

Question #47: Consider your typical prayers. Do they reflect a belief in God's providence? Explain by giving examples. _____

Appreciate His wise providential purposes and rule

How wonderful it is to consider that our highly exalted God has created us for the purpose of worshipping Him and enjoying Him forever! As the Westminster Shorter Catechism states, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." This statement clearly reflects the great and foremost commandment given to us by Jesus.

Matthew 22:37-38: ³⁷And He said to him, **"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."** ³⁸This is the great and foremost commandment."

How can we love God and *not* love His almighty rule over the world? How can we adore Him with everything that is within us and *not* worship and magnify the astounding wisdom displayed in His providential control over the world? We can only rejoice and give thanks for the great benefits we have in God's providence! **Thomas Watson** expressed it well: *"Without this wise providence of God there would be anxiety and confusion in the whole world, just like an army when it is routed and scattered. The providence of God infuses comfort and virtue into everything we enjoy. Our clothes would not warm us, our food would not nourish us, without the special providence of God. And does not all this deserve your admiration of providence?"*¹⁶ Rightly understanding God's providence drives us to exalt the honor of His name as we worship Him with holy fear and rejoicing!

Psalms 96:9-13: ⁹**Worship the LORD in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth.**

¹⁰**Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns;** Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity." ¹¹**Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains;** ¹²**Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy** ¹³**Before the LORD, for He is coming; For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, And the peoples in His faithfulness.**

God rebukes those who do not adore His mighty providence.

Jeremiah 5:22-23: ²²**"Do you not fear Me?" declares the LORD. "Do you not tremble in My presence?** For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it. ²³But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; They have turned aside and departed."

And He commands us to tremble and praise Him because He is highly exalted.

Psalms 99:1-3: ¹**The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble;** He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake! ²The LORD is great in Zion, And **He is exalted above all the peoples.** ³**Let them praise Thy great and awesome name; Holy is He.**

God's providence is worthy of our admiration and praise. Rightly understanding it benefits us while intensifying our worship of God in many ways, including the following.

- Increases our gratitude to God

Psalms 75:1: **We give thanks to Thee, O God,** we give thanks, For Thy name is near; **Men declare Thy wondrous works.**

¹⁶ Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*. reprint 2003 by The Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle PA. pg 124.

- Increases our trust in God.
Psalm 65:5: By awesome deeds Thou dost answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation, **Thou art the trust of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea.**
- Changes the way we view our world
Psalm 102:25-27: ²⁵**Of old Thou didst found the earth; And the heavens are the work of Thy hands.** ²⁶**Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure;** And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing Thou wilt change them, and they will be changed. ²⁷**But Thou are the same, And Thy years will not come to an end.**
- Helps us understand that evil is not outside of the control of God but that He is using it for the ultimate end of all of His good purposes.
Proverbs 16:4: **The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil.**
- Causes us to *rest in God's promises* as we consider *future events*, knowing that even if we face dreadful suffering, God will work it for our good.
Romans 8:28,31: ²⁸And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. . . . ³¹What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?**
Psalm 23:3-4: ³He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. ⁴**Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me;** Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.
- Encourages us to anticipate the accomplishment of *God's ultimate end in everything:* He will destroy evil forever, and we will lie down in peace.
Isaiah 14:24, 27: ²⁴The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, **"Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will be. . . ."** ²⁷For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His outstretched hand, who can turn it back?"
Isaiah 11:6-9: ⁶And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the kid, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. ⁷Also the cow and bear will graze; Their young will lie down together; And the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. ⁹**They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,** For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.
- Affirms that God's providence is the *foundation of our hope* for a future day of glorious rest and eternal happiness.
Revelation 21:3-4: ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, ⁴and **He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain;** the first things have passed away."

Oh Christian, consider how His eye is on the sparrow and He watches over you! Yours is a special providence, being in the company of God's dearly beloved and chosen people.

Romans 8:28: And we know **that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**

Thomas Watson further teaches us: "*God's providence reaches to all persons, especially the persons of the godly, who in a special manner are taken notice of. God takes care of every saint in particular, as if he had none else to care for. 'He careth for you,' 1 Peter 5:7. i.e., the elect in*

a special manner. 'The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him; to preserve them from death, and to keep them alive in famine.' Ps 33:18,19. God by his providential care shields off dangers from his people, and sets a life-guard of angels about them. Ps 34:7. God's providence keeps the very bones of the saints. Ps 34:20. It bottles their tears. Ps 56:8. It strengthens the saints in their weakness. Heb 11:34. It supplies all their wants out of its alms basket. Ps 23:5. Thus Providence wonderfully supplies the wants of the elect."¹⁷ Let us therefore appreciate God's providence enough to worship and magnify God's great name because of it. Let us do this while always seeking to acknowledge His invisible hand of guidance and care.

