It's just a matter of the mind. It's how some people try and frame it. Maybe God doesn't even exist. And so, maybe that's some people try and solve it that way.

God may not be all-powerful. God may be limited in his power. But there are some things in this world God cannot. This is how some people try and address the tension.

All right. So, like I said, those are the problems and the tensions or rather, as you say, in the doctrine of evil. So, I have said there are three groups. It would be nice to take maybe the next five to ten minutes.

So, let's say we stop at nine, 42 and talk among yourselves. First, what should you do? Are there examples of these tensions in scripture?

One. And then two would be how does scripture encourage us to answer or respond to this? And then we can come back and then discuss. Okay. So, this is at four, three, four.

[29 : 31] Four. I was thinking there's the three of you here.

Yeah. Although, I mean, Tyler, you can also join this group too. I feel like, you know, I don't want to divide what God has joined together, but, all right.

No worries. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[31 : 27] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

The point is that true forgiveness of religion. Human suffering involved in their insane revolution was not as senseless as we have seen in the church.

[34 : 41] It doesn't teach that sense of God. Well, I wouldn't say there was simple fall in that way, but that is the bigger picture.

There's a bigger picture of what he's not. But I also like, I know I like this.

Imagine some science fiction story where everybody is avoiding it.

If somehow we could say, there's no such thing as suffering, but the reason is that we have been in the world for the first of those examples of the same life. Would that be a desirable one?

I mean, imagine the one person who has a slightly shorter person. Right, like they trip home to every kid. Like, does that now... Does that, like, everybody else is perfect, but this one kid trips and gets in their knee one time and touches another one?

[35 : 44] Does that all of a sudden cast people on God, like, who allowed this to happen? Like, this is a very theoretical sort of argument. Right, right. But the point being, like, if you reason about it,

like, is that really the right thing?

It's kind of like, I'm making like an argument from contradiction. Like, that's almost a calling if you live in a world where everybody lives identical lifestyles.

And yet, you know, any deviation from that would give you some sort of cause to accuse God of like, well, you could have made everybody perfect.

Like, that is to say, what is your definition? Okay, so, pull that thought forward. He did make everyone perfect, originally. And we can taste that.

Yeah. So, then the fact that people in the world, what's our piece of that? Well, I guess, yeah. And God, who is not going to come here and say, you must bow down to me, you must love me, you must...

[36 : 49] He's like, no, I'm giving you an invitation. And I'm giving you all the reasons why this is a good idea. And it's your, you know, it's your decision. I'm giving you an invitation.

Yeah, I've heard you guys that, my whole life, as a child, I was angry with God. I couldn't understand why did you do this when I was like this, and, you know, that's all the stories that were out of my heart.

And I started realizing that, like, God is so much better than any difficult area. And I was like, I don't want to leave you alone, that's all the stories that were out of my heart. And I don't want to leave you alone. And that encounter made me understand that it's not extremely worth doubting over the world, or troubling, or compared to what I see, what I see God, and experience it.

And I'm sure that there's other conversations about why did God allow us to eat? I don't know, but I do know that it's gonna, if there's gonna be a day when this is even a glorious, like, the Psalm 119 says, It was good that you, that you afflicted me.

It was such a terrible moment. Before I was afflicted, I went astray. But now I'm with you. That's great. That's great. Something that was interesting, you know, I don't do to our...

[38 : 05] I think it was a lighter discussion. You're gonna say, like, even in the world where you need to test people, why do you miss particular things? What is your problem? I came to build a board, I grew up in a Christian, I came to build a board.

I'm older and have a lot of friends that I have stayed with who find me ridiculous and my beliefs ridiculous and are very thoughtful in their adversarial perspectives.

And I think that, you know, if you go back to creation, part of what's incredible about creation is that the Lord has inaugurated a veil.

And we can't see beyond that veil. What are we supposed to do? Yeah. And you can itemize aspects of that veil. One of them is death.

We can't transcend that veil. We don't know what has happened to our loved ones. It was just a way of the children who had no idea. And so, to make these assumptions that I make as a believer, compared to my friends who are adversarial to that, that there is a platform of trust.

[39 : 26] I have made a decision to trust some things that I cannot see. And that's somewhat illuminating the notion of race and faith that has been conveyed to me.

I just read today, B. Ho, Frederick B. Ho, Christian Apologist writer, he's talking about this exact topic and he talks about that God can raise to people, believers, a capacity.

