

Decisions and Divine Providence

While Proverbs cannot make your decisions for you, it can set you up with a wise perspective on the relationship between your decisions and God's work in your life.

The overwhelmingly clear teaching of Proverbs is that our decisions matter. Just not entirely.

Two oversimplifications to avoid:

The first is that “Our decisions do not matter at all.” The wise embrace the stewardship of their role in decision making.

The second is that “Our decisions are all that matter.” The wise rest in God's purposes ultimately prevailing.

Proverbs shows us that God's Providence is a careful integration of our choices that He influences for His glorious purposes. The word Providence describes the God's ability to see the future beforehand. You can think of it as though God is “Pro (ahead)” “Video (the action)”. He is ahead of the action; He understands the future clearly and has Holy and Good plans.

Here are some ways that Proverbs teaches us about God's Providence and our decisions...

1. The Lord has His Own Purposes for all of Our Own Actions.

Proverbs 16:1. The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

*Proverbs 16:9. The heart of man plans **his** way, but the LORD establishes **his** steps.*

2. Multiple real purposes exist for the same event. I own a purpose and God does.

Proverbs 19:21. Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.

It also means...

1. Seemingly small things are integrated into His plan.

Proverbs 16:33. The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

2. Seemingly large things are integrated into His plan.

Proverbs 21:1. The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

3. Victories are integrated into His plan.

Proverbs 21:31. The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the LORD.

4. Failures are integrated into His plan.

Proverbs 21:30. No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the LORD.

5. The Purposes of the Lord are not obvious in our circumstances.

Proverbs 20:24. A man's steps are from the LORD; how then can man understand his way?

Proverbs 3:5-6. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

So what do we do?

1. We entrust our integrity to the Lord.

*Proverbs 2:6-8. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; **he is a shield to those who walk in integrity**, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints.*

2. We entrust our hunger for revenge to the Lord.

Proverbs 20:22. Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.

3. We entrust our fear of destruction to the Lord.

Proverbs 3:25-26. Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes, for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.

4. Ultimately, We entrust our actions to the Lord.

Proverbs 16:3. Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.

Look to Christ - We find real hope in the gospel.

If you want to appreciate the beauty of God's Providence in your own situations and decisions you will first need to see the beauty of it in the gospel. The actions of wicked and evil men nailed the sinless Son of God to a cross with no regard for justice. It was the great purpose of them to destroy Him and put an end to His teaching and to His movement of disciples.

And in the same moment that they nailed Him to the cross with vile disdain in their hearts, by God's intention and the willingness of Jesus to be our substitute they were nailing the debt of our sins with all it's demands as well in an Eternity altering act of mercy. That is God's glorious providence.

Acts 2:22–24. [22] "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—[23] *this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* [24] God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. (ESV)