

Transcripts of
**SIN and
PERFECTION**

A Lecture Series by R.J. Rushdoony



R.J. RUSHDOONY

(1916–2001)

Rev. R.J. Rushdoony (1916–2001), was a leading theologian, church/state expert, and author of numerous works on the application of Biblical law to society. He started the Chalcedon Foundation in 1965. His Institutes of Biblical Law (1973) began the contemporary theonomy movement which posits the validity of Biblical law as God's standard of obedience for all. He therefore saw God's law as the basis of the modern Christian response to the cultural decline, one he attributed to the church's false view of God's law being opposed to His grace. This broad Christian response he described as "Christian Reconstruction." He is credited with igniting the modern Christian school and homeschooling movements in the mid to late 20th century. He also traveled extensively lecturing and serving as an expert witness in numerous court cases regarding religious liberty. Many ministry and educational efforts that continue today, took their philosophical and Biblical roots from his lectures and books.

Learn more about R.J. Rushdoony by visiting: <https://chalcedon.edu/founder>

Providence

R.J. Rushdoony

Hear now the Word of God as it is given to us in Proverbs 16:33, and Matthew 10:29-31.

Proverbs 16:33;

“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”

Matthew 10:29-31;

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

There was a time when, basic to the Reformed faith, was the doctrine of providence. Perhaps no other doctrine was more characteristic of the Puritans than precisely this. Not only did they rejoice in it, speak of it, but they would name towns and ships and their homes with the word ‘providence.’ Without the doctrine of providence, the Reformed faith is dead. Without the doctrine of providence, the doctrine of predestination becomes only an academic doctrine, and irrelevant to everyday life, why?

What the doctrine of predestination affirms is that; ‘God from all eternity did decree, ordain and establish all things that come to pass.’ Now by itself, that doctrine can become an abstract, a cold, a neoplatonic, or an Islamic concept. Indeed, in the modern Reformed community, it is to a large extent a neoplatonic concept. The neoplatonic doctrine of the ‘idea’ is that the universe is made up between two different things; ideas on the one hand, and matter on the other. These are brought together in an unhappy, and unstable compromise, but they are forever distinct and different. But, scripture declares that God the Lord made all things by His sovereign Word, and that all creation is one being; created being, and it cannot be separated into diverse elements, as though one were above and beyond the other. Now, when Neoplatonism through Cambridge University began to corrupt and destroy Puritanism, what it did was to make predestination into a neoplatonic idea, up there in the heavens, and very quickly, providence dropped out of theology.

How long has it been since a book was written on providence? You have to go back to the Puritans to find one. They wrote, they preached endlessly about providence, because, to them it was the most basic, the most marvelous doctrine of all of Scripture. It meant that the God who established and ordained all things by His predestinating counsel, also governed all things closely, intimately, closer to us than we are to ourselves. Which of us knows the every hair of our head? Now as the years have passed, I’ve come closer and closer to being able to count the hairs on my head, but I still can’t, thank God! But the Lord tells us that God knows me and knows you so intimately, so personally that He knows the very hair of our head; not a hair falls apart from His government.

Do you see what that does? It brings predestination out from the heavens into our very being. The lot, the dice, is cast into the lap, and its every roll is the determining of God. The sparrow falls, but not apart from the will of our Father. Instead of being an abstract and cold doctrine, when predestination and providence are made inseparable, as they were intended to be by the reformers, then the doctrine is precisely what Calvin called it, not a matter of abstract disputation by schoolmen, but for the com-

fort of the saints.

I submit therefore, we need to think more about the doctrine of providence, because it is this doctrine that makes God more real to our daily lives than anything else around us or within us. What The Catechism and The Confession of Faith tell us on providence is very moving. The first paragraph of The Westminster Confession of Faith declares, when it speaks of providence;

“God, the great creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose and govern all creatures, actions and things from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge and the free and immutable counsel of His own will to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy.”¹

Now, what happens when we deny that doctrine? It does not disappear, it is simply transferred elsewhere, because providence being a part of God’s plan and purpose, it is like everything God has done, an inescapable aspect of this world. Man cannot help but think in terms of the categories of God’s creation. Marx talked about abolishing the Biblical ideas of heaven and hell, and then he turned around and insisted on portraying the communist utopia as a heaven on earth, and said that all who opposed the socialist revolution had to be portrayed as enemies, as devils, who needed to be put into a kind of humanistic hell. He couldn’t abolish the language; he simply transferred it from scripture into communist thinking.