And he's very careful. He doesn't define any of this. He talks about the verb convey. He's looking at the knowledge factor. I've got an answer to their people. He's looking at the truth.

One more minute. Everyone. I've got a question about this. I'm just getting ready to answer. Okay? Well, Yeah. I choose to do that. I think this will be chapter 11 is church.

And then earlier, you're coming up to church. There's this amazing. Who are you here? I do not know I'm just talking about that. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

[40 : 39] Yes. Yes. All right.

All right. Okay. Feel free to sit so that your teammates can kick you if you don't answer correctly. All right, Tyler.

Teams, let's get back together. All right. So there were two questions you were asked to discuss in your group. First was, these problems I highlighted. Maybe we start off like, what are some of the examples?

The problem of evil and the tension with problem of evil and the problem of responsibility. What are some examples in scripture? We talked about Pharaoh's.

Ah, yes. Pharaoh hardening his heart, but God hardening Pharaoh's heart for his glory. Exactly. Yeah. That is almost like the classic passage on responsibility because it says them both.

[42 : 09] Yeah. It says them both. And it's actually completely fine with that tension. Okay. How about the problem of evil? We came up with a couple of ideas.

First of all, we don't have God's perspective. So what we might necessarily... Kim, let me pause you just a little. The first is the example. What was an example in scripture that highlights the problem of evil?

Guys. Is it Job? Ah, yes. Job, I think, is the... Also like the classic example. That was what I was saying to us in like that book will come up later on.

Like Job fully addresses, especially when good people go through evil. That is almost meaningless. Like it's... How does this... Why does this happen?

All right. Great. Thank you. Thank you, Brett. All right. Kim, you're saying... And also the senseless versus senseless.

[43 : 11] Mm-hmm. That, okay, senseless to us in terms of the Holocaust or something along that line. Where is the good that comes out of that? And I think we've seen some of that and God may have more to reveal to us in situations like that.

There is also, from the New Testament, talking about the boy that was born blind. Mm-hmm.

Yes. Yes. And the son that was constantly throwing himself into the fire. So you have these presumably innocent people that were afflicted in a way that didn't seem to some extent fair.

But Christ said, this is for God's glory. Yeah. So in some respects, we have to trust that that's what it's there for.

Okay. I hear a couple of them. Anyone else? Before I go to the next group, did Kim capture it? I wanted you to stay in your group so you could kick and be like, why?

[44 : 19] That's not what we said. I'm kidding. All right. Thank you very much, Kim. Appreciate it. Okay. The group at the back.

Anyone? John, why don't you give a summary? Let me just... I used to be a teacher when I was in college. I used to teach high school math and physics.

So some of these behaviors, they just come up. All right. I think Tyler was about to go, John. Let me spare you. All right, Tyler. Oh, okay.

So we talk anecdotally about our own lives, about how God brought us to himself and our salvation.

And some of those things that happened were pretty horrible things and same hook shooting.

And God is not the one pulling the trigger at the children. But yet, at the same time, we can say God has ordained those things. And Melissa's salvation, part of that, her testimony is that that event's brought her to Christ.

[45 : 21] Seeing true evil and injustice and what is God's wrath against sin. What does it mean when I know that I'm the sinner? So I think we just experience it personally.

And we know God, looking back, that God works out some of those horrible things for our good, including our salvation. Yeah. Amen. Anyone else?

All right. Group three. Anyone want to share? Sure. Sure. We also, I talked about a similar, many of you know, I was born with a heart defect.

And I was so angry with God in my entire childhood about that. Why would you let me, why would you let this happen to me? And then when I, then he kind of, I encountered him.

And it was just this overwhelming experience of seeing him and knowing him and trusting him. And the answer, I guess the solution was God's been worth this for good.

[46 : 23] And that is a trustworthy thing. How? I'm not always sure. But he will. And it's a glorious, wonderful truth. But that was something that I took for very evil in my life that then brought me to Christ.

Yeah. No, thank you all for sharing. I think those are, those are interesting. Actually, those are, those are scriptural perspectives and how we address some of these questions.

Given I spend a little more time thinking about it than you guys may have had in the 10 minutes, I have a few that I think just to crystallize what we heard. I think the biggest thing that I think is common theme is the greater good approach, which is that God uses evil to accomplish a greater good.

