

That Was Lucky?

Do the activities of life happen for a reason or do they come to us by chance? Are there divine purposes behind the events of our world, or do they occur accidentally? If good things happen to you, are you lucky? If bad things happen, are you unlucky? Are circumstances coincidental or happenstantial, or are they intentional and timely? To answer these questions and more, we must consider a remarkable attribute of God — providence.

Understanding Providence

By God's act of creation, all things are rightly His, to rule in accordance with His good pleasure and to dispose in accordance with His will. God's supreme authority naturally leads to the idea that He has an overriding hand in the affairs of creation, historically referred to as the "**Hidden Hand**" of God or as His providence.

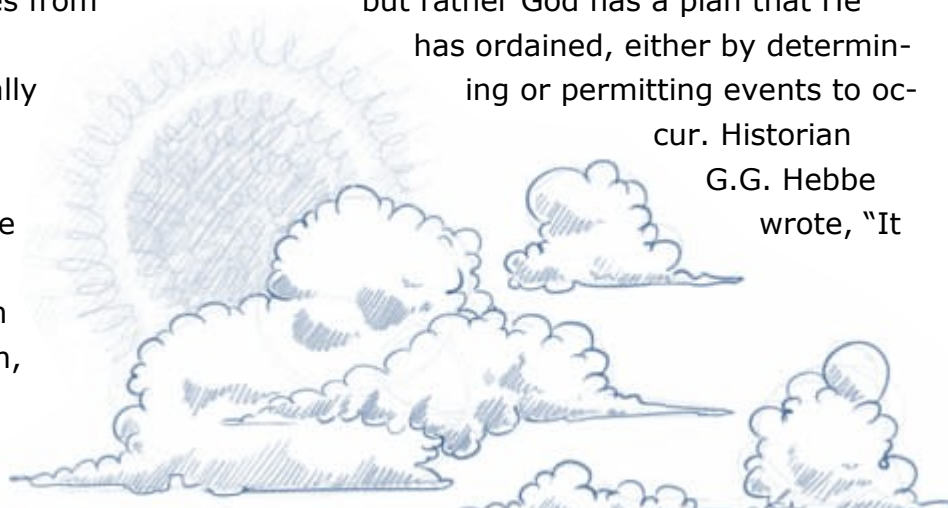
The word "providence" is much like the word "trinity." It is not mentioned in the Scriptures, but the idea is repeated throughout. Providence comes from two Latin words — *pro* and *videre*. The word *videre* literally means "to see" (we get the word *video*) while the word *pro* means "before." Thus, the word "providence" means "to see beforehand." The modern synonym for providence, then, would be "foresight."

The concept of providence implies that God can see the future. Since He is all-knowing, the fact that God can see the future is a given. He wouldn't be divine if He didn't have foresight. However, providence entails much more than foresight. It's not just that God can see what's going to happen, but that He can also bring it about the way that He wants it to happen.

In his 1828 Dictionary, Noah Webster defined providence as "active foresight." Like an author writing a novel, God can look forward in time and arrange events the way that He desires. He does not sit powerless to control the time, space, or creatures in His story. All three are in His hands; all three are at His command.

Included in the word "providence" is the root word "provide." Another way to view providence is God providing in advance to ensure that His will and good pleasure are fulfilled.

Life, then, is not haphazard or accidental, but rather God has a plan that He has ordained, either by determining or permitting events to occur. Historian G.G. Hebbe wrote, "It



must be recognized that God's power, which extends infinitely out into time and space, also extends infinitely in as well, into the most hidden and minutest of details." Historian Katherine Dang concurs, "God is not a detached monarch, distant and removed from His subjects (as deists believe), nor is He the Creator who left His creation to the mechanics of nature and reason. He is a personal God, conscious of and ruling every detail. He is intimately involved in people's lives."

Applying Providence

Taking into consideration God's divine providence, we can deduce three basic principles about the world around us.

First, **God has a plan** (*Isaiah 46:9-11; Daniel 4:35; Jeremiah 29:11*). If God is sovereign (which He is) and all things are under His control (which they are), then there can be no such thing as chance or accident. Life's events don't happen randomly or haphazardly, but rather they happen for a reason. In God's sovereignty, there can be no such thing as luck, for even the roll of the dice are under His control (*Proverbs 16:33*). Not one second nor one molecule escapes His notice or control. If they did, then He would not be God. He is either 100% in control of everything or He controls absolutely nothing.

The second principle is that **God's plan is good** (*Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20*). We may not view the things that happen to us or around us as good, but God uses them for His good pur-

poses. What about evil then? Yes, even evil is under God's control. Everything has to go through God to occur; all events must have God's permission. Everything God does or ordains is good. Thus, even evil must have a good purpose. The most evil event in history, the murder of Jesus Christ, was allowed and used by God for the good of man — salvation.

The third principle of providence is that **God's plan includes you** (*Jeremiah 29:11; Philippians 1:6; 2:13*). Deists believe that after God created the universe, He distanced Himself from creation and limited Himself only to watching time unfold, but that view of God is not biblical. The God of the Bible is personal; He is intimately involved in our lives. He cares about us and is working to conform us into the image of His beloved Son.

Some people argue that if the concept of Providence is true, then our choices do not really matter. God has already decided things for us. That argument may sound logical but it does not comply with reality. Climb a building and jump off and you will learn quickly that your choices matter.

Somehow, in God's sovereignty, He has allowed us a great deal of freedom to make decisions, and yet, He somehow fulfills His purposes. That's why He is God; He can use human freedom in His divine providence. God does not ask us to understand everything that happens to us. He only asks that we trust His kind providence (*Proverbs 3:5*).