The same is true of the doctrine of providence; when it began to fall out of theology, it fell into politics. Our politics today is the politics of predestination and providence. Notice the confession said that, “... that God doth uphold, direct, dispose and govern all creatures, actions and things from the greatest even to the least.” Now, isn’t that exactly what the modern State, which seeks to be God walking upon earth, tries to do? Exactly! Remember what the word providence comes from the same word as provide. It’s another way of saying; ‘providence’. And when man does not look to God for His providence, he will look to the state for its providence. Men have not ceased to believe in providence but they do not look to the triune God for it, they look to Washington or the state capitol. And the result is the corruption of our lives, the destruction of our characters, the confounding of our religious faith because we have broken the link between predestination and providence so the state having taken over providence is now taking over predestination, cradle-to-grave security, womb-to-tomb care. Government planning and control, master plans; all these are evidences of the modern doctrine of predestination and providence. Inescapable! If you deny it to God, you will affirm it to the state or some human agency.

Providence, thus, is a very important doctrine. We had better believe it. Our lives and the lives of our children and our children’s children hang in the balances. Are they going to be under the government of the Triune God or under the government of totalitarians? Believing in providence, our forefathers here in this country came into a wilderness and faced all kinds of problems. Because they believed that; “...whithersoever thou goest, I will be with thee.” “I will both lay me down in peace and sleep for Thou, Lord only makest me to dwell in safety.” “I will not leave thee nor forsake thee...” The promises of providence are so many.

True, they knew that God determines the course of providence, that it is not in terms of the purposes of man, but the purposes of God. As The Larger Catechism, question eighteen asks;

“Q. What are God’s works of providence?”

A. God’s works of providence are His most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving and governing all His creatures, ordering them and all their actions to His own glory.”

And whose wisdom and whose glory is the greater? God's or man's? God's or the State's? And in whose hands are our lives most secure? In ours, or the State's or the Lord's?

To believe in providence is to cast our every care upon Him, knowing He careth for us. To believe in providence is to know that; "...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." To believe in providence is to know that while we may not feel all things that happen to us as joy, because as God tells us through Paul His apostle, we can be at times, "...for His sake, slaughtered like sheep all the day long...", and yet we know that whatever it may mean for us, we can feel it, not as joy, but count it all joy in the Lord. We know that we and our loved ones are in His hands.

My maternal grandfather was killed by a very anti-Christian people, the Turks. When he was going towards an ancient church on a pilgrimage, and he saw them step out of the bush behind the trees to kill him. At home was his wife, expecting what was to be his first-born son, and five daughters. He began to sing a hymn and went to his death. He believed in providence. And I'm here today because of the providence of God.

To believe in providence is to say that God is all wise, all holy, that: "...known unto Him are all His works from the foundation of the world...", that He who sits on the great throne before Him all the ages are as a crystal sea. And that when we, in eternity, see the totality of His purpose for all of history and for our lives, its full and glorious unfolding, we shall cry, "...Great and marvelous are Thy works, oh Lord!"

You see, the focus of providence is on God's glory, God's purpose, God's kingdom, and God's sovereignty, not man's. "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things to whom be glory forever, amen."

When the world withdrew providence from theology, it reappeared in politics. And so today, we are in crisis. We face a world in which the screws, the torture screws of the state's doctrine of predestination and providence are being fastened upon man. They spell the slave labor camps of The Soviet Union and the growing claim of the state to more and more of that which is yours. We see that doctrine of providence in Pittsburgh, where a man had to go to court to fight for his bone marrow from the claims of the state, because a cousin of his was dying and needed bone marrow, and so he was hailed to court to fight for his bone marrow. Or in France today where a new government regulation says that unless your parents or our relatives or your children step in when you're dying, your body organs can be raided for an organ bank by the state. And it's justified by the French civil government in the name of providing for the people; providence, man's providence! We are being ruled increasingly by the would-be gods of creation; men.

