

Seeing God's Providence

Introduction. The word "providence" means "foresight" or "forethought." The dictionary defines "providence" as "divine guidance or care; the God-conceived power which sustains and guides human destiny." Therefore, providence is the preservation and direction of everything by God.

Since the beginning of time, God's providential hand has been seen in the workings of nature (Nehemiah 9:6; Matthew 5:45), in the kingdoms of men (Daniel 4:17, 32; Acts 17:26) and in the lives of individuals (Genesis 45:5-8; Matthew 10:29-31). But because this has been a misunderstood subject, fertile soil has been prepared for an abundance of false teaching. God works through natural means to provide for His people. He does not use miracles, for that period has passed (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Miracles were obvious acts where God superseded or suspended natural laws. This lesson will detail four ways in which we can see God's providence in our lives.

I. We Can See God's Providence In Blessings

- A. There are certain physical blessings that are given to all men (Acts 14:17).
- B. However, there are special blessings to Christians who do the Lord's will.
 - 1. Physical blessings through obedience come by means of His providence.
 - a) God's special protection (Psalm 41:1-2).
 - b) A hundredfold blessing (Mark 10:28-30).
 - c) Every need supplied (Philippians 4:19).
 - d) Long life and good days (1 Peter 3:10-12).
 - 2. But we cannot overlook the finest spiritual blessing ("crown of righteousness," 2 Timothy 4:8; "crown of life," James 1:12; "crown of glory," 1 Peter 5:4).
- C. In contrast, the Lord works against those who disobey Him (Psalm 7:10-13).
- D. If we want to be successful in life, we need to do God's will (Joshua 1:8).

II. We Can See God's Providence In Trials

- A. God has always tested or tried His people (Jeremiah 20:12).
 - 1. Job was tested (Job 23:10).
 - 2. Abraham was tested (Hebrews 11:17).
- B. Christians will be tested (John 16:33).
 - 1. God works through providence in trials.
 - a) Some had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings (Hebrews 11:36).
 - b) A man's faith will be tried with fire (1 Peter 1:7).
 - c) Fiery trials come to all Christians (1 Peter 4:12).
 - d) Some were cast into prison to be tried (Revelation 2:10).
- C. The Greek word for "temptation" is defined as "trials of all kinds."
 - 1. "Temptation" includes "trials with beneficial purposes and effects" (James 1:2-3). Sometimes it is translated as "trial" or "trials".
 - a) We pray that God will not lead us into temptation (Matthew 6:13).
 - b) We remember that God provides escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).
 - 2. "Temptation" also includes "trials definitely designed to lead to wrong doing" (Matthew 4:1).
 - a) God tries the righteous, but does not tempt them to evil (James 1:13-14).

- b) Satan tempts us to do evil (cp. Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5), although his end will come (Revelation 20:10).
- D. In those trials which God uses to prove and strengthen us, we patiently endure (Romans 5:3-4; James 5:10-11).
- E. In those temptations which Satan uses to destroy us, we steadfastly resist (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9).

III. We Can See God's Providence In Prayers

- A. Providence and prayer go together.
 - 1. The person who denies the providence of God unwittingly places himself in opposition to prayer.
 - 2. God accomplishes great good through His providential answer to prayer.
 - a) He heals the sick (Psalm 30:2).
 - b) He delivers out of troubles (Psalm 34:17).
 - c) He gives good gifts (Matthew 7:7-11).
 - d) He gives wisdom (James 1:5).
- B. God's providential care is on all who diligently seek Him.
 - 1. Jacob diligently petitioned the Lord to provide for him as he went to seek a wife (Genesis 28:20-22).
 - 2. This principle was also illustrated in Ezra and those with him who returned from Babylonian captivity (Ezra 8:22-23, 31).
- C. God is able to abundantly provide for us beyond all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20-21). This refers to physical and spiritual provision.
- D. Therefore, we always should pray and not grow weary (Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

IV. We Can See God's Providence In Chastisement

- A. God's chastisement is a demonstration of His love (Revelation 3:19).
- B. The Christian will sometimes endure trials and persecutions as forms of God's chastisement (Hebrews 12:3-5). God chastens in several ways.
 - 1. With the rod of men (1 Kings 11:4-11).
 - 2. With the sword of His mouth (Revelation 2:16).
 - 3. With sickness and great tribulation (Revelation 2:21-22).
- C. We need to endure the chastening of the Lord (Hebrews 12:7).
 - 1. It allows us to be partakers of His holiness (Hebrews 12:10).
 - 2. It produces the fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11).

Conclusion. God's providential care works in blessings, trials, prayers, and chastisement. To see God's providential hand, one has to first know God Himself. The dealings of God are not always evident on the surface, but there is always a purpose which time or eternity will reveal. We can always be confident that even if providence is frowning, behind it is the smiling face of God.

God's greatest work of providence was seen in Jesus (Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:27-28). All nature and history moved to His hour of death and resurrection. This providence with a view to salvation was meant for me and you. Take advantage of the opportunity now, and start your life as a Christian, and live under the providential hand of God.