

**Series: The Providence of God #1461**

**Title: Psalm 111.2**

***Professors on the Providence of God***

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world! We come now to a discussion on the providence of God. My sincere prayer is this will be a blessing to you, and others whom you may invite to listen along with you. In our ongoing journey of discovering who God is, let's talk for a few weeks about the ministry of God's providence. Life can be hard, yet *God* is in charge! Let's take comfort from and confidence in the sovereign, providential hand of God in our lives. And to do so, we turn to God's Word.

As we dig in I want you to know that I am following several theologians – all dead, by the way – yet nevertheless men who deserve a lot of credit for what they discovered about the providence of God and passed along to me (to us). Off the top, I want to introduce three of these gentlemen to you. The reason I do so is so that you have a sense for who is teaching me, who I am reading, and what perspectives I agree with. Basically, I thought you might like to know who is influencing me as I attempt to influence you.

Fear not! I will *try* not to make this long and certainly not boring. It is important to me that you know where my theology, where what I believe about God comes from. I am not thinking about God in isolation, all by myself here in my office, coming up with new ideas about who God is. Never. I always follow in the footsteps of my mentors and teachers – people who far more intelligent (that is without question), and also wise than I am. Three such men are Francis Turretin, Charles Hodge and his son A.A. Hodge (these are the Hodges).

Francis Turretin (that's how we English speakers pronounce his name, but is better said François Turretini). His family were Italians who came to settle in Geneva, Switzerland. He lived between 1623 and 1687. That's right, I said 1623 and 1687. So Turretin is long absent from his body and present with His Lord. He was well trained in theology and also philosophy in Switzerland, as well as the Netherlands and France. And Dr. Turretin returned to Geneva to fulfill two important responsibilities. He was pastor of the Italian church, also ministering to the French congregation, and he was professor of theology (this was a chair in theology) at the University of Geneva. He was serving in both ministries when he died.

And his systematic theology, his major work, is published with this title *The Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. The *what?* I know, Institutes sounds boring. But think of Institutes this way: a commentary, a summary of ideas, and a treatise. And then what in the world is this word elenctic? I mean that is not a word we use every day, is it? It's even sort of hard to say. Elenctic. (E-L-E-N-C-T-I-C) It means that which refutes an argument. So Turretin took up some of the bad theology, some of the false teaching about God, that was popular in his day and he refuted it, he argued against it, he showed why it was unbiblical and wrong. He wrote an elenctic theology.

So, there you go. When your teenager is being combative this evening, arguing against you – you respond with your elenctic. Refute your teenager. Argue against such flawed logic. Show him why he's wrong. No! They are not doing that – whatever they seek permission to do! That will be your elenctic.

It is really important with Turretin not to get caught up on the title! But it is true that reading him and his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* is not exactly Netflix! That being said, if you were willing to invest time in Turretin's three volume theology, published in English, I guarantee you that you will know God and His Word better, you will be a more mature believer, and if you apply what you read, you will be a transformative witness for Christ in your community. His combined gifts as pastor-theologian do come through in these books.

He takes work, but he rewards unlike any other protestant theology I read. I am not alone in feeling this way. Some of you may know and remember RC Sproul from Ligonier Ministries and *Renewing Your Mind Radio*. Dr. Sproul said that Turretin was one of the three most brilliant theologians he studied (Edwards and Aquinas being the other two). And that is saying something, because RC was also brilliant. We miss him.

Alright, so Francis Turretin on the providence of God is excellent and now I will rope you in with him as we follow his theology. And that brings me to two other influential theologians – those who study God – and they are a father and son team. The father is Charles and the son is A.A. Their last name is Hodge. And yes! They are also both with the Lord. Charles lived from 1797 to 1878. And he was an American, born in Philadelphia. He was a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary. And that was Princeton in 1819, OK? It's a different school now than it was then. Be wise and discerning if you are taught by anyone who is a graduate of Princeton these days.

Charles Hodge was then a professor at Princeton – only its third professor, serving under his mentor Archibald Alexander for whom he would name his son (AA Hodge – more on him in a moment). Anyway, Charles was one of the leading Hebraists teaching in an American academic institution. That's because he taught the biblical languages, like Hebrew, as well as hermeneutics, biblical criticism, and Old Testament texts. Later he would teach New Testament texts, so by this he knew all of Scripture very well and could pull on what he knew to write his *Systematic Theology*. He was the professor of Systematic Theology and so he just took what he taught and published it in three volumes in 1872 and 1873.

And you might think, "This was published 150 years ago? I bet I wouldn't even understand a word!" Not so. You might be surprised to find how readable it is. But sure, it's thick. It is rich in content, and something that requires more than a speed read. But you would do well to have your Bible in one hand and Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology* in the other hand. His section on the providence of God, at the end of the first volume, is something I will be drawing upon.

Finally, the third theologian I want to introduce to you is A.A. Hodge. And A.A. stands for Archibald Alexander, because he is named after his father's mentor. A.A. was born in 1823 and died in 1886. He was the first born son of Charles, who was a loving and caring Dad. A.A. Hodge became the greatest biblical scholar and theologian in mid-nineteenth century America. Like his Dad, he served in Princeton as a beloved professor. He was also a gifted and passionate preacher of the gospel.

He had a lifelong interest in missions and for a period of time he and his wife were missionaries in India, but they had to return to the U.S. due to health concerns. But he never lost that love and compassion for people. As he loved people, so he loved the Scripture and the God of Scripture. His one-volume book *Outlines of Theology* was originally published in 1860 and revised and enlarged in 1879. You can get it today from the Banner of Truth Publisher. That's the Banner of Truth Publisher.

What is great about it is the way it is written. He asks a question and then in very short order he answers the question. (Usually in no more than a few paragraphs.) So, for example, in his chapter on the providence of God he asks, "What do the Scriptures teach as to the relation of Providence to the acts of sinful men?" Then, using the Bible, he answers the question. And *that* question is of great importance to us because we want to know what purpose sin has in the plans of God.

That is a little biographical background on some of the prominent theologians I will reference in the days ahead. Well, some of you are thinking, "Oh my! I wish he'd get on with the Bible teaching. Did we really need to hear about these old birds he's so into?" Ha. Thanks for your patience. In Psalm chapter 111 and verse 2 the Psalmist says, "**Great are the works of the Lord; They are studied by all who delight in them.**" "Great are the works of the Lord; *They are* studied by all who delight in them." I like that. That's what we do here on *God Is*. We study the great works of the Lord. But we do so in the context of a group of God-fearing Christians who have come before us.

As Steve Lawson says (and he is alive!), (quote), "To those who preach: We have nothing new to say. If it is new, it is not true." He's right.

At a time in history when many people believe history starts with us, we disagree. History informs the present. History matters. And that is very true when it comes to church history and the men and women of God who have come before us – we must listen to what they have to offer us in this century. So, let us surround ourselves by these preeminent theologians and their theology on the providence of God, and tomorrow let's begin to learn divine providence.

Will you pray with me? Father, God, we are on sacred ground here. Anytime we talk about You, Your nature and Your character, we must do so in reverence for who You are. Make us humble learners of You; of Your truth. Teach us. O Spirit of God, You be our Teacher. And all of us Your students. I pray we will grow in our understanding of what the Bible says about providence. And that we will apply this to our lives in this sin sick world. Grant us much grace in the days ahead. Protect us from the Evil One. To You be all honor, glory, and praise. Amen.

I am so glad you're with us. Please join us again tomorrow as we continue to discover who God Is.

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