Providence means that:

"God, the great creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions and things from the greatest even to the least by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise and the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy."

Do you believe that? If you do, you will take the state's hands off your lives and you will take your own hands off your lives because you are the Lord's possession, and you will walk as free men in Jesus Christ, knowing that it is His government, His providence which alone is all wise and all holy. Let us pray.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we come before Thee to confess that other gods have had dominion over us. We have sought to rule ourselves, and we have given ourselves into the hands of ungodly men and we now, as a people, groan under the burden of our sins. Oh, Lord our God, free us from men, free us from ourselves, free us from our sin, into the glorious freedom of Thy providence, to walk in Thy care, and Thy government, to know that the very hairs of our head are all numbered, that even the very roll of dice is according to Thy purpose and plan, that there is not a thing that happens, oh Lord, that Thou dost not ordain and make to work together for good in terms of Thy glorious purpose. Oh Lord our God, how great and marvelous are Thy ways, and we praise Thee. We thank Thee our God, for Thy providence. Work in us that which is pleasing in Thy sight and make us bold and confident in Thy government, that through Christ our Lord and King, we may be more than conquerors. Grant us this, we beseech Thee, in Jesus' name, Amen.

ENDNOTES:

1. Schaff, P. (1882). *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, with Translations* (Vol. 3, p. 612). Harper & Brothers.

Sin and Perfection (2)

Faith

R.J. Rushdoony

Hear now the Word of God as it is given to us in the Gospel According to St. Luke, the eighteenth chapter, verses 1-8;

“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”

May this reading of scripture be to the glory of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.

Some years ago, when the intellectual Walter Lippmann was at the height of his influence, a critic ably pinpointed his spirit by referring to him as; ‘the trumpet that always sounds retreat.’ Unhappily, that same description could fit all too many churchmen; the spirit or trumpet that always sounds retreat. And, all too often this parable has been used to sound retreat, to speak of hopelessness. But first of all, this is a parable about faith.

Now, the common opinion contrasts faith to reason or sight. Faith is often referred to as; ‘blind faith.’ There is the assumption that faith is a ‘grin-and-bear-it’ attitude in the face of fearful odds, or even in the face of evidence. In brief, some say that when you have nothing else to go on, go on faith. But this is not scriptural. Scripture tells us; “...by faith we know...” Rather than being contrasted to knowledge, we are told that it is the basis, the foundation of knowledge, the foundation of true sight. To believe in God is not unreason or blindness, but the life of logic, reason and reality. It is sin which his blindness, it is sin which hinders knowledge and faith. It is sin and unbelief which are blind and illogical. Adam, in paradise, had no intellectual problems in believing. It is sin which produces unbelief, ignorance and blindness. And Revelation 21:8 tells us that unbelief and fearfulness go together.

This parable defines faith. Now unhappily, too many people approach this parable with a modern interpretation of the eighth verse; one, true, that has roots in many older opinions but which has come to predominate in the modern age. “Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” And the common opinion now is that this means when the Son of man comes at the end of the world, and that He will find so sorry a situation that there will be almost no faith on the earth. And then the whole parable is misread in terms of this interpretation. But’ a much older interpretation, and a much more relevant one because our Lord spoke to the people of His day, and He did speak more than once of His imminent coming in judgment on Jerusalem and Judea, and He stressed this at His trial. We read for example;

“...again the high priest asked him and said unto Him, art Thou the Christ, the Son of the blessed? And Jesus said, I am, and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

And he had reference to the fact that they, his judges at the moment, would soon see Him when He came in judgment on Jerusalem and Judea. This is the context. Our Lord was not speaking of The Second Coming, but His coming in judgment which came with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the nation.

