

GOD WILL PROVIDE

³⁶ **Who endowed the heart with wisdom or gave understanding to the mind?** ³⁷ **Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens** ³⁸ **when the dust becomes hard and the clods of earth stick together?** ³⁹ **"Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions** ⁴⁰ **when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in a thicket?** ⁴¹ **Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food?** (NIV⁸⁴)

The classic question for people who read the book of Job is, where was God? Why did it take so long for God to arrive? The answer is given in three different ways. First, Job and his friends talk about God and the different ways he always answers their prayers throughout the book. If they would only listen to themselves and to each other, they would conclude **(1) God is always listening; he hears our prayers and he answers them.**

Second, there are hints in the text all through the book that **(2) God himself is on his way to speak to Job** here on the eastern side of the Dead Sea where Job lived-- it's a part of the land of Canaan we spend almost no time in, in any other book of the Bible, the land of Uz, the desert wilderness. God is going to speak from a storm-- this is how he is speaking in our text, from out of the roar of a savage thunderstorm. God is always there in the book; he is always on his way. The men talk about the need for rain in the first half of the book, and then around chapter 21 they see some leaves blowing on the ground (21:18), then there are thick clouds on the horizon (22:13-14), the gathering clouds obscure the night sky (25:5) and even swallow the full moon (26:8-9), and they begin to hear the distant thunder in chapter 26 "like a faint whisper" (26:14). By chapter 27, they can hear the hiss of hail or sleet in the distance (27:20-23), and throughout chapters 30-39, their speech is filled with references to rain, thunder, lightning, and windstorms. Now in our text God is speaking from that storm-- he was there all along; they heard him and watched him coming.

Finally, beginning with our text and running throughout the last four chapters, God himself speaks to Job and asks these clear questions about **(3) the way he provides for all of creation.** In his sermon here in chapter 38, he proclaims to Job and his companions that he is the source of all things. He provides food, he provides water, he provides even the dumb animals with the wisdom to use the resources he gives to them. And he has given man special wisdom in the heart and mind and the tools of the sciences which are to be our servants but not our masters.

This doctrine of the way God provides is known as his divine **providence**. This is the action of God for the benefit of his creation. It is God's **care** based on his **love, his foreknowledge, and his special purpose** by which all of creation-- believers, unbelievers, animals, plants, stones, and everything else, with the goal God has of displaying his glory, and especially caring for the welfare of mankind, the crown of his creation. We are not arrogant when we say this, but humbled that God would love us so much as to create and preserve time, space, the whole universe and this world in particular, as a blessing for us, for you, today.

Notice how he cares for the lions. Who hunts for the baby lions? Who satisfies their hunger? Who makes sure even the scavenging raven-- one of the most unclean of the unclean animals-- has food while it spends all of its time and energy and may well give up its life just to feed its young. God set this passion and devotion in these animals to preserve the species so that they will do the things that they do.

So he **(1) preserves the lions and ravens** by watching and knowing what happens to them. Jesus talked about the same thing when in Matthew he says that not even a sparrow falls without God's knowledge. **(2) God governs the universe** for both man and animals, like the way God directs the wind and the weather for the benefit of all, and he allows no evil to come unless somehow there is some good, somewhere, that will come from it. And we should also remember that the Lord our God has lost souls he is concerned with, but that he also concerns himself with the smallest of things, even things we would think are unimportant or even worthy of contempt. In the Psalms as well as here in Job, the lions and the ravens acknowledge God, not just poetically, but by an observable natural instinct or some other form of reasoning, acknowledging God's preservation and sustenance, "the young ravens when they call" (Ps 147:9) and the "lions when they roar" (Ps 104:21,27).

This world government, or the way God governs more than this world but all of creation, with four main actions: His **permission** for some things, his **hinderance** of other things, his **direction** of all things, and this **limitation** wherever he desires.

(3) Finally, there is also Concurrence. God works with his creation and his creatures with influence appropriate to their **nature**. So he may permit the spider to spin and the bat to swoop, but the bat and the spider are keeping the other bugs from overwhelming us.

So if God gives understanding and wisdom and tips over the water jars of the heavens to give us rain, and cares for the animals, for all creatures great and small, what do we imagine are the limits to his care?

If God cares for our world and our bodies, surely he cares for our souls. In fact, if he has made the world, this beautiful exotic and familiar world of ours, imagine what he has in store for us in heaven!

And how will we arrive in his heaven? Listen again to the words of God Almighty spoken to Job: “Who gives wisdom? Who gives understanding? Who tips over the water jars to heaven to bring the rain? Who teaches the lions to hunt for prey? Who makes sure the raven mother and father are fed when they are giving everything they find to their little hatchlings?” The answer to each question is the same? God! “God gives, God sends, God teaches, God feeds.”

This passage teaches a strange First Commandment sin. This sin is forgetting that God is the one who is supreme and in charge of all things.

The petty gods of the pagan Canaanites were thought to be minor, local deities. But the true God is not just a demon who lives up the street or stirs up the local bullies. He is supreme over all things. When we forget that, we have fallen into a weird idolatry that is open to lifting up theories from science and philosophy into divine status.

But God **forgives**, and only the Maker of all things has the authority to forgive all our sins. Consider how **Christ, whose mercy endures forever, who forgives all our debts, himself became a debtor for our sakes.**^a He rescued us even from the sins of weak and sloppy faith, and promises to care for us forever in heaven.

The same God who takes care of the way the grass and the weeds grow together also makes sure that alongside unbelievers, believers will also grow, be fed, be taken care of, and will thrive.

And so let's remember that we are both body and soul. If God takes care of the needs of our bodies which begins with the design and creation of the universe with us in mind-- with you, personally, in mind-- then how much more does God care about our spirit, our soul, our condition for arriving in heaven in the resurrection on the Last Day.

As you serve him in the mean time, remember this. He takes care of you by everything he does in the world. His divine providence watches over even the hairs of your head and the sparrows at your bird feeder. He will never let you go; so give him glory with what you do, serve him with whatever your life gives you to do today, and share him by word, example, and devotion. And God will provide.

^a Augustine *Confessions* Book V.