

SUPERNATURAL LIVING IN A SECULAR WORLD

Providence Made Practical

Romans 8:25–39



LET'S BEGIN HERE

At long last, we have reached the climax of the first section of Romans. Finally, the truths we've gleaned thus far begin to come together. Now that we have acknowledged the essential and inescapable presence of suffering in our journey, we need strong words of encouragement and reassurance. Because “we do not see” what's ahead (Romans 8:25), and because “we do not *know* how to pray” (8:26), we desperately need something to hang on to, mentally and emotionally—something to stabilize us in the midst of the “mess of life.” Knowing that, the apostle Paul offers some of the most powerful and comforting words in all his writings—he reminds us of God's magnificent providence. Only by coming to terms with this great doctrine can we confidently face an uncertain future.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Wrestling with God's Providence (Isaiah 55:8–9; Romans 8:25–27)

The reason we wrestle with God's providence as finite human beings is twofold:

- First, *we tend to focus on the immediate*, while God focuses on the ultimate.

- Second, *we forget our knowledge is limited*, while God's is unlimited.



Quotable

*You are
God's project.
To Him, you're
beautiful to
work with and
to shape. You're
necessary in
His plan.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. Thinking through God's Providence (Romans 8:28–30)

Romans 8:28 contains an unconditional promise—God's guarantee of what He will do for us. When we know His promise to work all things together for good, we can rest in His sovereignty and goodness, which has a particular purpose and providential goal: our conformity to the image of Christ.

- Understanding the Providential Goal
 - The underlying plan: to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ

— The unfolding process: God foreknew us, He predestined us, He called us, He justified us, and He glorified us.



DIGGING DEEPER

Providence: God's Care and Control of Creation

What do we mean when we talk about God's "providence"? Some people mistakenly think it refers to God's knowledge of all things—the fact that He is aware of what goes on in the universe. This is actually called God's omniscience, the doctrine that God knows all things past, present, and future. Providence presupposes God's exhaustive knowledge, but providence goes much further in its scope. *New Bible Dictionary* defines providence as

the unceasing activity of the Creator whereby, in overflowing bounty and goodwill . . . he upholds his creatures in ordered existence . . . guides and governs all events, circumstances and free acts of angels and men . . . and directs everything to its appointed goal, for his own glory.¹

God's all-encompassing care and control of His creation must always be kept in balance with other vital assertions about God's character. He is completely good. He is completely powerful. And because of His power and goodness on behalf of His people, God does all things for His glory and our good. Asserting the providence of God apart from an understanding of the character of God can lead to an idea of God as a domineering deity rather than a loving heavenly Father.



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LET'S LIVE IT

Responding to God's Providence

Because of God's providence, goodness, and ultimate purpose for His people, nothing can separate us from His love and our destiny (Romans 8:31–39). Having given us His Son, wouldn't God give us whatever else is best for us?

If you have never memorized Romans 8:37–39, take the time to memorize that passage. You will find it to be an unparalleled encouragement as you face the trials, struggles, and temptations of life.

ENDNOTE

1. J. I. Packer, "Providence," in *New Bible Dictionary*, 2d ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1991), 990.



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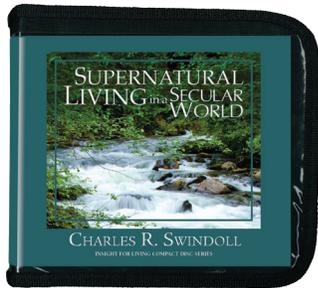
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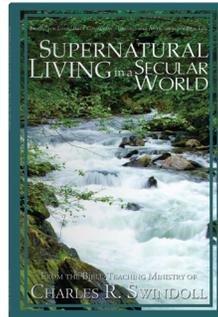
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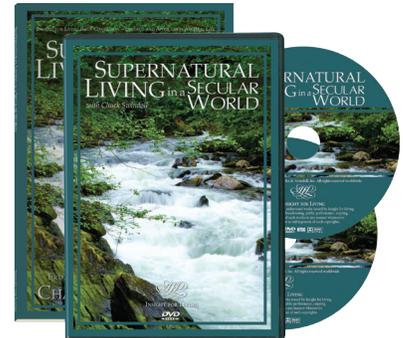
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