This parable is a parable concerning faith and victory: "...for this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." The parable gives us a widow, a very stubborn woman. There are such, you know. I'm reminded, since I'm a few thousand miles from home, of my wife. She is a fiery Scot. She comes from a border clan that prided itself in the old days about the number of clans they were at war with. It was a status symbol to be at war with the most number of clans. A tremendous woman, a very godly woman, ideal to have on your side, but not against you! Now, this widow is selected as a type of faith, because humanly speaking a widow is the epitome of helplessness, especially in the ancient world. Widows were easily wronged and defrauded. And this widow has been defrauded. She comes, and the judge, the only judge she can go to, is a reprobate man. But this widow is persistent, she is stubborn, she persists. She nags, in other words. She goes after that judge day and night. "Avenge me of mine adversary!" She persists, and she gains justice.

Now, the whole point of the parable is precisely that. Our Lord says very bluntly, if an unjust judge will give justice to a helpless widow's prayer, how much more so the all-righteous judge God the Lord?

"And shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you He will avenge them speedily."

Faith, thus, means confidence that God the Lord is far better than an unjust judge, and will readily bring justice to light when we turn to Him in faith.

And so, we are told, that our Lord: "...spake this parable to His disciples unto the end that men ought always to pray and not to faint." Our Lord's words are very clear. They are like a slap in the face to men of weak faith. To us who fold our hands and say; 'well that's the way the world is, what can you expect, it's a rotten, depraved, fallen world and how can a man get justice?' But to treat God as though He is not capable of granting what even some unjust judges will grant is not faith nor prayer, but insulting unbelief! How dare we treat God as though He will not do for us what an unjust judge will do for that most helpless type of person, a widow! And so our Lord says, even an unjust judge will give a widow justice at times when she persists, when she nags, when she makes it difficult for him. Now are you going to treat God as though He isn't capable of doing what even an unjust judge does?

And isn't that what we're doing continually? We see evil, we see wrongs all around us and we fold our hands and we say; 'well that's the way the world is, we'll have to grin and bear it.' And we feel that we're men of faith. And we're incapable of that passionate and intense prayer that marked John Knox's son-in-law, John Welsh who prayed in the cold of the night, night after night, and his wife came and asked him if he were daft, he was going to get his sickness and die, and he rebuked her, and continued to pray, saying:

"...Lord give me Scotland 'ere I die!"

It was men like that that won Scotland. They never moved in terms of what man was doing, or the triumph around them of the ungodly but in terms of God the all-righteous judge. In terms of our Lord's Word; "...men ought always to pray and not to faint." Thus, faith moves confidently, and aggressively toward victory because it takes God seriously. If we believe therefore God is what He declares Himself to be in His Word, we will pray and act in the confidence of that faith, know-

ing that God will avenge His elect speedily. Faith thus is defined for us in this parable. It is active, it is aggressive, it is persistent, and it moves in the clear knowledge of what God is and what He declares Himself to be.

Unbelief in God is a radical ignorance about the nature of God and the universe. It presupposes a meaningless and blind world and lives on the presupposition that; 'all things work together for evil because there is no sense to anything.' Faith, thus, is inseparable from the most basic kind of knowledge. Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God so the things which are seen are not made of things which do appear. This is why we must hold that faith is basic to true learning and to true knowledge, and a school that is not founded upon faith in the Word of God is not going to be a school where there is any true learning.

Denial of faith in our Lord is, finally, a denial of knowledge, because Jesus is the Truth. By denying our Lord, the modern world is turning its back on truth. Faith is not human belief, but supernatural grace. Therefore, it never appears in isolation from the other works of grace. The doctrine of 'the carnal Christian,' thus is an abomination. Faith is God's work in man, conforming man in all his being and works to God and Christ. Paul declares; "...for whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." And again we are told; "...and be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that He may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

We conform ourselves to what we believe in; if we believe in the God of Scripture, then we conform ourselves to Him and to His Word and we manifest the kind of faith that moves in terms of victory. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith..." a faith which, like that of the widow, continues in prayer, believes in the all righteous judge, believes that God's righteousness shall be set forth to the confounding of His enemies. We conform ourselves to what we believe in.