And I think that's your example, Melissa. It's the idea that even in, in, even sometimes in things that are senseless, like God works, as we studied over the summer in Romans 8, for we know in all

things, God works for the good of them that love him and are called according to his purpose. It says all things, not some things, in all things good and bad. The previous section had talked about in some of the trials, I think, and some of the challenges we've gone through. And he also outlines later on that they were going to go through trials.

[47 : 44] But the idea, the core is, is the idea that all things, God is working good. He's working good, greater good, many of which we can't see, many of which we cannot see.

Now, the second one, the greater good, some of these things do have their own challenges and limitations. And I think it, it has a conclusion for us, uh, or an implication for us as we, as we wrap up soon.

But the second one is the reality of sin. God created the world good. Like when we respond, especially the problem of evil, but we sinned and the world was cursed on the, on our, yeah. Like, you know, God created the world seven days in Genesis one, and he said, it was good. It was good. And then when Adam's sin is like, cursed is the ground because of you.

Like it's creation in some way is as Romans eight, again, and interestingly, that we studied in the summer talks about creation is in groaning, waiting for the day that it is liberated from this bondage.

[48 : 46] When we are in some way fully enter into our inheritance, um, as children of God. So there is the reality of sin, sin, um, both like you would say the original sin, many of which you could say echoing the natural, the fact that the world itself is broken as a result.

And then there is also the sin of our actions. Our actions have consequences. And so like when we sin or when we do things that violate God's will, yeah, there are consequences that would happen. Listen, um, Jesus actually, if you read John five, the man that was, that was waiting at the pool of bedside. I think it's a pool of bedside. I was waiting for the angel to go in and stir the water.

Jesus heals him. Jesus comes back to him and says, now you are whole again. Stop sinning. Else something worse could happen to you. So Jesus makes the connection between, he doesn't, he doesn't expand on the sin, but essentially reminds him like there is a connection between what he is doing and sort of the affliction he had.

So sin, some of the things that we could argue that we are doing to the world itself, you could argue some of the policies we may advocate in government, in the world that we live in and the country that we live in, actually could drive results of the things that we see downstream.

[50 : 04] And it's like there are, our actions have consequences. Our sinful actions have consequences and some of the evil that we see. Yet it's not always. When the disciples, the Israelites were steeped in that philosophy.

And so the story you mentioned came around the man who was born blind. It's like, so who sinned? This man who is father. And God's, and Jesus was like, neither, but that God's glory may be revealed.

So that brings to the third one, which is a mystery. I think it's an interesting idea. And I think I heard it, Brian, you were describing about the veil in your, in the group that I came to your group, that there is a deep mystery around some of the things God does.

Not everything is fully revealed to us. That was essentially, and that we, we know only in part, regardless of how deeply we think we know and think, we don't know everything.

And that was actually how God answered Job. So the book of Job is the book of, I mean, many of us would know the story. Job essentially was a righteous man, proclaimed by God as righteous.

[51 : 16] God was boasting to Job, to the devil about Job. Like, have you seen him? Great guy, righteous, there's no one like him. And it's like, oh, you know, Job serves you for, you know, the things you bless him with, let me afflict him.

And God says, you know, yeah, you can do anything, but don't touch his life. That's actually providence. You know, the fact that like, providence at work, all that was happening in Job's life had been circumscribed by God.

But then Job wrestles with it. We hear about, you know, the first part of Job's response, you know, the Lord gives, the Lord takes away, blessed be his name. But the rest of the book is Job just anguishly lashing out.

Like, why is this happening? God, like, let God show up. I need an advocate. Like, you know, I can't answer God on my own, but if he was an advocate to restrain his power, then I would speak to him like, I would speak to him face to face and say, you have done wrong.

And so God eventually shows up in chapter 7, 37, 38, I think. And God begins by asking Job a few questions. Yeah. Okay, I'm here.

[52 : 21] Before I answer you, though, I will give you a long list of questions. And God starts asking him how creation works. You say you're pretty wise, no?

Okay, well, tell me how. And Job slowly begins to realize that he doesn't know very much. And so the basis of his argument before God was he knew enough to bring an accusation.

Yeah, like, God has not been fair. And God essentially was expanding his awareness of his ignorance. There's so much in this world you don't know. And so in this particular case, how can you say that you know enough to bring me to justice?

You know? And Job was humbled by that. And so there's mystery. Now, some people take mystery in a fatalistic life. We can't know anything. That's not how mystery works.

