

## Systematic Theology for the Local Church

### #31—Theology Proper—Part X<sup>1</sup>

#### The Providence of God

Paul Karleen

December 9, 2007

For studies in theology proper, if you have the book, you should read Bruce Ware's *Their God Is Too Small*. The next topic will be on divine sovereignty and human freedom. You may read in Reymond, pp. 343-381. Relevant for today's study are pgs. 398-414 (I do not agree with his presentation of the covenants of grace and works on pp. 403-407).

#### Amazing facts and "laws"

I would like you to consider with me some amazing facts about what some people call 'nature'<sup>2</sup> (for your enjoyment there are more at the end of the study):

- All snowflakes are basically six-sided, since water freezes this way, but no one knows why, even though many have investigated it.
- Monarch butterflies migrate from North America to central Mexico. The 300 million or more that migrate are three or more generations removed from the last generation to over-winter there, which means that they are flying to a location as much as 3100 miles away that they have never been to.
- Any number, squared, is equal to one more than the product of the numbers on either side of it -- 4x6 is 24, 5x5 is 25, etc.
- The ant can lift 50 times its own weight and can pull 30 times its own weight.
- Polar bears are left handed.
- Elephants are the only animals that can't jump. We should be thankful.
- Starfishes have no brains.
- Some breeds of vulture can fly at altitudes as high as 36,900 feet.
- A dragonfly eye contains 30,000 lenses.
- The star-nosed mole uses its fleshy star nose for hunting. It has 100,000 nerve fibers that run from the star to the brain. This is almost six times the touch receptors in the human hand. I wonder how they counted the fibers!
- An octopus retina contains 20 million photoreceptors.
- A pig tongue contains 15,000 taste buds. For comparison, the human tongue has 9,000 taste buds. Are pigs actually fussy, then, about what they eat?
- With eyes mounted laterally on their heads, pigeons can view 340 degrees—everywhere except in back of their heads. They can detect sounds as low as 0.1 Hz.

Here are some well-known "laws of nature":

- Archimedes' principle—a body that is submerged in a fluid is buoyed up by a force equal in magnitude to the weight of the fluid that is displaced and directed upward along a line through the center of gravity of the displaced fluid. This means that your rowboat stays upright on the surface.
- Doppler effect—Waves emitted by a moving object as received by an observer will be blue-shifted (compressed) if approaching, red-shifted (elongated) if receding.

<sup>1</sup> Copyright 2007 by Paul S. Karleen. Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> Some of these can be found at <http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/amaze.html>

- First law of thermodynamics—The change in internal energy of a system is the sum of the heat transferred to or from the system and the work done on or by the system.
- Second law of thermodynamics—The entropy—a measure of the unavailability of a system’s energy to do useful work—of a closed system tends to increase with time.
- The speed of light in a vacuum is exactly 299,792,458 meters per second, about 670,616,629.2 miles per hour, 983,571,056 feet per second or 186,282.397 miles per second, or roughly one foot per nanosecond. Speeds in media such as water or air are slower. The light from the moon takes about 1.2 seconds to reach you.

And here are some simple but profound and important facts:

- $2 + 2 = 4$  today and did yesterday, too.
- Male and female human beings complement each other.
- Geese in North America fly south in the fall, not north.
- Your nose opens downward, not upward, so you don’t drown in a heavy rain.

All of these facts are statements about the providence of God in creating and sustaining the universe. And the “laws” that human beings “discover” are actually the constant working of parts of the universe in relation to each other, designed by the Holy Trinity, created and held in place by the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 1:16-17). ‘Providence’ is not a word that occurs in the Bible, but the doctrine called providence occurs throughout the Bible, and we can see its effects everywhere. Here is a simple definition of providence:

Providence is God’s care for and upholding of his creation.

Here is a more complex definition, from the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646 (V. i):

God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.

