

March 27, 2022 - Brad Kloeppe

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Preacher: Brad Kloeppe

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Wow, you gave me a lot of time. That's good.

I hope so. I hope we do. Yeah, I'm tired. I'm looking forward to going home and taking a nap. And I was telling Jeffrey I worked on this until about one in the morning.

And then, by the providence of God, Auburn woke up at six. And so I woke up and finished it at six this morning. So I don't do well on little sleep either, so I'm tired.

Let's go ahead and start by praying. Heavenly Father, I thank you for this day. I thank you for this time. We can come look at your word, God. I pray that your spirit just helps me as I present this, the life of Joseph, and just your providence in his life, and just look at providence in general, Lord.

I just pray that we can glean from this, Lord, apply it to our lives, and that you can work through me. In Jesus' name, amen. I think I mentioned last time that when I'm driving for UPS, I like to listen to sermons and podcasts, and sometimes I'll flip through episodes that Joe Rogan's done.

[1:34] I'm not saying I recommend this. He definitely has a foul mouth. But you do come across some really interesting guests sometimes, and he had a guest on this week who was a former CIA operative, and his name was Mike Baker.

And I figured they would probably talk about Russia, Ukraine, and I wanted to hear his opinion on it. And so I listened through the episode, and towards the end of the interview, Baker was talking about these hypersonic missiles you can put a nuke on.

And, Teddy, you actually mentioned that your buddy talked about this also. Basically, these missiles, they go at Mach 9, and they can completely evade the U.S. defense, the air defense system that we have.

So if your hope was that you could shoot down one of these things, don't have your hopes too high, because these things, the way they move and how fast they are, they can't time it to actually knock these things out of the air.

Whereas the old ones, you could kind of get the trajectory of the missile and time it to where you could actually get it over the ocean or whatever. But anyway, let's see.

[3:06] It used to take five hours to make a decision for a military response. From the time you would get intelligence that a country was going to deploy a nuke and the time it took to deploy one.

And then it went down to 15 minutes. And now it's down to what sounds like seconds. So little time that you can't even retaliate. So because of these short response times, the Russian developed a system called the dead hand system.

And that signals all nukes to be deployed if it recognizes that all the Soviet leadership has been killed. So I don't know if the leadership has chips or what.

If they're like somehow this computer system can go out, recognize that their leadership is dead, and then from there deploy everything else they got.

Like all the missiles, all the nukes. And I mean, it kind of makes you not want to take out their leadership. But I guess that's part of the idea behind the system. Anyway, after he told Joe all this, he said, I didn't mean to bum you out.

[4:16] And Joe says, man, it's too late for that. I'm so bummed out right now. And you could hear this sense of hopelessness in Joe's voice as he talks about how terrified he is that this is a real scenario that could play out.

I pray this morning as we look at God's providence in general and in the life of Joseph, we realize as believers we have a hope, a peace, and a purpose because of a God that is in control. We can trust him no matter what we go through. He already knows about it. He is in control, and he has a purpose for it in our lives. What does Romans 8, 28 say?

For we know that God causes all things to work together for the good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose. And we are called according to his purpose. And remember what David says in Psalms 46.

I like how this one fits with our time of, you know, kind of war. You know, David mentioned this morning in the breaking of bread. I mean, we could be on the verge of World War III, and there's just a lot of things up in the air.

[5:28] But it says, Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth. He makes war cease. So he brings desolations. He can bring about war.

He makes war cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He can also make them cease. He burns the chariots with fire. And here it is.

It says, Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us.

The God of Jacob is our fortress. That's pretty comforting when you start thinking, Be still and know that I am God. He's in control. That is his character.

And he's our fortress that we can look to in these times. Joe Rogan's hope is in this world. And it's easy to see with what's going on in the world today, just how hopeless the world is as an unbeliever.

[6:30] Fafo had this whole part of the Rocky Balboa movie memorized. But there's this scene towards the end.

It's supposed to be like an inspirational speech he makes to his son. And he starts it by, The world wasn't all sunshine and rainbows. He's telling his son this. But anyway, the world wasn't all sunshine and rainbows in Joseph's time either.

Joseph was sold into slavery to these Ishmaelites and Midianites who just happened to be passing by and happened to be going to Egypt. You've heard of happenstance, right?

Well, it's not a thing. It was God's providence. Anyway, so then he was sold again in Egypt to Potiphar, unjustly accused of rape, therefore unjustly thrown into prison, forgot about in prison, and then went through an historic famine.

