

# **Getting to Know God Through His Providence**

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## **Consider these questions:**

1. What do we know about God?
2. And especially how should we view things that happen in our lives?
3. To what extent do people build unhappiness, anguish of soul, resentments, bitterness, irritableness, impatience, etc., because of the way we view the 1) circumstances, 2) events of life, 3) situations, and the 4) people who make up our lives?

## **The Meaning of the Word:**

Providence is a word not often used today. Yet, it was very popular a century ago. The Puritan writers and the Pilgrims made much of the word "providence." What does it mean? A number of things are included in a complete understanding of God's providential workings.

## **I. The Instruments of God's Providential Working in Our Lives:**

### **A. Events and circumstances of our lives, (Study Psalm 139.)**

1. Providence is the working of God in every minute detail of our lives.

Psa. 57:2 \_\_\_\_\_

Phi. 2:13 \_\_\_\_\_

- a. Including events, situations, and circumstances that occurs in our life from birth until our death.
- b. This will include all the testings, trials, and temptations,
- c. including the joys, blessings, happenings,
- d. the problems, and victories,
- e. every fortunate thing, and unfortunate,
- f. even our nationality, parents, and place of birth.

### **B. All aspects of life are controlled by God.**

1. It is God who designs, plans, and executes all. He "performs all things for me."
2. Psalm 57 was written by David when being hunted by King Saul.

God protected David; God worked His providential will. David reviewed how God had taken care of him in the past. David knew his former good fortune was not luck, but caused by a *sovereign God*. (Psa. 47:2; 138:6; 57:2) (Consider Paul's sermon on Mars hill.)

**C. Providence is for Our GOOD and for God's GLORY.**

Eph. 1:9 *"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself."* vs. 11 *"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."*

1. It is God at work... it is *"He who performs all things for me."* (Psa. 57:2)
2. God is at working carrying out His plans made before the beginning of time as He carries out the *"counsels of His own will."* (Eph. 1:9-14)
4. Remember our ultimate purpose in life -- is *"His glory!"* (Eph. 1:6, 12)

God has planned for us to achieve that goal and He is constantly at working in our lives to bring us to that end. Therefore, all that is happening in our lives is for His ultimate glory. Meanwhile, it is for our good. What God is doing is the plan of His appointment, He has prepared all the goodness that is possible for a man on this earth. Thus all circumstances bring us good (Romans 8:28). And all events of history are *"His story"* as He carries out His sovereign will.

**D. Providence is manifested in two ways:**

1. It is seen in God's mercy! (Psa. 103:1-6 (vs. 6 especially) *"The Lord executeth righteousness (mercy) and judgment for all that are oppressed."* He withholds judgment, chastening, and rebuke that we truly deserve. He is often merciful to us and brings tender, kind blessings into our lives. And gives us grace or favor we don't deserve.
2. It is seen in God's judgment! At times God moves with angry judgment, and chastening, and frowns upon us. (Prov. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:5-17) However, both mercy and judgment are for our benefit and are from His providential working of GOOD.

**II. The Method of Knowing God Through His Providential Workings:**

**A. God becomes more real through our meditation on His providence.**

1. (Psa. 1:1-3) Meditation on the providence of God is our duty. Richard Baxter wrote the following: *"If thou be a Christian indeed, I know thou hast, if not in thy book, yet certainly in thy heart, a great many precious favors upon record: the very remembrance and rehearsal of them is sweet; how much more sweet was the actual enjoyment."* (In The Saints' Everlasting Rest)
2. Paul made much of God's providential workings in his life. (Acts 22:1-16; Acts 26:6-20)
3. Moses spoke of God's working of victory, it became a song of deliverance. (Exod 15) At another time Moses wrote a memorial of victory over Amalek and built an altar with the inscription: *"The Lord my Banner!"* (Jehovah-nissi) (Exod 17:14-15)

## **God's Providential Care!**

4. Many Psalms were written for that purpose, maybe the best being Psalm 111. God did His works to be remembered, etc. (Consider also Psalm 38 and 70.)
5. Children were named as a means of keeping in mind God's providential workings in the life of the parents. Consider Hannah, naming Samuel who was given as an answer to her prayers. (I Sam 1:20)
6. Often even people, places, and events were named to bring remembrance of God's providence and action. (Gen. 28:19)

### **B. God's blessings become more real as we see them as His providence.**

Events, circumstances, etc., do not depend upon us. We think that if things are to get done - it is up to us, or it won't be gone. We must discover the minute dealings of God, even in the small and insignificant area of our lives, and learn that He is in control and we depend upon Him rather than on ourselves for everything!