Mystery says we can know some things, but not all things. The secret things belong to God, I think it says in Deuteronomy 29. But the things he's revealed to us belong to us and our children forever.

[53 : 22] There are things that God has revealed and we should be confident that we can know those things. But there are things that God has not revealed that we should recognize we don't know. G.K. Chesterton's book, *Orthodoxy*, has this brilliant illustration that I've always found about the limit of what we know and how we can be humble about what we know.

It's like, imagine an alien race comes and observes us humans and it sees, oh, we have two eyes, two arms, two legs, we have two lungs, two kidneys.

And like, ah. It's like, so we must definitely have two hearts and two livers, which we do not have. We don't have. But like, by logical deduction on the things we have seen, we make inferences about some of the things we don't see.

And I think sometimes I was recognizing that there are limits. Because, no, we don't have two hearts and none of us walk around thinking, that is illogical. Why do we not have two hearts? No, we don't. Maybe now you will start thinking about it.

But we don't do that. And I think it's the same. Like, God has revealed a few things. And then we sometimes logically try and deduce some of the things that are not true.

[54 : 37] I mean, I think that's why even when we deduce things, we come back to what Scripture acknowledges and what it doesn't acknowledge. And acknowledge that somewhere in there is a mystery we don't understand.

And that actually is the problem that addresses some of the problems with responsibility and God's sovereignty and our responsibility. Everywhere we are giving, God works through, sometimes through evil means, actually.

But Scripture never ascribes to God evil intentions or that God delights in evil. And so this question around what does that mean, what language, for example, do we use to describe God's relationship with evil is mysterious.

Like, we sometimes get around and say God allows it but doesn't delight. But, you know, sometimes we need to be careful that we don't try and ascribe, like, God's allowance as, like, a weaker.

Like, God's will is God's will. And we can recognize that in some ways we just don't understand it. So Scripture does try and address these. We're recognizing that greater good, even the greater good, the greater good response.

[55 : 46] Sometimes it is, how does somebody dying or how do these children being to their own greater good? Well, it's good. I mean, if I was cynical, some would say it's good for you, Melissa.

But how is it good for the kid? How is it good for their parents? And I think sometimes it's in humble recognition that some we don't always know. But then there's one more, like, almost like a, even when we don't know, what we can acknowledge is we have a God who suffers with us through evil. And actually, that's one of the greatest arguments. Like, when you think about Jesus, God did not just think about evil and it's not an intellectual thing. God knows the pain and God knows the suffering.

And so there is a compassion. Compassion literally means co-suffering. There is a compassion about God. Like, even when we don't understand how he works, the Bible reminds us that in Jesus, God takes on our suffering.

He sits with us in our suffering and also longs with us for the day that we are liberated from it. So, and many times you think about Job's friends. Before they landed in trouble of trying to solve his

problems, the Bible records that when they came and they saw his sorrow, they sat with him for seven days and they said nothing.

[57 : 05] And sometimes that idea of co-being with people in their suffering without trying to even answer or address with theories is sometimes the best we can do.

Because God in Christ has given us an example of carrying each other's burdens through Christ. So, that's how Scripture addresses its sense.

So, I'll probably rush a little bit quickly to what are the lessons for us in God's providence. So, how do we, the goal of providence or goal of some of these things we discuss about how God works, they're not primarily for our abstract.

They're primarily for how we live and how we walk in faith. The first one is for us to not be afraid or to trust God. I grew up, I would say, in a background that didn't really emphasize, that emphasized, you could say, a lot more of human responsibility as opposed to this belief in the sovereignty of God.

And I think those are the tensions on the extreme end. Calvinists are sometimes accused of putting all things on God and no human responsibility.

[58 : 13] And then you have like, Armenians on the other hand that fall into the opposite trap. I think it is recognizing that even though we may not understand it as those who belong to the reformed tradition, we have responsibility.

And we have action. We should act. But we should remember that the safety net of all of our decisions is the sovereignty of God. It is his providence and his ability to work all things for our good.

While we discern, while we do, it should free us from worry. And I think Tyler concluded with that last time in his lecture. It should free us from worry.

We should plan. We should think. We should consider. But when we trust, we should also like, God is able to accomplish more than we can imagine.

The second one is joy and worship. It's like in Psalm 97 verse 1, the Lord reigns. Let the earth be glad. It's not a, it's not a, sometimes people, I guess it arises sometimes out of our, the tension of our relationship with authority.