Modern man is conformed to this world, to the crowd. He is group-controlled. Robert C. Harvey has described the modern man as manifesting a 'new tribalism.' He declares that modern man is marked by anxiety because he is always anxious to be accepted and approved by man. He is marked by aggressiveness. He is continually trying to prove himself with other men; marked by a false perfectionism, and he judges all men sharply as a means of exalting himself. And the mistakes of others please him, and he talks of them, and his witness is to the sins of others. In the new tribalism, society and man are homogenized. Men conform themselves one to another and it leads to impersonality, because the crowd governs man. And there is a fear of the future. Where the spirit of man prevails, there also the fear of man prevails. But. for us. the fruit of the spirit is in all good and righteousness and truth.

The widow in the parable did not conform herself to the world, nor to the opinions of the world that; 'you can't fight city hall.' She worked in the confidence that the supreme court of the universe was on her side, and she refused to be overcome of evil, she was an overcomer. And we have a word from the throne concerning this. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son." "But the fearful and the unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second death." The opposite of overcoming, of having faith is to be fearful and unbelieving. And Revelation tells us we are then a companion of depravity in its ultimate form.

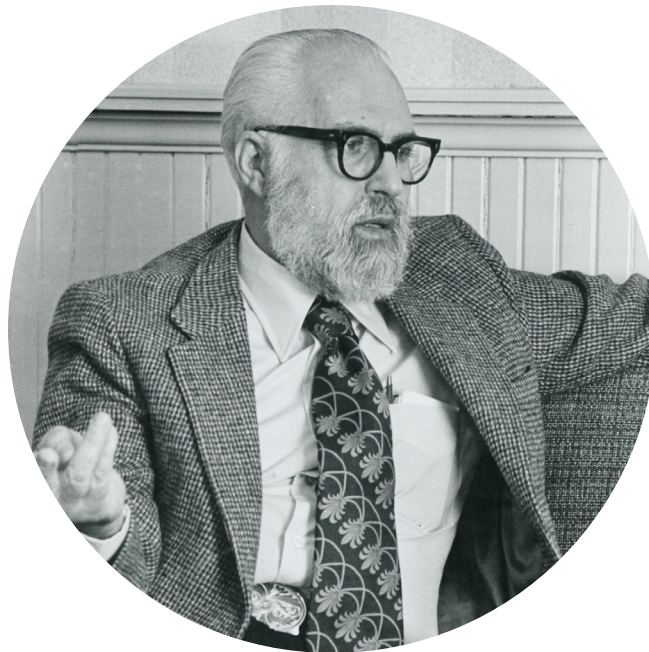
This parable summons us, therefore, to faith, faith which is victorious, faith which is triumphant, because our faith is in God the Lord, and, with such a faith, who can fail? John Welsh's prayers are heard and, though, before the battle is won, he dies, like Moses, he sees The Promised Land. By faith, the saints of old moved in the confidence that what God declared, He would deliver. And they saw, by faith, those things of which we are the inheritors, and of which the ages to come shall be the heirs. By

faith they moved as citizens of 'no mean city.' Our faith will manifest our citizenship. Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. How do you treat God in your prayers? As not even capable of being as gracious as an unjust judge, or as the righteous Lord of creation? Let us pray.

Our Lord and our God, we live in an evil time, and we see the fruits of our sin all around us, our cowardice, our timidity, our sloth, and our weakness. And we see also, all around us, the fruits of our prayerlessness. O Lord our God, grant us the spirit of prayer, of this widow of old. Instruct us by thy Holy Spirit that we may come to thee in unflagging prayer, in earnest and triumphant prayer, knowing that we come to the throne of righteousness and of omnipotence. Give us grace therefore, to pray without ceasing, to cast our every care upon thee who carest for us, to rejoice evermore, knowing that greater is He that is with us and in us than he that is in the world, knowing, oh Lord, the glory of thy promises, the majesty of thy Word. Make us, O Lord, a people of faith and of prayer, in Jesus' name, amen.

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