Joseph went through a lot of trials in his life. Look at what he named his sons in Genesis 41, 51, and 52.

[7:41] I'll probably just read all these. You can try to follow along, but I've got a lot of material. For the sake of time, I'm just going to read through these passages.

So Genesis 41, 51, and 52. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh, for he said, God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house.

So all those bad things that happened to Joseph in his life, he could see who is in control to the point where he forgot about the hardship and hard times.

It reminds me of Romans 8, verse 18. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Then the name of the second son he called Ephraim, for God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. We will see God's purpose for taking Joseph through all the hardships and afflictions in this story of God's providence.

[8:46] At the beginning of the story of Joseph, after Jacob gives Joseph his coat of many colors and makes his brothers jealous, Joseph has two dreams, divine revelations from God.

Let's read Genesis 37, verses 6 through 11. He said to them, Hear this dream that I have dreamed. Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf.

His brother said to him, Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us? So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

They already hated him because his dad gave him this coat of many colors, and it talks about how his dad favored him and Benjamin as the daughters of Rebecca.

[9:44] And anyway, they hated him even more because now he's telling them, Not only are you the favorite son, you get the coat, but now I see this prophetic dream in the future that you guys are all going to bow down to me.

So if you want to make your brothers mad. Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.

But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?

And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. I find it interesting that his father kept Joseph's dream in mind.

The father didn't feel any jealousy or anything. My guess is that it crossed his mind that it could have been prophetic and from the Lord. And of course it was. You see, that dream was God's purpose.

[10:51] And what does Job 42.2 say about God's purpose? Let's read it. It says, I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

I don't believe there's a person in the Bible where the providence of God is more clearly displayed than Joseph. We will see God using fallen man throughout Joseph's life to accomplish his purpose. And we will see the prophetic dream Joseph had at the beginning. Through God's providence will come true. which will set off a whole series of events that will show God's providence ultimately leading to the Savior of the world and his plan of redemption and even to us today at Bethel Community Church in the land of the free of the United States.

I say all that and string God's providence to us because God's providence isn't just at work in the life of Joseph or Jesus. Although it's very evident I'm sorry, it's very evident in their lives it's at work in our life also.

There's a clip from one of R.C. Sproul's messages called No Maverick Molecule. I'm not going to play it for the sake of time but you can look it up on YouTube. But in this clip he says that if God is not sovereign then God is not God.

[12:12] And if there is one maverick molecule in the universe, one molecule outside the scope of God's sovereign ordination, then you shouldn't have the slightest confidence that any of God's promises he has made about the future will come to pass.

Because what if that maverick molecule changes everything? I mean you think about this butterfly effect you even see in Joseph's life. So just think about that.

There's not a maverick molecule outside of God's control. So I've talked about God's sovereignty and used this word providence a few times this morning already.

And I think it would be beneficial to look more into what providence means and some aspects of God's providence and hopefully answer a few difficult questions when looking at God's providence. So what I'm going to do is I think I got three questions here and I'm going to try to answer them in this and kind of give us a better grasp of what providence is and what biblical providence looks like in the Bible.

[13:22] So the hard questions are does prayer influence God's providence? How is God's government related to sin in the world? And the question of how God's authority interacts with our choices?

You see the question of providence boils down to the question of cause and causality. Everything has a cause and the ultimate cause is God.

I'll repeat that. The question of providence boils down to the question of cause and causality.

Everything has a cause and the ultimate cause is God. A great example of God's sovereignty working through fallen man's choices is the life of Joseph and hopefully we can get a glimpse of that this morning.

Before we do though, I wanted to take a look at the word providence. So the word doesn't really give an accurate description of what we mean when we biblically talk about God's providence because when you break the word down, you have the prefix pro, which means before, and the root video, we talk about the YouTube video that's recording right now, it's a broadcasting of visual images or God seeing visual images.

So you have God who sees everything beforehand in regards to time. If you break down the word, the providence video, it's God seeing everything beforehand in regards to time.

[15:00] You can see how that word doesn't really do God's providence justice because although God seeing everything beforehand is certainly part of His providence, God is much more involved than that.

The heart of the concept of providence is that God governs His creation. So when you think of the word providence, think of God's governing. He's governing His creation.

I've been reading on Facebook these stories on the origins of Turkey Hill and I wanted to read a few paragraphs here. I thought it was a cool story of God providing. So they're talking about the dining hall and balcony.