2. We must receive the lesson that centers on God's providence, sovereignty and power. Too often we act and react to live -- as if God were dead. He is alive, working out His will even in spite of us. Our task is to find out what God is doing and get into the flow of it.
3. Ultimately, we can never be outside the will of God. (Often we talk about God's perfect will, allowed will, etc.) God IS going to accomplish His will on earth and He will ultimately accomplish His will in us. We may run, resist, be indifferent, apathetic, rebellious, etc. BUT our resistance leads to sorrows and judgment, but God's sovereign plan will come to fruition.

Our task is not so much finding God's will -- but finding God, having fellowship, an intimate walk with Him. We must 1) observe and ponder what God is doing, 2) realize that He is at work in our lives, 3) give Him full sway, and 4) all the rights to work His plan and purpose. *Then we will be in His will!*

4. We must have a "right attitude" toward circumstances, events, situations of life. Not griping, complaining, (I Cor. 10:1-14-- such can bring moral failure) not grumbling, but joyful acceptance of God's workings. Finding joy in all things -- all providence, whether of mercy or judgment. In all things making God, as our Father, more real in our lives.
5. We must accept all those whom God puts in our lives. (Rom. 15:7; 14:1) As His instruments of ministry us -- in doing right or in their failure. Acceptance and not rejection of them and what God is doing through them. Not rejecting, which will bring friction and bondage.

### **III. There Are Steps of Meditation on God's Providence Which Will Build Our Lives.**

#### **A. By remembrance -- searching backward into the past (Psa. 111)**

1. We must work at building a habit of reflection on God's doings and providence in life.

2. Doing this will lighten our burdens and cares as we see God at work in our lives bringing good, blessings, joys, and maturity.
3. Witness, consider, reflect upon God's performances throughout your life. Asaph did this, note Psalm 77:11-12. God expects us to look at and accept His providence. (II Thess. 5:18, 24)
4. Think upon all that God has done in your life since birth. Consider questions:
  - a. What if you had been born in a country of poverty?
  - c. What if you had been in Russia in the past 70 years?
  - c. What if you had different parents, different beginning in life, parents who were slaves?
  - d. What if you had been born in a country that did not even have God's Word in your language? Or you never had a chance to learn, schooling, etc.
  - e. Imagine that you were born under a Roman Catholic dominated country ruled with an iron fist.

**B. By thorough reflection -- search backward into the past.**

Think about all of your life -- every detail you can recall -- and meditate upon -- **What God Has Done!** Take time to reflect -- meditate unhurriedly. *See God's glory in it all like an increasing cloud upon the sky of life!*

**C. By pondering --- search backward into the past.**

1. Ponder on the timeliness of God's workings. God moved just when mercy was needed. God allowed testings and afflictions for our good as they became the catalyst to bring us to a place of trust, dependence, and acceptance of His will. His timing is perfect, and always amazing. (Consider Israel at the Red Sea.)
2. Ponder on the little things in His providence which make up the whole. They may seem slight, trivial in themselves, but it is the little things, accumulated into the whole, that make up life.

The father, Jesse sending David with food for his brethren was an insignificant thing. But was the beginning of a series of little things that culminated in the death of Goliath, the honor given to David, and the beginning of events that led onward to his kingship, in God's will.

Many were the little things that were involved in Paul's conversion. All these little things are to be noted as the very hand of our eternal God. *He works everything after the counsel of His own will and purpose.*

3. Ponder on the instruments God uses to fulfill His providence. If we truly reflect upon God's doings, we will recognize His hand in: an act of a stranger, a friend, and even an enemy, the unusual and normal events that make up the whole of life, the unexpected and the expected; the great, noble, and the obscure, the difficult and the joyous events, saved and unsaved... all these things God uses.

If we studied the history of Israel carefully, and thoroughly we would see the providence of God in so many ways. The book of Esther is just one of those many wonderful evidences of God's providential working in behalf of His people. Joseph's life is a continued panorama of God's workings in His providential plan for Joseph and a ministry to Israel through him. (Gen. 50:20) God meant all for good.

4. Ponder on the Scriptures as they give the story of God's providential doings. All providence have a relationship to the Word of God. (I Kgs. 8:24) Scriptures were fulfilled and revealed to us through the providence. The many prophetic utterances concerning Christ were fulfilled through little things that made up His life. Scripture ought to be applied to all the events of our lives. There are promises fulfilled (Psa. 119:50,92), warnings fulfilled, counsels etc., that have to do with His mercy and judgment.
5. Ponder that God's very character is revealed through His providential workings. God desires that we would see, know, consider, and understand His greatness, reality, and majesty through the acts of His providence.

**This ought to be the sequence:**

- First, we see the event transpire,
- then we witness what happened,
- then we meditate and ponder on what has transpired that we might reflect and **k n o w** that **"God is God."**
- And, thus we understand the mighty providence of God.

**God made His mighty acts to be remembered!** *When Israel walked over Jordan they were to put stones in the river bed and on the bank -- to remember God's doings, for these were all in the providential workings of a wonderful God. Illustration: Consider Judges 2:1-13 !*