Question #48: At this particular time in your life, what do you most appreciate about God's providential purposes and rule? _____

Question #49: In what specific ways should you demonstrate (in your thoughts, actions, attitudes, and speech) your appreciation of God's providential purposes and rule? _____

Humbly submit to His will

We rightly acknowledge God's good providence by humbly submitting to it. Are we happy that God is in control? Then let us also be happy with what He gives and *also* with what He takes away. Remember God's good promise to never give us more than we can bear and to bring us safely to His heaven.

1 Corinthians 10:13: No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and **God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able,** but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

2 Timothy 4:18: **The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom;** to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 1:3-5: ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵**who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation** ready to be revealed in the last time.

John 10:27-29: ²⁷My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸and **I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.** ²⁹My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

Consider the example of the saints who have gone before us. Even though they faced great trials and the hand of God seemed against them at times, yet they trusted Him and humbly submitted to His will. **Watson** elaborates, "*God is to be trusted when his providences seem to run contrary to his promises. God promised to give David the crown, to make him king; but providence ran contrary to his promise. David was pursued by Saul, and was in danger of his life, but all this while it was David's duty to trust God. Pray observe, that the Lord by cross*

¹⁷ Watson, 120.

providences often brings to pass his promise. God promised Paul the lives of all that were with him in the ship; but the providence of God seemed to run quite contrary to his promise, for the winds blew, the ship split and broke in pieces. Thus God fulfilled his promise; upon the broken pieces of the ship they all came safe to shore. Trust God when providences seem to run quite contrary to promises."¹⁸

Abraham: Faithful to God in severe trial while trusting in God's promise to bless.

Hebrews 11:17-19: ¹⁷By faith Abraham, **when he was tested, offered up Isaac**; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; ¹⁸it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." ¹⁹He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type.

Job: Worshipped God in the midst of terrible suffering and pain.

Job 1:20-21: ²⁰Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. ²¹And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. **The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.**"

Job 13:15a: **Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.**

Joseph: Faithful to God in the midst of terrible hardships and suffering.

Genesis 50:19-21: ¹⁹**But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?"** ²⁰**And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.** ²¹**So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones."** So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Daniel: Faithful to God in the midst of great suffering and severe temptation in a pagan culture.

Daniel 1:1-9: ¹**In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.** ²**And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah in to his hand**, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels in the treasury of his god. ³**Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, . . .** ⁶**Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. . .** ⁸**But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.** ⁹**Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials.**

Paul: Persevered to the end despite tremendous suffering and persecution.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28: ²³**Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so;** in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. ²⁴**Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.** ²⁵**Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.** ²⁶**I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;** ²⁷**I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.** ²⁸**Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches.**

Question #50: Which of the above examples are most helpful in encouraging you to submit to God's will? Explain how they are encouraging to you. _____

¹⁸ Watson, *Body of Divinity*, 123.

Question #51: Describe one or more specific situations in which you need to submit to God's will. Then list specific actions you must take in order to submit to God's will in this (these) situations. _____

Question #52: Make a specific step-by-step plan that you will follow to take the actions listed in Q. #51. _____

Never Complain against God's Providence

Would you like to rule the world? Do you have a wiser plan than God's? Would God and His world be better off if you were at the helm? Such thinking is utter folly, and we all know it. Why then do we complain disrespectfully against God's wise providence? Shall the clay say to the potter, why did you make me like this? (Romans 9:20-21) Shall the dog bite the hand that feeds it? Complaining to God about the circumstances of our lives is sheer folly, but *seeking consolation and comfort* in His sovereign power, wisdom, and care is wise. Consider the words of **Thomas Watson**: "*Let us **be content** that God should rule the world; **learn to acquiesce** in his will, and **submit to his providence**. Does any affliction befall you? Remember God sees it is that which is fit for you, or it would not come.*"¹⁹

Philippians 2:12-16: ¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling;** ¹³**for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** ¹⁴**Do all things without grumbling or disputing;** ¹⁵that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

May we always seek humble submission to God, realizing He knows what we need far better than we do ourselves. The circumstances God has ordered for our lives are those which produce our highest good and God's greatest glory!

