

Dear friend,

I began a series last month in which we are considering the biblical doctrine of God's providence and what difference it makes in our lives. Last month we saw, from Psalm 135:6 that God does whatever he is pleased to do throughout all of creation. This is the most fundamental description of God's Providence. In all of creation, all of the time, God does what he is pleased to do. This month we will begin to consider some of the things that God says he is pleased to do. We will begin with Psalm 135:7-8 which immediately follows the declaration that whatever God pleases, he does. It says, "He makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth, he sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses." One of the things that God is pleased to do is to send clouds, rain, lightning and wind upon the earth. It gives God pleasure to directly control all weather patterns.

The fact that God directly controls the weather patterns is stated hundreds of times in the Bible. Consider these few: "In the past God let all the nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony—he has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven..." (Acts 14:16-17). "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). "He draws up the drops of water, which distill as rain to the streams; the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind... See how he scatters his lightning about him, bathing the depths of the sea... He fills his hands with lightning and commands it to strike its mark. His thunder announces the coming storm..." (Job 36: 27-33). "He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes. He hurls down his hail like pebbles. Who can withstand his icy blast? He sends his word and melts them; he stirs up his breezes and the waters flow" (Psalm 147:16-18).

There are several things we learn about God's providence by considering the fact that God directly controls the weather all over the planet. First, notice that God's rule over the weather is connected to his ownership of all creation. It is "his sun", "his lightning", "his thunder" and "his hail." Every part of the weather cycle belongs to him and thus he can do with it as he pleases. Second, he controls weather patterns and he controls the changing of the seasons. Winter comes and winter goes at his command. Third, in Psalm 147 the response to the fact that God rules the weather is that we are to give thanks and praise to God (vv. 1, 7 & 12). We are not to complain about the weather, but we are to thank and praise God for it, whatever it might be. Whatever the weather for the day happens to be it is a manifestation of God's personal involvement with and care for his creation.

Fourth, God controls the weather by means of physical processes. He even acknowledges his use of the water cycle in the Job passage. "He draws up the drops of water" refers to evaporation. "...Which distill as rain to the streams...", refers to condensation. The fact that we can measure and understand the various physical forces at work in creating weather patterns does not mean that God is not directly sending the weather. God uses means to control the weather, such as the water cycle. This also means that God knows about and is using human activity to direct the weather as he wills. While controlling air pollution and greenhouse gases may be good public policy we should not think that somehow human beings are doing things to the weather that are outside of God's control. Pumping CO₂ into the atmosphere does not change the fact

that God sends all the weather to every part of this globe just as he wills. He directs whatever impact human activity has on the weather as he pleases for his purposes.

Fifth, this means that the devastations caused by tornadoes and rain and hurricanes and drought are caused by God himself, just as all of the good things that come from weather come directly from God. As Job says, "...he fills his hands with lightning and commands it to strike its mark." Whatever lightning strikes, God commanded it to strike there. The scores of fires begun by lightning this past month in California were started by God. This fact then begins to raise one of the fundamental questions associated with the doctrine of providence. If God sends all weather and various kinds of weather patterns cause untold harm and destruction to human beings, does that mean that God does evil? I will answer this question in the future but for right now I am drawing your attention to this fact. The Bible unequivocally declares that God sends all weather and we know that many times the forces of nature bring much harm to human beings. Therefore, how do we reconcile belief in a good and loving God with the fact that this God commands lightning to start fires and kill people?

Before we get to that question we need to look at several other things that the Bible tells us that God is pleased to do. That is what we will continue to do next month.

Seeking to rejoice in the heat and humidity that God has sent,