

**What Do You Believe? – “The Ologies”**  
**Study Notes #5, February 14, 2016**  
**Theology Proper – Part 3 – God’s Will & Providence**

- **REVIEW:**

This is our fifth lesson in the new study of “*What Do You Believe?*” We have introduced the material by considering:

- **Why do you believe what you believe?**

So we looked at the objective and subjective means of determining our beliefs. ***What is your source, basis, or authority for your beliefs?***

That ultimately led us to the ultimate source of truth – God Himself. Only the ultimate absolute Being can provide and reveal ultimate absolute truth! And he does so objectively in His Word, the Holy Scriptures, the Bible! So we first looked at:

**The Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures:**

- **Bibliology – The Study of the Bible**
- ***sola Scriptura* – Scripture Alone – the sole authority and source for truth**

Then we moved into the first and logically beginning subject to study:

- **“Theology?” *Theos* – God; *logos* – logic, word, idea**

**Theology Proper – The Study of God (Himself)**

The first and most important is known as “***Theology Proper.***” That is the term used to refer to the purest and highest branch of “Theology” in total – namely **the study of God Himself!**

- **To Begin, “*Who*” is God?**

We looked at why it is important that we must think rightly about God. As A. W. Tozer so powerfully taught us in his book, ***The Knowledge of the Holy*** –

***“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”***

We looked at both the **The Existence of God** and the **The Knowledge of God – His Incomprehensibility.** As John Calvin said that **“the finite cannot grasp the infinite.”** But, through various means, we can *know God!*

**So if God is incomprehensible, and unknowable fully, what are we to do? We must know God! YET - This is an impossibility! What are we to do?**

- **We must understand that before we even try, we will never fully understand or comprehend God!**

**And yet – God chooses to reveal Himself and be “known” by and through His Son Jesus Christ! (Mat. 11:27; 1Cor. 2:14-16; John 1:14-18)**

- **Then – How can we know God? How can we comprehend Him?**

**Through Jesus Christ! He has explained Him! He is the only way we come to know God! (Truth in tension!)**

**We see and know God best in Jesus Christ!**

So, we now move from looking at “Who” God is, to “What” God is.

- **“What” is God?**

*I mean this with reverence and respect, knowing He is NOT a “What” but a Who! But, we need to ponder what kind of Being He is. **What is His essence? What is His nature?***

- I. **The TRINITY:** from combination of words “tri – unity” or “three in oneness”

This brings us to the first and perhaps the most important doctrine of “theology proper” about God Himself, and that is **His Own Essence and Person**. That mysterious and glorious, scary and complex, concept is known as the **Trinity**. It is not only one of the greatest and deepest concepts in Theology, it may be the most profound and important concept in all of man’s thinking! *(It is also one of the “scariest” and hardest to grasp!)*

- **This is perhaps the most difficult concept in all the Bible or Theology!**
- **Discuss why? Why we must move immediately from His Incomprehensibility to the Trinity – Incomprehensibility is most seen in Trinity, and Trinity is perhaps the most incomprehensible attribute.**

A. W. Tozer on the Holy Trinity:

**“To meditate on the three Persons of the Godhead is to walk in thought through the Garden eastward in Eden and to tread on holy ground. Our sincerest effort to grasp the incomprehensible mystery of the Trinity must remain forever futile, and only by deepest reverence can it be saved from actual presumption.**

### A. One in Essence:

The very definition of God demands that He be ONE, and One Alone! The concept of “monotheism” is central to the “One True God,” and was emphasized and declared repeatedly for the Jews and the nation of Israel.

- **God’s Unity and Uniqueness**

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NASB) <sup>4</sup> ***“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!”*** <sup>5</sup> ***“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”***

So clearly, this concept of **God’s One Essence, His Unity** is important to Him and should be to us!

- What is another word for “uniqueness” when speaking of God? **Holiness**

And Peter was inspired to write later:

1 Peter 1:16 (NASB) <sup>16</sup> ***because it is written (in Leviticus), “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”***

So clearly, this concept of **God’s Uniqueness, His Holiness** is important to Him and should be to us!