### **The extent of God’s providence or What is God’s providence?<sup>3</sup>**

#### Overview of providence

Providence is God’s relation to what he has created, which, since it could not create itself, cannot sustain itself. Providence is seen in the innumerable regular activities in the universe—the orbits of the planets and their moons, the migration of geese and the effects of gravity. Providence keeps everything from falling into a chaotic state. All actions of all living and inanimate objects in the universe are included in the providence of God. One of the most helpful passages on this is Ps. 145 (vv. 9, 13 and 15-17 here):

<sup>9</sup> The LORD is good to all;  
he has compassion on all he has made.  
<sup>13</sup> Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
and your dominion endures through all generations.  
The LORD is faithful to all his promises  
and loving toward all he has made.

---

<sup>3</sup> Many of these observations are drawn from John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, Book 3, Chapter 4, “Of the Providence of God.” Gill was a British scholar who lived from 1697 to 1771.

<sup>15</sup> The eyes of all look to you,  
and you give them their food at the proper time.  
<sup>16</sup> You open your hand  
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.  
<sup>17</sup> The LORD is righteous in all his ways  
and loving toward all he has made.

With regard to v. 17, we should not conclude that God loves everyone the same way; many of the passages below help us to see that God's providential care differs for certain groups.

### Direct and indirect providence

Sometimes God acts directly on his creation, as when he made the earth or caused the walls of Jericho to fall or spoke with Moses from the burning bush. Other times he uses intermediate agents, as when the sun heats the earth and provides light, or when earthquakes change the shape of the earth or Christian parents bring good things to the lives of their children. God's direct acts of providence are usually called miracles, but ultimately all of his interactions with his creation are miraculous, since he is involved directly or indirectly. In other words, his creation doesn't run by itself.

### General and special providence

God exercises providential care over the whole world but does things (sometimes called "special providence") for the elect that he does not do for any other human beings. In his general care he uses many means, including the structures of the universe that human beings "discover" and call "laws"—forces, energy, movement, mass, chemical composition and so many more.

God uses angels in his care for his creation, sometimes to inflict punishment, sometimes to care for the elect:

<sup>19</sup> The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. <sup>20</sup> Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. (Ps. 103:19-20)

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (Heb. 1:14)

God uses human leaders as his instruments for positive and negative things.

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup> Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup> For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. <sup>4</sup> For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. (Rom. 13:1-4)

He used evil kings to chastise Israel and used Cyrus king of Persia to free Israel:

who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid." ' (Isa. 44:28)

In Rev. 1717 God puts evil acts into the hearts of kings in the end times in order to fulfill his will. We have no indication that they will know that they are being used for his purposes.

<sup>15</sup> Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. <sup>16</sup> The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. <sup>17</sup> For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God’s words are fulfilled. <sup>18</sup> The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

God uses Christians to do good to saved and unsaved alike and also commands them to care especially for other believers:

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (Gal 6:10)

God uses animals in the lives of saved and unsaved alike. Flies, frogs, lice and locusts inflicted pain and misery on the Egyptians but at the same time enabled the escape of Israel.

With regard to special providence, it is clear that God has distinct purposes in this life for the elect. Isaac Watts wrote a book that amounts to paraphrases of the Psalms called *The Psalms of David, Imitated in the Language of the New Testament and Adapted to the Christian Use and Worship*. Here is what he has for Ps. 36:7:

Thy providence is kind and large,  
Both man and beast thy bounty share;  
The whole creation is thy charge,  
But saints are thy peculiar care.

I am amazed at God’s providential provision of this text for me. I performed a Google search on a few words in the last two lines after coming across the last two lines in a search on providence. Sure enough, I had several hits. One took me to Google’s own digitizing of texts held in libraries around the country. This one was from a book in the Andover-Harvard Theological Library that was published in 1821. I encourage you to look at the site and ponder the providence of God in preserving this beautiful text through printed and then digitized form (along with others in the book) and making it available for this study.<sup>4</sup>

Some examples of God’s providential care of the elect are 1) God’s direction and care for Abraham, 2) the account of Joseph, in which God used sinful actions to bring blessing to Joseph and eventually even to the brothers who had sinned and 3) his providential care for the apostles on their journeys as seen in the book of Acts. God providentially cared for Jonah by causing a fish to swallow him (after he brought the storm!) and then to spit him out on dry land (not in the water!). At the end of the account, God brings a vine to shade him, but then a worm, a wind and the harsh sun to chastise him!