Maybe some of you have already read this. It says, After much deliberation on the best solution, a plan for a two-floor concrete structure was approved, with the bottom being a lobby, office space, and the top housing, the dining hall, and kitchen.

But because of the desire to add a balcony, special pre-stressed concrete tea beans had to be added to create the 10-foot overhang. These beans had to be special ordered so a source was located that could meet the needs and an order was placed.

[16:13] A down payment was made at the time of the order with the remaining balance due upon delivery. The company made it clear that unless a check was presented when the beans arrived, they would not even be unloaded.

At the time the order was placed, the money was not in the bank. When the company contacted the staff to schedule the delivery date, the money was not in the bank. On the Monday of the week of the delivery date, the money was still not in the bank.

But that week, private donations came trickling in and the Lord provided the money in His own time. When the trucks rolled in on Thursday, the money was in the bank, a check was written, and the beams were unloaded and construction continued on schedule.

The dining hall and its balcony had been enjoyed by visitors for over 30 years thanks to willing donors, hard workers, and the faithful timing and provision of the Lord.

We see God's provision there. There's a relationship between provisions and providence. Provide and providence have the same Latin structure.

[17:23] Part of God's providence, His governing over His creation, is providing our needs. Philippians 4.19 says, And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in the glory of Christ Jesus.

Then Matthew 6.8 tells us, For your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. So He provides our needs, He knows what we need. So if He knows our needs before we ask and provides our needs, then why are we praying?

When we studied prayer in the men's Sunday school, I don't know if you guys remember, we used this acrostic axe. So what does axe stand for?

Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. When you break each one of these down, you will see that prayer is so much more for us than God.

God doesn't need us, and He doesn't need our prayers. He is self-sufficient and self-existent. He has and does enjoy perfect fellowship with the Trinity from all eternity.

[18:34] The Godhead perfectly fulfills one another. Think about that. I mean, before anything was creation, eternity passed. He didn't need us. He was self-existent, self-sufficient, and He was in perfect unity with the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, His Son.

So let's look at adoration to God and how it is good for us. It is a blessing for us and helps us in our spiritual growth. It seems boring to the world, but the joy that comes from adoration and the worship of God is very beneficial in our walk with God.

Confession means our relationship with God and brings us back into fellowship with Him. Our relationship with God is deepened through thanksgiving also.

What does Paul say in Philippians 4, verses 6 and 7? Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

And what's the result? The peace of God which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and your mind in Christ Jesus. So I'm going to spend some time here on the last one, which is supplication.

[19:55] This is where the question of God's providence and our prayers really meet. I'll ask the question again, why are we asking for what we need when God already knows and provides what we need?

Does prayer change anything? So what does James 5, 6 say? It says, the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

So of course prayer can change things. It says it right there. Here's the thing. God not only ordains the ends of human history, but he also ordains the means.

And our prayers are a means by which God accomplishes his plans. In a similar fashion, God works out his plan of redemption through the preaching of his word.

In his sovereignty, he works his plans out through the means of prayer and he works out salvation through the means of the beautiful feet of those spreading the gospel. Romans 10, 15 says, And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

[21:05] As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news. You see, God knew what we are going to pray before you prayed it.

And that knowledge was factored into his plan all along. In praying and sharing the gospel, we are being used by God and what it is or what privilege it is to be used by God.

It's the greatest privilege. So, can prayer change things? Yes. God uses our prayer as a means to change things in his plan. Can prayer change God's mind?

Absolutely not. And in regards to the passages that talk about God relenting or changing his mind, we have to remember that the Bible describes God in human terms for our understanding and uses metaphorical language like God owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

He uses this metaphorical language. Sproul says in one of his messages, he says, God is not a cosmic cowboy even though he owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

[22:15] It's a human way of talking about his vast riches. So, you have the didactic portions of Scripture and by that I mean the portions of Scripture that are intended to teach.

okay, and then you have the narrative and the didactic corrects the narrative, the portions of Scripture that are telling the stories.

Okay, not corrects it in pointing out an error but corrects it in qualifying the meaning of the narrative portions of Scripture.

and I'm glad he does or we would be in danger of misinterpreting Scripture. Here's the didactic verse to correct the narratives of God relenting or changing his mind.

It says, God is not a man that he should lie or a son of man that he should change his mind. Has he said or will he not do it or has he spoken and will it not and will he not fulfill it?

[23:18] That's Numbers 23, 19. So if you think the mind of God can be changed, you are simply saying one of a few things.

Either God doesn't know everything or God's intentions are somehow defective or bordering on the unethical. It would be like praying, God, have you considered this?

Like you're telling God something new or to reprove God and tell him what he's doing is unethical. We don't instruct God what to do or what not to do.

Next, there was the question of how God's government relates to sin in the world. I'll say this in regards to that question. God the creator is eternally and immutably good.

He is unchanging. Okay? That's him. The creature was made mutably good, meaning he was made with the possibility of changing in his performance to perfectly live up to God's holy standards.

[24:29] Humans were made with the ability to sin. God never does evil, nor is he ever the author of evil. Does evil happen under God's sovereign providence?

Yes. He ordains evil in the sense that he allows it to happen. I don't mean he gives permission, but rather he chooses not to stop it.

God never forces innocent people to do evil. He has created creatures with the capacity for evil. He doesn't force them to exercise that capacity, but he knows that they are going to exercise that capacity, and he could have chosen to not allow the first sin to take place by destroying his creation.

But again, he allowed it to happen by choosing not to stop it, and in choosing not to stop it, he is ordaining it. Why? I'm not sure, but if I had a guess, I would say it comes down to him receiving glory through it all.

That's my best guess. Okay, the last hard question is, which will lead us back into Joseph's life, how does God's authority interact with our choices?

[25:47] We all know the story of Joseph, and for the sake of time, I'm going to go through it quickly. By God's providence, Joseph is given a coat of many colors.

He had his dreams, his brothers became insanely jealous, they sell him to the Ishmaelites and Midianites, who sell him again to Potiphar, who cast him in prison on wrongful convictions of rape. And while in prison, he interprets the dreams of two prisoners, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. The chief cupbearer, just like Joseph says will happen, is restored to his office as Pharaoh's chief cupbearer again.

And the baker, as interpreted by Joseph, is killed. Joseph asks the cupbearer to remember him, but he forgets until Pharaoh has a dream.

Then Joseph is called out of prison to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Let's read this verse. And this is what I saw over and over again in the life of Joseph.

[26:57] It's Genesis 41 verses 15 and 16. It says, And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have had a dream and there is no one who can interpret it.

I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it. Joseph answered Pharaoh, it is not in me. God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.

So Joseph, as well as many others, recognized God's providence, him working in situations of his life. Remember what he says there, it's not me, but it's God who will give you the answer.

Him working in the situation of his life, as well as him both sending prophetic dreams and telling Joseph the meaning of many dreams. Pharaoh is pleased with Joseph's interpretation of his dream and wisdom about what to do.

Notice he even recognizes God's hand in all this. I want to read Genesis 41 verses 35 through 40 here. This is Pharaoh recognizing God's hand.

[28:16] let them all gather all the good of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities.

Which, by the way, there are historic records of the famine and they're called these storage cities. And there's record of the, I forgot which historic book, but they have record of these storage cities that basically around Egypt that stored all this grain and stuff that happened in the years of plenty. And so, that food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.

This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, can we find a man like this? In whom is the Spirit of God?

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning as wise as you are. You shall be over my house and all my people shall order themselves as you command.

[29:31] Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you. So, now comes the pinnacle of the story where Joseph's dreams by God's providence are fulfilled.

Joseph's brothers are forced to go to Egypt to get food because of the great famine. Let's read here in Genesis 42, verses 6 through 9.

It says, Joseph was governor over the land. He was the one who sold to all the people of the land and Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground.

Just like the dream said. Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. Where do you come from?

He said, and they said, from the land of Canaan to buy food. Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them.

[30:36] And he said to them, you are spies. You have come to see the nakedness of the land. So Joseph comes up with this plan to bring his whole family to Egypt through deception.

Remember, God's providence is always at work through fallen man. What else is he going to work through? All of man's fallen. And so even Joseph, he deceives his brothers here, and he comes up with this plan.

But God can still work through the sin of any man. As we will see in the last few verses we look at, part of this plan involves planting money in his brother's sacks as they return home to their father. I find their action, I'm sorry, I find their reaction interesting as they also recognize the hand of God in the situation. him. There's too many verses.

So this was a huge section of scripture, and I struggled, like, there's so many ways to approach it. And chapters 37 through 50 are what cover Joseph's life.

[31:47] So I listened through all 14 chapters, and I highlighted all the verses that I thought had to do with God's providence. And all these different characters recognize God's hand in these situations.

I'm just picking out a couple, but it's just interesting that Pharaoh, the brothers, his father, all these people recognize God is doing this. God is doing this. That's what I saw over and over again.

But anyway, so here's one example of it. Genesis 42, 28. He said to his brothers, My money has been put back. Here it is in the mouth of my sack.

At this their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, What is this that God has done to us? They recognize, I mean, this is God at work.

What's he doing? What's his plan here? So Joseph's plan works, and his brothers come back, and Joseph reveals himself to them and says this in Genesis 45, verses 4 and 5.

[32:56] These two verses and the last two in Genesis 50 are real key in this picture of God's providence. So Joseph said to his brothers, Come near to me, please.

And they came near, and he said, I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here.

For God sent me before you to preserve life. God sent me before you to preserve life. Keep that sentence in mind as I'm going to play this short clip by R.C.

Sproul, where he connects the story of Joseph to God's plan of redemption and beyond. God sent you before me to preserve life. God had a plan to preserve life, and through his providence, he ultimately achieved that through Jesus.

So Joseph gets his whole family in Egypt, and his father dies there, and his brothers are scared that Joseph will take his revenge now that their dad is dead. But this is what Joseph tells them, and this is where we clearly see God's authority interacting with our choices.

[34:14] Genesis 50, 19 and 20. But Joseph said to them, Do not fear, for I am in the place of God. As for you, you meant it for evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive as they are today.

Again, God's bringing life through all this plan that he had. Joseph could have been bitter about the situation. The whole situation, he had so many trials and hardship that he had to endure.

Instead, he recognized the providence of God. You meant it for evil. God meant it for good. Let us learn from this as we look at what's going on in the world today, and as we look at the trials in our own lives.

We can have hope and peace knowing that God is in control and has a purpose. Be still and know that I am God.

I'll close in prayer after we listen to this clip. Sproul does a really good job of linking all these things better than I could ever speak about it.

[35:33] So I think it's like a three-minute clip. I thought it would be worth watching. What means in human history? If Joseph dies in the

cistern and is not sold to the Midianites, what happens?

Well, he doesn't go to Egypt. He doesn't become prime minister of Egypt. And so when his brothers come down to get food, they don't meet Joseph. They meet some other guy.

But instead, the brothers meet Joseph. And not only does Joseph provide the foodstuffs they're looking for to be spared from starvation, but he establishes a region of Egypt and invites all of the family of Jacob to migrate down into Egypt so that they can be fed the rest of their days.

And so they settle in the land of Goshen. And so all of a sudden, the Jews move from the north down into Egypt. And not only did they move down into Egypt, but then what? Then a couple of pharaohs later, the new pharaoh comes on the scene.

He forgets all about the promises that Joseph made to his family. And he doesn't like the Jews. And so he takes these people and makes them his slaves.

[36:56] And then, of course, they cry out and groan under their burdens. And God hears them. And he appears in a burning bush to this guy out in the desert.

And Moses comes down and takes on the people. You have an exodus. They go to Sinai. They receive the law. There they receive the whole instructions for the sacrificial system of the Old Testament.

And when that's violated, the prophets come. And the prophets call them back to the original agreement that they made in the desert after the exodus. And when the law isn't fulfilled and atonement is necessary for the people.

And God becomes incarnate and comes to this world through the virgin's birth. And so on. And so that the whole history of redemption hangs on that cistern. No cistern.

No Egypt. See? No Egypt. No Moses. No Moses. No Ten Commandments. No Israel. No Jesus.

[37:56] No England. No United States of America. All of which ultimately trace its political history to a concept of law that was given to a bunch of semi-nomads out in the middle of the desert in the Mediterranean.

All because some kid gets a coat and his brothers are jealous about it. You meant it for evil.

God meant it for good. God sent me here is what he said. And in this story, we see sovereignty.

We see that human history is in the hands of the God who is concerned about the smallest details.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I thank you for this time. We can look at your word, God. And just thank you for your providence, God.

[39:09] Thank you that we can rest in a God who is in control. We can find peace. We can find hope in that. Lord, and we can find purpose in that.

We just thank you for this. Thank you for this time together in fellowship, God. Pray that we can apply these things to our lives, Lord, in your name.

Amen.