Many believe that the Trinity is the reason that the threefold praise to God for His holiness in Isaiah and Revelation, where He is declared by the angels to be **“Holy, Holy, Holy” is for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!**

- **CONCLUSION about the Unity of God –  
God is ONE in Unity & Essence  
God is HOLY in Uniqueness**

### B. Three in Persons:

In spite of the most high and holy significance of the above concept of one in essence and holiness, He clearly reveals Himself throughout both the Old and the New Covenants as being Three in Persons!

You won’t find the word “trinity” in your Bible, but the concept and doctrine is clearly there, everywhere! We all know this in **the New Covenant or Testament**, as these three Persons are clearly revealed. Notice in the

- **New Testament Trinity:**

**God the Father**

**God the Son, Jesus Christ**

## God the Holy Spirit

***But, the Old Covenant or Testament has the concept of three Persons in the Godhead, or the Trinity, everywhere also!*** The Covenant that everyone would think would be so “mono-theistic” that such a concept would be a heresy!

- **Old Testament Trinity:**

***YHWH Elohim*** – the Lord God

***Malak YHWH*** – the Angel of the Lord

***Ruach YHWH*** – the Spirit of the Lord

In fact, there is **no passage in the Bible where it is stated that God is an absolute Unity**, singular in Person!

Even in what is the greatest “mono-theistic” statement in all of Holy Scripture (or even the writings of men), this concept and truth is there – at least not contradicted.

***“SHEMA Hear O Israel: YHWH the Lord our ELEINU God (plural) is YHWH ECHAD (one - united).”***

- Therefore, the Holy Trinity of the One God in the Old Covenant:
- ***These three OT Divine Persons correspond exactly to those in the NT!***
- **CONCLUSION** about the Trinity of God –  
God is Three in Persons  
All Three Persons are fully God

### A. Affirmations:

1. God is three Persons
2. Each Person is fully God
3. There is One God.

***All major Trinitarian errors that have arisen have come from a denial of one or another of the above primary affirmations!***

### ***(Transition – New Material)***

*We have examined these questions –*

- What do you believe?
- Who is God?
- “What” is God?

Now we come to questioning about God's decisions and actions –

- **How does God act?**  
*He acts according to His Own Divine Will!*

- **The Will of God:**

Gods' will is an attribute of **purpose**:

i.e. Attributes that have to do with making and carrying out decisions.

Other Attributes of Purpose are linked to His Will –

- Freedom (of His Will)
- Omnipotence or Sovereignty of His Will

**God's Will:** (Definition by Wayne Grudem)

**Gods' will is that attribute of God whereby He approves and determines to bring about every action necessary for the existence and activity of Himself and all creation.**

- **Gods' will is the final or most ultimate reason for everything that happens!**

This is more than evident and obvious throughout the Scriptures:

God inspired Paul to write of Himself:

Ephesians 1:11 (NASB) <sup>11</sup> *also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose **who works all things after the counsel of His will,***

And God inspires the 24 Elders to proclaim of Himself:

Revelation 4:11 (NASB) <sup>11</sup> *"Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for **You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."***

Daniel 4:32 (NASB) <sup>32</sup> *and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place *will be* with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that **the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.'***

1 Peter 3:17 (NASB) <sup>17</sup> *For it is better, **if God should will it so**, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.*

1 Peter 4:19 (NASB) <sup>19</sup> *Therefore, those also who suffer **according to the will of God** shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.*

James 4:13-15 (NASB) <sup>13</sup> Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." <sup>14</sup> Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. <sup>15</sup> **Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."**

- **Yet – are there not distinctions in different aspects of God's will?**

*Does He not will that His justice be perfect and delivered to all the guilty?  
And yet, does He not will to overlook the sin of the elect and save them by His grace?*

*Does He not establish and mandate that His will shall be done?  
And yet, does He not command some things accordingly to His will and yet they remain undone, (like the Ten Commandments)?*

### **Distinctions in Aspects of God's Will:** (Distinctions of His Nature)

#### **1. Necessary Will of God –**

**God's necessary will** includes everything that He **must** will according to His Own nature! God eternally wills to be, or wants to be, Who He is and What He is! He cannot choose to be different that He is or to cease to exist.