Matthew 6:31-34: ³¹Do not be anxious then, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "With what shall we clothe ourselves?" ³²For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; **for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.** ³³**But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.** ³⁴Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

¹⁹ Watson, 125.

Question #53: How do Philippians 2:12-16 and Matthew 6:31-34 specifically affirm the great wisdom of submitting to God's providence without complaint? _____

Question #54: What particular aspects of your life right now are you most tempted to complain about? _____

Question #55: How will you apply Philippians 2:12-16 and Matthew 6:31-34 to these particular aspects of your life? _____

Be Thankful for God's Providence

Dear friends, when we consider God's goodness to us, we must respond with thankfulness! God has promised that every single thing in our lives will ultimately work for our good. Since He has met our greatest need by not sparing His own Son, He will also give us everything else that we need.

Romans 8:31-32: ³¹What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?**

³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, **how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?**

If God will give us a Kingdom when we die, will He not also give us daily bread while we live? If Jesus suffered and died to bring us to Himself, will He not also hear our prayer when we cry to Him for help? Indeed He will! And He won't stop there. He will also crown us with eternal life and allow us to see His glory forever in Heaven. What more could we want from the good hand of Providence? Learn then, that it is fitting for the upright to praise God. Thanksgiving to God is pure praise! It honors the God who gives us life and breath.

Psalms 50:23: **He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me;** And to him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God.

Those who know the goodness of God will respond with the highest praises of our King! Thanksgiving runs through the veins of every God-focused saint. Praise is the garment that fits handsomely on our backs.

Psalms 145:9-10: ⁹The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works. ¹⁰**All Thy works shall give thanks to Thee, O LORD, And Thy godly ones shall bless Thee.**

The mouths of the wicked are filled with grumbling, murmuring, and complaining. The wicked cannot praise God; neither are they thankful. The poison of asps is on their lips, and with the tongue they profane the name of God. But such wicked speech does not befit a saint!

2 Timothy 3:2-4: ²For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, **boastful, arrogant, revilers,** disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³unloving, irreconcilable, **malicious gossips, without self-control,** brutal, haters of good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, conceited, **lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.**

Psalms 33:1-5: ¹**Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright.** ²**Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings.** ³**Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy.** ⁴For

the word of the LORD is upright; And all His work is done in faithfulness. ⁵He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.

Let us therefore give God the thanksgiving and praise which is due Him! No matter what cup we are called to drink, no matter what bitterness of soul should afflict us, no matter what great trial may befall us—may we stand in the company of God-honoring saints, with the glorious praise of God in our mouth, secure in the knowledge that He gives only what works for our good. May we do His good will by giving thanks in all circumstances!

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: ¹⁶Rejoice always; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸**in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you** in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 5:18-20: And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; **always giving thanks for all things** in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Question #56: According to Romans 8:31-32, Psalm 50:23, and Psalm 145:9-10 33:1-5, on what basis should Christians be *characterized* by thankful spirits? _____

Question #57: According to Romans 3:13-14, 2 Timothy 3:2-4, Psalm 33:1-5 how should the speech of believers in Christ differ from the speech of unbelievers? _____

Question #58: Read and meditate on 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and Ephesians 5:18-20 . Then write a hymn or a prayer of thanksgiving to God focusing specifically on your delight in and appreciation of His providence. _____

Trust in God's Good Providence to His People

When we consider the promises which God has made, we should be encouraged to rest in His providence. Because God is in control, we can rest knowing that He will bring about our good and His glory! **Thomas Watson** gives us this challenge: "*Therefore, Christians, believe that God loves you, and that he will make the most cross providences to promote his glory and your good.*"²⁰ Scripture affirms that God will care for us and meet our needs.

Psalm 37:3-7: ³**Trust in the LORD, and do good;** Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. ⁴Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵**Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him,** and He will do it. ⁶And He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your judgment as the noonday. ⁷**Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him;** Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.

²⁰ Watson, 125.

Jesus often confronting our fears with, “Do not be afraid,” followed by assurances of His presence with us. Indeed we have nothing to fear if we love God, everything will work for our *ultimate good*.

Luke 12:32: Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

Question #59: List the commands in Psalm 37:3-7 and Luke 12:32. _____

Question #60: Now list the promises and affirmations of truth in these passages. _____

Question #61: How do the promises and affirmations of truth in these passages encourage you to so trust in God’s providence that you delight and rejoice in obeying His commands? _____

Notes: