

The Attributes and Work of God

1.4: What We Know about God – Divine Works

“What can we know that is always true of what God has done, is doing, and will do?” We can summarize this basic approach by saying that the topic of divine works refers to how God works all things according to his eternal purposes.

Excerpt From “The Attributes and Work of God” by Richard Pratt Jr.

1.4.1 God works all things

- A. **Ephesians 1:11** *...who works all things after the counsel of His will,*
- B. *“To be sure, Scripture speaks of both divine and creaturely causes of historical events. Sometimes the Bible speaks of God acting in the world, such as when he delivered Israel at the Red Sea. At other times, it refers to preternatural creatures causing events to occur, such as when Satan tempted Job to curse God. Beyond this, we read about human beings causing things to happen, such as when David made preparations for Solomon’s temple. In addition, we read of animals and plants having effects on events as well, and the Bible also talks of inanimate objects, like the sun, influencing what happens in history. In light of these differentiations, the question in traditional Christian theology is, should we limit what we call “God’s works” simply to those events that Scripture attributes exclusively to God?” Richard Pratt Jr.*
 - 1. The answer is No.
- C. First Cause
 - 1. Does **not** mean that God, who is the First Cause, simply began history and then “took his hands off the wheel”.
 - 2. Does mean that God is the ultimate cause behind every event that occurs at every moment.
 - 3. **Exodus 14:21** *Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided.*
 - 4. **Job 1:12** *Then the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.*
 - 5. **Isaiah 45:7** *The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.*
- D. Second Causes
 - 1. God uses His creation and created beings to perform real but secondary roles in causing events to occur.
 - 2. **Matthew 27:22-23** ²² *Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Crucify Him!”* ²³ *And he said, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they kept shouting all the more, saying, “Crucify Him!”*
 - 3. **John 19:10-11** ¹⁰ *So Pilate said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?”* ¹¹ *Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above;*
- E. God’s divine works include everything that occurs in history, whether he does them directly (First Cause) or indirectly (second causes).
 - 1. **Isaiah 46:10** *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;*
 - a. God is not ignorant to what will happen.
 - b. God is never surprised by what happens.
 - c. God’s eternal plan is never frustrated by anyone or anything.

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1.4.2 Types of divine works

A. Creation

1. **Genesis 1:1** *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*
 - a. God starts His Word with this statement, and this forms the basis of everything we believe about the works of God.
2. Purpose
 - a. To fulfill His eternal plan; For the manifestation of His Glory.
 - b. Creation is not intended to simply be admired by His creatures. It also promotes their welfare, and most importantly, it attunes their hearts to give praise to the Creator.
 - c. **Isaiah 60:21** *Then all your people will be righteous; they will possess the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.*
 - d. **Romans 11:36** *For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.*

B. Providence

1. What is God's work of providence?
 - a. Providence is God's work in preserving His creation (and His creatures).
 - b. **Colossians 1:16-17** ¹⁶ *For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*
 - i. Without God's providence, God's creation would fall apart, and all creatures would die.
2. 3 main elements
 - a. **Preservation:** God preserves and sustains everything he has made.
 - i. **Hebrews 1:3** *And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.*
 - b. **Concurrence:** God works in every act of His creatures, not only in their good but also in their evil acts. He stimulates them to action, accompanies their action at every moment, and makes this action effective. Yet even so, this does not make God responsible for man's sinful deeds.
 - i. **Matthew 10:29-30** ²⁹ *Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*
 - i. **1 Peter 2:8** *"A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*
 - c. **Government:** God rules over all things so that they answer to the purpose of their existence.
 - i. **Psalms 103:19** *The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.*
3. *"The providence of God is God's ongoing care for his creation and all his creatures. Through his Word, through his Spirit, God continues to sustain the world. He provides what we need—food, water, air. He provides all the things we take for granted. As the governor, he oversees all events, even historic events that we may be mystified by. We believe God is in charge and guiding these events to his own outcome, providing for us and for our salvation, helping us to realize our need for his gracious work of restoration. He, as the great heavenly Father who loves us so much, provides us every good gift that we need to sustain us." Justyn Terry*