[59 : 22] Especially people in the West. But God reigns. I remember when I, the first time I heard that verse truly, I remember thinking, what if someone announced today that my mom is president of like the country I grew up in?

I would be so pumped. Like, it's like, wow. Because I, I know the person who's governing everything. And Nigeria is a little bit different. Maybe it's a little bit more autocratic than America. So the president has a lot of real power. But that's my point. I would be, I would be excited. And I think we are reminded, God reigns.

Let the earth be glad. Like, the person who has such power, control, authority is good. And does that for good. And so we should be, we should rejoice and we should worship.

We should thank God for, we should worship him because no one else has that power. He does. And he is good. And he is kind. And he is wise and powerful. And so he should awaken us this attitude of worship.

[60 : 26] And God's providence is at work in the world. Providence is not fatalism, like I mentioned briefly. Our actions are real and they have an impact. And they're often means through which God realizes his purpose.

There's a story in Nehemiah chapter 4 verse 8 to 9 where they hear about an attack coming. And the Bible says Nehemiah prayed and we prayed and we posted a guard.

Like, there's no tension between, you know, believing in God and actually taking wise action. Because wise action is often the means through which God works to achieve even the ends he wants.

So, uh, we should not make us, you know, what will be, will be. We do have action. We do have, Paul says, you know, even in the New Testament, there's this passage where Paul was talking about how, you know, are you a slave when you were made, when you became a Christian? Paraphrasing. Like, it's like, yeah, don't be, don't be anxious about it. But if there's a means for you to be free, try and be free. It's not a, it's not fatalistic.

[61 : 33] Our actions have consequences. We are encouraged to take action. But taking action in the confidence and assurance of a sovereign God. But our actions should be guided by prayer.

I think that verse that I quoted on Nehemiah is that right tension. We prayed and we posted a guard. Sometimes we err towards action. Whereas we need to pray.

Remember when David was going to, um, the reason why we pray is because sometimes God reveals to us his deeper purposes at work. And that actually guides exactly what actions to take. David was going to be attacked and he was like, oh, you know, Lord, should I go? Should I come? And God's like, yeah, you can go. There was a war about to break out in Israel when Rehoboam became king.

And they had mustered the armies and were about to fight. And God was like, everyone go home. This is from me. Don't fight. When we don't pray, we sometimes lose out on, Bible says, you know, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously.

[62 : 36] So if you don't have wisdom, ask. You never know. So God could reveal how then you can act wisely to take advantage or to walk in line with what he's already doing.

I think the final thing is a reminder to be humble. Especially when we disagree, when we engage people who may have challenges in some of these topics.

There are still tensions in some of the, these tensions are not being fully resolved. We are partly resolved. Like we should, we should be willing to admit, recognizing that, like Brian said in his breakout group, there are things we do not know.

And that humility should make us open to hearing how people resolve it, to think about it. But ultimately remember that, Lord, we know in part, one day you will know fully.

Paul uses this in Philippians 3.15 when he was talking to, that if on some reason you think differently, God will make clear to you. So we should pray with those, pray for those who may have different perspectives.

[63 : 42] Like, Lord, if this is clear to me but not clear to them, Lord, make it clear. Because, yeah, not everything is clear to everyone at the same time. And so this is kind of how all of these, we can bring these passages or like this doctrine of providence into practice.

How we can be more joyful, more faithful, more trusting, kind of more humble. And also be bolder in action.

Knowing that God, I think Tyler said it in his talk again, God is for us. And God is working to accomplish his purposes, good purposes for his children.

And that should make us kind of bold, kind, loving people in the world. With that, I think, any questions? Otherwise, I would pray.

Okay, let us pray. Lord Jesus, thank you so much for how we are reminded, God, that you are our work in the world.

[64 : 48] Every good and perfect gift comes from above. And so when we see good in the world, we can rejoice and celebrate the reminder of your work. And sometimes when we see things that are not good, Lord, we can react to the Lord in faith and trust.

Even when we are in anguish, a bedrock that you, Lord, are good, are good and wise. We pray, Lord Jesus, that as we go into the season, go into the week, help us, Lord, to continue to ponder, enjoy and worship on this doctrine, God.

And to rejoice that you, as King of all, to long for the day when you are crowned King, God, in front of all the nations, Lord. And to engage, O Lord, with humility and hope with those around us.

Knowing that, Lord, in all things you work for good. And in all things you will ultimately take the glory. I ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Oops.