But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. <sup>2</sup> He prayed to the LORD, “O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. <sup>3</sup> Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>4</sup> But the LORD replied, “Have you any right to be angry?” <sup>5</sup> Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the

---

<sup>4</sup> This can be found at [http://books.google.com/books?id=\\_n4CAAAAYAAJ&dq=watts+psalms+timothy+dwight&printsec=frontcover&source=web&ots=b-ArzWjQdb&sig=urp31vjTDn3ktDx9vF29O-gOK-g](http://books.google.com/books?id=_n4CAAAAYAAJ&dq=watts+psalms+timothy+dwight&printsec=frontcover&source=web&ots=b-ArzWjQdb&sig=urp31vjTDn3ktDx9vF29O-gOK-g)

city. <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. <sup>7</sup>But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. <sup>8</sup>When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." <sup>9</sup>But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" "I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die." <sup>10</sup>But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. <sup>11</sup>But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?" (Jonah 4)

All good things that people do are part of providence:

for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (Phil. 2:13)

Christians can do good things only because God in his providence implants a new nature at regeneration. Of course, regeneration is a sovereign work of God, as Jesus teaches in John 3:8:

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

And faith is a gift of God (along with suffering!):

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, (Phil. 1:29)

### Providence and sin

Perhaps the hardest thing to understand about divine providence is that it includes sinful actions. James 1 teaches clearly that God is not the author of sin, yet providence includes it in some way. If providence did not include sin, then it would be something in the universe occurring independently of God, which is impossible, and would also fall outside Acts 17:24-28:

<sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. <sup>28</sup> 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

God sustains human and angelic life while these beings sin, so ultimately he makes sin possible. Sometimes he does not stop sin, although he could. The Cross is the most obvious example of this. In some cases he gives people up to their own sin. Here is Rom. 1:26-28 (underlining is mine):

<sup>26</sup> Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. <sup>27</sup> In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. <sup>28</sup> Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

Similar is 2 Thess. 2:11-12:

<sup>11</sup> For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie <sup>12</sup> and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Evil acts that are public fall under God's providential work, as with Pharaoh and the Exodus, the persecution of the Church by the Roman ruler Titus and the murderous deeds of Herod against Jesus:

<sup>27</sup> Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. <sup>28</sup> They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. (Acts 4:27-28)

Prosperity and tragedy are alike within God's providence:

I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things. (Isa 45:7)

When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it? (Amos 3:6)

John Gill addressed this problem of sin and providence insightfully over 200 years ago<sup>5</sup>:

God in his providence may put in the way of persons things that are good in themselves; which may give an opportunity, and be the occasion of drawing out the corruptions of men's hearts; thus God in his providence directed Joseph to dream, and to tell his dreams; which drew upon him the envy of his brethren; and God put it into the heart of Jacob to send him to visit them in the fields, where they were feeding their flocks, which gave them an opportunity to form and execute evil against him.

God sometimes punishes one sin with another, as in the preceding two scriptures. Psalm 81:11-12 puts God's sovereignty and human accountability side by side:

<sup>11</sup> "But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. <sup>12</sup> So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.

In Rom. 9:18 Paul teaches God's right to include sin in his providential works:

Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

In Rom. 11:7-12 we see that God brings blessing on some through the sin of others (which occurred because of God's hardening!), yet ultimately he is glorified:

<sup>7</sup> What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, <sup>8</sup> as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day." <sup>9</sup> And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. <sup>10</sup> May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever." <sup>11</sup> Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel

---

<sup>5</sup> John Gill (1697–1771) was an English Baptist biblical scholar and a staunch Calvinist.

envious. <sup>12</sup> But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!