He says of Himself, "**I AM Who I Am**" or "**I WILL be what I will be!**" (Exo. 3:14)

#### **2. Free Will of God –**

**God's free will** includes all things that God decided to will but had no necessity to will according to His nature! This includes things like His will to create the universe and all things in it, visible and invisible! This includes things like His will to redeem His creation, including His people! These were totally free choices on His part. (*God is the only One with truly and totally FREE Will!*)

### **Distinctions in Aspects of God's Will:** (Distinctions of His Purpose)

#### **1. Hidden Will of God –**

This can also be referred to as the **Secret Will of God**, the **Sovereign Will of God**, or the **Decretive Will of God** (His will of Divine Decree). These are the things that "must needs come to pass!" These are the things that shall most certainly be done!

Deuteronomy 29:29 (NASB) <sup>29</sup> **"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever,** that we may observe all the words of this law.

## 2. Revealed Will of God –

This can also be referred to as the ***Preceptive Will of God, or His Will of Command.*** These are the things that are clearly revealed by Him to us, in His precepts, commands, or word, and may or may not be done as per the choices of men.

This “Preceptive Will of God” is often seemingly at “conflict” or paradoxically seen “**in tension**” with the “Decretive Will of God!”

Acts 2:22-23 (NASB) <sup>22</sup> "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— <sup>23</sup> this *Man*, **delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.**

Luke 22:22 (NASB) <sup>22</sup> "For indeed, **the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!**"

Both John MacArthur and R. C. Sproul readily admit that one of if not the most asked question they get is **“How can I know God’s will for my life?”**

- **Watch Video from R.C. Sproul about God’s Will**

But before we consider this matter of God’s will, we must always consider, which “Will of God” am I seeking or wanting to know? If it is His “Hidden Will” we can forget it, because that may never be known. If it is part of His “Revealed Will of God” then we should be pursuing it, knowing it, believing it and acting upon it!

- **But how then may the Lord’s guidance be expected? How can we know God’s Will in our lives?**

*(Below from John Piper):*

After what has been premised negatively, the question may be answered in a few words. **In general, He guides and directs His people by affording them answer to prayer, the light of His Holy Spirit, which enables them to understand and to love the Scriptures.**

The Word of God is not to be used as a lottery, nor is it designed to instruct us by shreds and scraps, [verses taken out of context] which, detached from their proper places, have no determinate importance. Rather, the Word of God is to furnish us with just principles and right apprehensions, to regulate our judgments and affections, and thereby to influence and direct our conduct.

They who study the Scriptures, in a humble dependence upon Divine teaching, are convinced of their own weakness, are taught to make a true estimate of everything around them, are gradually formed into a spirit of submission to the will of God, discover the nature and duties of their several situations and relations in life, and the snares and temptations to which they are exposed.

The Word of God dwells richly in them, is a preservative from error, a light to their feet, and a spring of strength and consolation. By treasuring up the doctrines, precepts, promises, examples, and exhortations of Scripture in their minds, and daily comparing themselves with the rule by which they walk, they grow into an habitual frame of spiritual wisdom, and acquire a gracious taste, which enables them to judge of right and wrong with a degree of readiness and certainty, as a musical ear judges of sounds. And they are seldom mistaken, because they are influenced by the love of Christ (which rules in their hearts), and by a regard to the glory of God, which is the great object they have in view.

In particular cases, the Lord opens and shuts doors for them, breaks down walls of difficulty which obstruct their path, or hedges up their way with thorns (when they are in danger of going wrong), by the dispensations of His providence. They know that their concerns are in His hands; they are willing to follow whither and when He leads; but they are afraid of going before Him.

Therefore they are not impatient; because they believe they will not make haste, but wait daily upon Him in prayer. Especially when they find their hearts most engaged in any purpose or pursuit, they are most jealous of being deceived by appearances, and dare not move farther or faster than they can perceive His light shining upon their paths. I express at least their desire, if not their attainment, that thus they would be.

And though there are seasons when faith languishes, and self too much prevails, this is their general disposition, and the Lord, whom they serve, does not disappoint their expectations. He leads them, by a right way, preserves them from a thousand snares, and satisfies them that He is and will be their guide even unto death.

- **Four Ways God Leads His People** (by John Piper)

I see at least four methods that God uses to lead us in His will. I put them in four “D”s to help me remember them.

**1. Decree** - God sovereignly decrees and designs circumstances so that we end up where He wants us to be, even if we don’t have any conscious part in getting there. For example, Paul and Silas found themselves in jail, and the result was the salvation of the jailer and his household (Acts 16:24-34). This was God’s plan, not Paul’s. God does this often putting us in places we did not plan or decide to be. This is the leading of decree. It is **unique above the other three leadings** because it includes them (since **God’s decrees include all our decisions**), and because **it happens infallibly** (since “no

purpose of [God's] can be thwarted" – Job 42:2). The other three leadings of God involve our being consciously led.

**2. Direction** - This is simply what God does for us by giving us **the commands and teachings of the Bible**. They direct us specifically what to do and what not to do. The Ten Commandments are one example. Don't steal. Don't kill. Don't lie. The Sermon on the Mount is another: Love your enemies. The Epistles are another: Be filled with the Holy Spirit; Put on humility. This is the leading of direction.

**3. Discernment** - Most of the decisions we make are not spelled out specifically in the Bible. Discernment is how we follow God's leading through the process of **spiritually sensitive application of biblical truth to the specifics of our situation**. Romans 12:2 describes this: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and **perfect will of God**." In this case God does declare a specific word about what to do, but His Spirit shapes the mind and heart through the Word and prayer, so that we have inclinations toward what would be most glorifying to Him and helpful to others.

**4. Declaration** - This is **the least common means of God's leading**. He simply declares to us what we should do. For example, according to Acts 8:26, "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, 'Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.'" And according to Acts 8:29, "Then the 15 Spirit said unto Philip, 'Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.'" Notice three implications. **First, we should always rest in the decrees of God**. They will always be for our good if we love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). This **should remove worry** from our lives, and **put us at peace** as we seek the directed, discerned, and declared leading of the Lord. **Second, there is the implication that God's leading of decree may bring about acts that are contrary to His leading of direction, discernment, or declaration**. In other words, He may direct, "Thou shalt not kill," but decree the murderous death of His Son (Acts 4:28). **There are mysteries here**, but it is manifest in dozens of places in the Bible that God wills that some things come to pass which He forbids in His Word. Finally, our confidence that we are tracking accurately with God in each of these leadings increases as we move from the bottom to the top of this list. Subjectively perceived declarations from God are least common and most easily abused of all the ways God leads. Our confidence that we have known the will of God in this method will not be as great as in the other methods that relate directly to God's written Word. Discerning what to do on the basis of biblical principle when we do not have a specific command for our exact decision will yield less confidence than when we have an explicit direction in the Bible. And the truth that God is sovereign and guides all things is the rock-bottom confidence under all the others. It is a good place to rest.

**How to Know God's Will is one of the most asked questions among Christians. It is also one of the most important for which to find a truly biblical answer, in order to avoid countless errors and confusion.**

David prayed:

Psalm 143:10 <sup>10</sup> **Teach me to do Thy will**, For Thou art my God; Let Thy good Spirit lead me on level ground. (NASB)

Colossians 1:9-10 <sup>9</sup> For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask **that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding**, <sup>10</sup> so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; (NASB)

Ephesians 5:15-17 <sup>15</sup> Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of your time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> So then do not be foolish, but **understand what the will of the Lord is**. (NASB)

In Colossians 1:9 God is emphasizing through Paul's prayer and petition the importance of *full or complete knowledge* for the Christian. He was "unceasing" in his prayers and asking that the Colossians would be "***filled with the knowledge of His will***". This *knowledge* must be *full, complete, personal, or believed knowledge* (indicated by the intensifying prefix *epi* before the primary root *gnosis*), and must be *knowledge of His will!* For example, note its use in the following:

Ephesians 4:13 <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of **the knowledge** (epignosis) **of the Son of God**, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. (NASB)

Obviously, this is not just mental knowledge, mere facts about the Son of God, but something much more personal, entrusted and relational!

- **What are the steps to knowing His will?**

1. **We must *be willing* to do it** (John 7:17)

John 7:17 <sup>17</sup> **"If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching**, whether it is of God, or *whether* I speak from Myself. (NASB)

2. **We must be guided by *His Spirit*** (John 16:13)

John 16:13 <sup>13</sup> "But when He, **the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth**; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. (NASB)

3. **We must base it upon *His word*** (2Tim. 3:16-17)

2 Timothy 3:16-17 <sup>16</sup> **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable** for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> **that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.** (NASB)

#### 4. ***We must be and do what we already know as His will*** (Mat. 6:33)

Matthew 6:33 <sup>33</sup> "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. (NASB)

- **For some examples, we know from His word that it is His will for us to be:**  
(From John MacArthur's *Found: God's Will*)

##### 1. **Saved:**

1 Timothy 2:3-4 <sup>3</sup> This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who **desires all men to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (NASB)

2 Peter 3:9 <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but **for all to come to repentance**. (NASB)

##### 2. **Spirit-filled:**

Ephesians 5:17-18 <sup>17</sup> So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled with the Spirit**, (NASB)

1 Peter 4:6 <sup>6</sup> For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may **live in the spirit according to the will of God**. (NASB)

##### 3. **Sanctified:**

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 <sup>3</sup> For **this is the will of God, your sanctification**; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup> that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, <sup>5</sup> not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; <sup>6</sup> *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. <sup>7</sup> For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. (NASB)

##### 4. **Set on above:**

Colossians 3:1-2 <sup>1</sup> If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> **Set your mind on the things above**, not on the things that are on earth. (NASB)

Philippians 4:8 <sup>8</sup> Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, **let your mind dwell on these things.**

### 5. Submissive & Serving:

1 Peter 2:13-15 <sup>13</sup> **Submit yourselves** for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, <sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. <sup>15</sup> For **such is the will of God** that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. (NASB)

Ephesians 6:5-6 <sup>5</sup> Slaves, **be obedient** to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; <sup>6</sup> not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, **doing the will of God** from the heart. (NASB)

1 Peter 5:2 <sup>2</sup> **shepherd the flock** of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but **voluntarily, according to the will of God**; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; (NASB)

### 6. Suffering:

Philippians 1:29 <sup>29</sup> For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also **to suffer** for His sake, (NASB)

2 Timothy 3:12 <sup>12</sup> And indeed, **all** who desire to live godly in Christ **Jesus will be persecuted.** (NASB)

1 Peter 3:17 <sup>17</sup> For **it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.** (NASB)

### 7. Sorrowful about sin:

2 Corinthians 7:9-10 <sup>9</sup> I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. <sup>10</sup> For **the sorrow that is according to the will of God** produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (NASB)

### 8. Saying thanks:

1 Thessalonians 5:18 <sup>18</sup> **in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.** (NASB)

### 9. Seeking:

Matthew 7:7 <sup>7</sup> "Ask, and it shall be given to you; **seek, and you shall find**; knock, and it shall be opened to you. (NASB)

#### 10. Secure:

John 6:39-40 <sup>39</sup> "And **this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing**, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup> "For **this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life**; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." (NASB)

#### 11. Sure in faith:

Hebrews 11:6 <sup>6</sup> And **without faith it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (NASB)

*If all the above (and other known clear indications from the Scriptures of His will) are being believed and obeyed by us, then we have the mind of Christ (1Cor 2:16), and "our" will becomes His will for the things that are not so clear! He also will perform it for us! We then have His desires, thoughts, actions, and power!*

*Notice the verses before and after Psa. 37:4:*

Psalm 37:3-5 <sup>3</sup> Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. <sup>4</sup> Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. <sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it. (NASB)

- Then God's will for us becomes **"what we want to do!"**
- We should seek, study and know God's Preceptive or Revealed Will, believe it and apply it to our lives, that we may have our "hearts' desires" – God's will for us!

