



Power From on High

Series: Power From On High

Title: Ordinary Means, Extraordinary
Providence, Part 2

Lesson: 131

Text: Acts 23:19-22

Date: May 17, 2026

Acts 23:11 But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, **“Take courage;** for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you **must** witness at Rome also.”

Definition of providence

God’s providence is His continual, sovereign work of sustaining, governing, and directing all things according to His will.

“all things”

Ephesians 1:11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose, who works all things after the counsel of His will,

Sovereignty and providence are similar, but they are not identical.

While sovereignty is God’s right to rule, providence is

the _____ of that rule.

Divine _____

Divine irony is God's sovereignty working through providence to overturn human expectations in shocking and unexpected ways that accomplish His will and bring Him glory.

Proverbs 21:5 The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage,
But everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty.

Proverbs 16:9 The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps.

Scripture is saturated with examples of divine irony.

Hosea 9–10, Joel 3:1–8, Amos 5:18–20, Obadiah 1–15, Jonah 4, Micah 1:8–16, Micah 3:11–12, Micah 4:7, Micah 5:2, Nahum 3:4–7, Habakkuk 1, Zephaniah 1:13, Zephaniah 2:15, Haggai 1:4, Haggai 1:6, Zechariah 3:1–3, Zechariah 9:9, Zechariah 11:12, Zechariah 12:10, Zechariah 13:7, and Malachi 1:6–9

Four clear examples of divine irony:

1. Joseph and his brothers - Genesis 37-50

Genesis 50:20 “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

2. Pharaoh oppressing Israel - Exodus 1-14

3. Haman and the gallows - Book of Esther

Esther 7:10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, and the king's anger subsided.

4. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ - Isaiah 53:3-6; Acts 2:23

Six ways God's providence works on our behalf:

1. He sees all hidden threats. (12-15)

2. He uses unlikely people. (16-18)

3. He has perfect _____ . (19-22)

Jesus Himself is an example of how God controls the timing.

John 2:4 - "My hour has not yet come."

John 7:6 - "My time is not yet here"

John 7:8 - "My time has not yet fully come."

John 7:30 - "No one laid a hand on Him, because
His hour had not yet come."

John 8:20 - "No one seized Him, because His hour had
not yet come."

John 12:23 - "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

John 13:1 - "Jesus knowing that His hour had come"

John 17:1 - "Father, the hour has come..."

4. He enlists _____ power. - 19-22

19 The commander took him by the hand and stepping aside, began to inquire of him privately, "What is it that you have to report to me?"

"took him by the hand"

"stepped aside"

There are several layers of divine irony here

1. The pagan became the protector.
2. Lysias thought he was investigating a report to keep peace, but in reality he was being sovereignly directed by God to fulfill Christ's "must" that Paul reach Rome.

20 And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him.

21 “So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they slay him; and now they are ready and waiting for the promise from you.”

22 So the commander let the young man go, instructing him, “Tell no one that you have notified me of these things.”

Why did Lysias want silence?

1. To protect him.
2. To avoid a political scandal.
3. To protect his own strategy.

Proverbs 21:1 The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.

God uses irony for four reasons:

1. To magnify His _____.

2. To remind us that evil _____ operates outside His control.

Proverbs 16:4 The Lord has made everything for its own purpose,
Even the wicked for the day of evil.

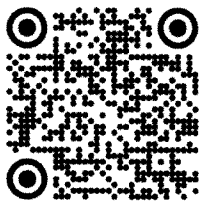
3. To humble human _____.

4. To teach believers to walk by _____ and not by sight.

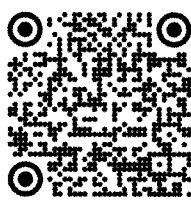
Our lives are not dependent on circumstances, but they are anchored in God's sovereign will, which transforms human evil into divine good.

Discussion Guide

1. Which example of divine irony from Scripture impacted you the most: Joseph, Pharaoh, Haman, or the crucifixion of Christ? Why?
2. According to the sermon, divine irony matters because it magnifies God's sovereignty, reminds us that evil never operates outside His control, humbles human pride, and teaches believers to walk by faith. Which of those truths do you most need to embrace right now, and why?
3. In the sermon, we heard the distinction: 'Sovereignty is God's throne; providence is His hand.' How does this illustration help you understand the difference between God's right to rule and the practical ways He actually administers that rule in your daily life?
4. Can you share a time in your life when an apparent "trap" or obstacle laid by a difficult circumstance actually became the exact vehicle God used to transition or protect you?
5. In the sermon, this statement was made. "What looks like defeat may actually turn out to be deliverance." Can you think of a difficult circumstance in your own life where God later revealed a greater purpose through it?



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ANSWERS: application, irony, timing, secular, sovereignty, never, pride, faith