John 12:37-40, based on Isa. 6:10 and 53:1, shows us that the unbelief of Israel during the apostolic period is a fulfillment of prophecy and was the direct result of God's hardening. This is a very important passage that too many Christians ignore.

<sup>37</sup> Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. <sup>38</sup> This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: "Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" <sup>39</sup> For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: <sup>40</sup> "He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them."

Finally, here is Gill again:

Thus God corrected David's sin with Bathsheba, by the incest of his son with his wives and concubines; and punished the hypocrisy and idolatry of Israel, through the pride, ambition, and cruelty of the Assyrian monarch, who was in his hand the rod of his anger, and the staff of his indignation (2 Sam. 12:11; Isa. 10:6,7). Sometimes God overrules the sins of men for good; as the sin of Adam, for the glorifying of his perfections; the crucifixion of Christ for the salvation of men, and Joseph's being sold into Egypt, for the saving many persons alive (Gen. 50:20).

## Redemption and providence

Robert Reymond makes an important connection between creation, providence and redemption.<sup>6</sup> Creation, originating and upheld by providence, is the backdrop for God's redemptive work. He quotes T. H. L. Parker in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*<sup>7</sup>:

We must resist the temptation to think about providence generally and independently of Christ. It would be possible to draw on certain Psalms and the Sermon on the Mount, for example, to make up a doctrine of God's relationship to his creation that had nothing to do with Jesus Christ. But since it is in Christ that this relationship is established, an attempt to understand it apart from him would be a misinterpretation from the start. In Jesus Christ, God has set up the relationship between himself and his creatures, promising to carry through his purpose in creation to its triumphal conclusion.

We can see this connection clearly in Jn. 17:2, for example:

For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

Reymond points out that the 'authority over all people' is general providence, and the rest is special providence. Similar in showing the connection between Jesus' general providential work and his provision for the elect is Heb. 1:3:

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

---

<sup>6</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of The Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 396-414.

<sup>7</sup> T. H. L. Parker, "Providence of God," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 890.

This is brought to the level of the life of the individual Christian in Rom. 8:28:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

I prefer to translate the first part of this verse “God causes all things to work together for good.” This is much stronger than the NIV above and is true to the Greek text.

Reymond goes so far as to say that God created the universe to serve as a backdrop and vehicle for saving sinners through the work of Christ. We will return to this topic of the goal of God in creation when we take up soteriology and what theologians call the order of the decrees. It appears to me that Reymond’s position on creation, providence and redemption follows from his view of the plan of God in salvation.

### **Providence and our walk with God**

It should be obvious by now that the doctrine of providence is related to everything that we do. How should we react to this doctrine and how should we live in the light of it? I appreciate the perspective of John Gill:

To conclude this article of providence; let it be observed,

1. That all the providences of God are executed in the wisest manner; though they may not sometimes appear clear to us, and are inscrutable by us, and the causes and reasons of them not to be accounted for; yet even in such a view of them it should be said with the apostle, “O the depth of the riches”, &c. (Rom. 11:33).
2. They are all done in the most holy and righteous manner; even such as are concerned about sin, are clear from any imputation of it; “The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (Ps. 145:17).
3. They are executed with power irresistible; they are immutably performed, according to the unchangeable will of God, who works all things in providence after the counsel of his will; he does what he pleases; his counsel always stands; and he does all his pleasure. Wherefore,
4. We should give to him the glory of all; observe with wonder and gratitude, the various steps of it respecting ourselves and others; and put our trust in him for things temporal and spiritual; and at all times cast our care upon him, who cares for us; seeing it is, and always will be, well with the righteous, in time and to all eternity.

Scottish church leader Thomas Boston (1676-1732) helps us further with our view of providence, pointing out that (I have paraphrased his points)<sup>8</sup>

1. The providence of God is never an excuse for sin. God’s providence includes sin, but we are responsible for it.
2. The biblical doctrine of providence should eliminate murmuring and worry. Nothing happens to you within God’s providence that He does not want for you—except your sin. Job understood this: 1:21
3. The biblical doctrine of providence should eliminate concern about our material well being in this life. Mt. 6:31
4. God works through means; small steps are important. But we should never rely on any means themselves, only on God. Hosea 1:7; Rom. 4:19

---

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Boston, “How We Ought to Think about God’s Providence.”



We conclude with these words from Boston:

Happy is the people whose God is the Lord: for all things shall work together for their good. They may sit secure in exercising faith upon God, come what will. They have good reason for prayer; for God is a prayer-hearing God, and will be enquired of by his people as to all their concerns in the world. And they have ground for the greatest encouragement and comfort in the middle of all the events of providence, seeing they are managed by their covenant God and gracious friend, who will never neglect or overlook his dear people, and whatever concerns them. For he has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," Heb. 13:5.

I provide here the section on providence in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

## **CHAPTER V.**

### **Of Providence.**

I. God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.

II. Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.

III. God, in his ordinary providence, maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at his pleasure.

IV. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first Fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God; who being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

V. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God, doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.

VI. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous judge, for former sins, doth blind and harden; from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and wrought upon their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had; and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan; whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.

VII. As the providence of God doth, in general, reach to all creatures, so, after a most special manner, it taketh care of his Church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof.

## More amazing facts

- The human heart creates enough pressure while pumping to squirt blood 30 feet.
- Right-handed people live, on average, nine years longer than left-handed people do.
- The flea can jump 350 times its body length. This is like a human jumping the length of a football field.
- It is impossible to sneeze and keep ones eye's open at the same time.
- An elephant has hearing range between 1 and 20,000 Hz. The very low frequency sounds are in the "infrasound" range. Humans cannot hear sounds in the infrasound range.
- Cockroaches can change course as many as 25 times in one second, making them the most nimble animals known.
- Ants can see polarized light.
- Bats can hear frequencies between 3,000 and 120,000 Hz.
- Worker honey bees have 5,500 lenses in each eye. They have a ring of iron oxide (magnetite) in their abdomens that may be used to detect magnetic fields. They may use this ability to detect changes in the earth's magnetic field and use it for navigation. They can see polarized light.
- The butterfly *Colias* can distinguish two points separated by as little as 30 microns. (Humans can distinguish two points separated by 100 microns.)
- A buzzard's retina has 1 million photoreceptors per sq. mm. and can see small rodents from a height of 15,000 ft.
- Like bats, dolphins use echolocation for movement and locating objects. They can hear frequencies up to at least 100,000 Hz.
- An eagle's eyeball length is 35 mm (human eyeball length = 24 mm). Visual acuity is 2.0 to 3.6 times better (depending on the type of eagle) than that of humans.
- Normal vision for people is 20/20. A hawk's vision is equivalent to 20/5. This means that the hawk can see from 20 feet what most people can see from 5 feet.
- A falcon can see a 10 cm. object from a distance of 1.5 km. Its visual acuity is 2.6 times better than humans. Can see sharp images even when diving at 100 miles/hr.
- Each eye in a fly has 3,000 lenses. The eye has a flicker fusion rate of 300/sec. Humans have a flicker fusion rate of only 60/sec in bright light and 24/sec in dim light. The flicker fusion rate is the frequency with which the "flicker" of an image cannot be distinguished as an individual event. Like the frame of a movie, if you slowed it down, you would see individual frames. Speed it up and you see a constantly moving image.
- The eye of a giant squid is 25 cm in diameter. The retina can contain up to 1 billion photoreceptors.

## Study questions

1. What is divine providence?
2. What is the difference between general and special providence?
3. What are the objects of divine providence?
4. What is a miracle, and what purpose do the scriptural miracles serve?
5. How should belief in divine providence affect our cares?
6. Name some of the blessings of providence.

What features of the doctrine of providence are found in the following?