#### **(Transition – New Topic)**

*In keeping with the above concept or attribute of God, namely His Will, we should also consider a logical result of the same:*

- **The Providence of God**

**"Providence"** has become an "old fashioned" and almost obsolete word for American Christians! What was once a common and often used word and concept that was universally believed and embraced, has now become redefined at best, and forgotten or disputed at worst.

- **Discuss Chart of Usage of the Word Providence:**  
**Why has its use declined so much?** (No one would ever name a city “Providence” today!)



Providence has been traditionally used to describe and summarize God's ongoing relationship with His creation. The word comes from the Latin *providentia*, from *providere* 'foresee, attend to.' Literally – “pro video!”

It relates to God's “fore knowledge” of and provision for our future needs as His children.

Providence may be defined as Wayne Grudem has:

**Providence:**

***God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which He created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill His purposes.***

We can also define Biblical Providence by denying what it does not mean and **what it is not:**

1. **Deism** – God created the world and then essentially abandoned it.
2. **Pantheism** – Creation does not have a real distinct existence in itself, but is only a part of God.
3. **Chance** – Random by accident or without design or purpose.
4. **Fate** – Determinism by some unknown cosmic or mystic karma or power.

***What Providence is, includes three elements or subtopics:***

1. **Preservation** – God keeps all created things existing and maintaining the properties with which He created them.
2. **Concurrence** – God “cooperates” with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do.

3. **Government** – God has a purpose in all that He does in the world and He providentially governs or directs all things in order that they accomplish His purposes.

Romans 8:28 (NASB) <sup>28</sup> 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.

Providence really gets meaningful when viewed in light of the whole of Romans 8, namely –

Romans 8:31 (NASB) <sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? **If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?** <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; <sup>34</sup> who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup> **Who will separate us from the love of Christ?** Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." <sup>37</sup> But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that **neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,** <sup>39</sup> **nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

That very significant phrase **“God for us”** was the root of a Latin phrase that has been important to the church for centuries, but is now unknown. ***Deus pro nobis*** is the Latin for “God for us” and has been **the summary of the essence of the relationship between God and His people. This is what Providence is all about – God for us!**

Although Paul writes this with such conviction and confidence (**“we know”**), most of us do not really believe or trust this statement, because we do not **know that God is for us!**

- **WHY? Why do we not really believe this?** (*Which is proven by our reactions.*)

Do we really **trust God? Do we trust Him to have our best interests covered? How much of this is knowing and acknowledging that we are not “in control,” AND that such is a good thing?**

- **Watch Video “Living in the Providence of God about the Wolgemuths**
- **Discuss** – **how does this (Providence) apply to us and our lives? How would living in the light of Providence change our daily attitudes, actions and lives? Be specific.**

**• SUMMARY:**

1. *We should know that God's Decretive or Hidden Will shall be done (it "needs must be"), and that no power of hell or scheme of men can thwart any minor part of it!*
  
2. *We should seek, study and know God's Preceptive or Revealed Will, believe it and apply it to our lives, that we may have our "hearts' desires" – God's will for us!*
  
3. *We should be sure that we are willing to do His will, are being guided by His Spirit, basing our lives on His word, and being and doing what is clearly revealed to us. Then – we should "follow the desires of our heart" as they are His!*
  
4. *We should live and trust in the Providence of God, knowing that His loving purposes for us shall be accomplished, and that all things will work together for our good and His glory! If God is for us, then who can be against us!*