Deut. 2:7

1Kings 17:6, 16

2 Kings 4:6

Matt. 14:20

Isa. 41:10

Matt. 6:32

Luke 12:7

Phil. 4:6, 7

1 Pet. 5:7

Isa. 25:4-6

Ps. 121:4

Ps. 37:28

2 Tim. 4:18

## Running compilation of key definitions

1. Systematic theology: The organized presentation of all that the Bible teaches about God and His works.
2. Exegesis: The actual practice of studying or interpreting a document or other message to determine its meaning.
3. Context: Context in a document or utterance is the surroundings of a portion of a word, a word, or a group of words.
4. Bibliology: The doctrinal study of the nature of the Bible.
5. Biblical authority: The quality inherent in Scripture by virtue of which human beings are completely answerable to its content.
6. Revelation: The information about Himself given by God to human beings.
7. General revelation: God's disclosure of Himself, available directly to everyone, given through means other than dreams, visions, direct words and Christ Himself.
8. Special revelation: The disclosure of information from God that is not available directly to all human beings.
9. Inspiration: A term applied to the Bible denoting that it is the product of God's creative activity, figuratively breathed out from Him (2 Tim. 3:16); applies to the process of recording Scripture, not specifically to the people involved; actually, *expiration* would be a better term to reflect the concept of 2 Tim. 3:16; the result is *inerrancy*.
10. Textual criticism: The science and art of attempting to discover the original text of a literary work for which the original document does not exist. It is especially important for biblical studies, and the foundational endeavor to all subsequent investigation of the Scriptures.
11. Canon: Transliterated from a Greek Word meaning "standard"; as used of the Bible, it refers to books authenticated as possessing divine origin and therefore authoritative; the Jewish canon consists of thirty-nine books, the Protestant of sixty-six and the Catholic of eighty (including apocryphal books).
12. Inerrancy is a term applied to the Bible, although not specifically found in it; it denotes that the Bible, as originally written, possessed no humanly induced deviations from the message God intended to be recorded and that it is true in every respect; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:19.
13. Infallibility: Although some assert that this term has a different meaning from inerrancy, the two terms are, for purposes of biblical study, synonymous; the Bible is infallible because inerrant, and inerrant because infallible.
14. Illumination is the teaching ministry of the Spirit of God that imparts understanding of the message of Scripture to the believer; not to be confused with inspiration, which in the Bible is used of the work of God in giving Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16); 1 Jn. 2:20; Jn. 16:13.
15. Spirituality: God is not physical, but immaterial, incorporeal, invisible and alive.
16. Self-existence/Aseity: God exists independently of anything else. He is self-existent.
17. Immensity: God is infinite in relation to space.
18. Eternality: God is infinite with regard to time.
19. Simplicity: God is not a plurality and cannot be looked at as divisible into parts.
20. Pure actuality: There is nothing about God that is potential. He is not unfinished in any way.
21. Necessity: God is uncaused and exists because he must exist.
22. Immutability: God is unchanging and unchangeable.
23. Impassibility: God is incapable of being changed or disturbed by what he experiences and is incapable of suffering.
24. Transcendence: God and the world are distinct; he is not part of the world, and the world is not part of him.
25. Immanence: God is present in the world.
26. Infinity: There are no limits to God's person and his perfections.
27. Omnipotence: God can do whatever he wills.
28. Omniscience: God knows everything there is to know.
29. Omnipresence: God is present everywhere in his creation

30. Holiness: God is morally pure and separated from all moral evil and sin.
31. Goodness: A quality that describes or includes his love, benevolence, mercy and grace
32. Truth: God's person, actions, knowledge and revelations correspond to reality
33. Love: God's continual communication of himself to his creatures.
34. Benevolence: God's goodness toward his creatures.
35. Mercy: God's goodness toward those who are helpless.
36. Grace: God's goodness toward sinners.
37. Glory: The greatness of God's perfections.
38. Trinity: There is only one true God, existing as a single Being comprised of three Persons who are equal in every way, yet distinct in their tasks and relations to humanity.
39. God's decree: The decree of God is his plan for the universe that includes all things and is certain to come to pass.
40. Providence: God's care for and upholding of his creation.