

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture texts: **Matthew 6:33; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 3:20.**
- B. The religious world views providence and miracles as one in the same, to the extent that;
 - 1. Simple Biblical principles are misapplied.
 - 2. The subject is avoided in Biblical teaching given.
 - 3. We hear of absurd or farfetched ideas concerning the "special guidance of the Lord."
- C. The Bible does not promise a life of ease w/o problems or suffering.
- D. Life has many stages, we must learn to trust God through all of them (Eccl. 3:1-11a).
*There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven--
A time to give birth, and a time to die; A time to plant, and a time to uproot what is planted.
A time to kill, and a time to heal; A time to tear down, and a time to build up.
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance.
A time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, and a time to shun embracing.
A time to search, and a time to give up as lost; A time to keep, and a time to throw away.
A time to tear apart, and a time to sew together; A time to be silent, and a time to speak.
A time to love, and a time to hate; A time for war, and a time for peace.*
What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils? I have seen the task which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves. He has made everything appropriate in its time.

I. DOES GOD WORK IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE TODAY? (AND HOW?)

- A. The answer to this question always has been, and always will be, "yes."
- B. God's work comes under three headings:
 - 1. **Natural law.** An effect produced without special acts of God. Laws of reproduction, creation, scientific laws.
 - 2. **Miracle.** A direct act of God contrary to natural laws (Mk. 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4). Remember miracles were to confirm the word, not provide daily needs.
(Mk 16:20) And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed. And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.
(Heb 2:3-4) how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.
 - 3. **Providence.** This means a special act of God in harmony with the laws of nature. This is utilization of natural laws. The Bible was given by miracle but has been preserved by providence (Prov. 30:5; Psa. 34:7; 37:25).
(Prov 30:5) Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.
(Psa 34:7) The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, And rescues them.
(Psa 37:25) I have been young, and now I am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Or his descendants begging bread.

II. TWO BASIC REASONS FOR PROVIDENCE.

- A. *First, for judgment or discipline.*
In the two examples listed below no miracle was involved. However, there was a direct act of God. He worked providentially.
 - 1. Dagon's head, hands, and people's tumors (see 1Sam. 5).
 - 2. A locust plague destroys the land (see Joel 2).
- B. *Secondly, as a blessing.* Listed are two examples from the OT and one from the NT.
 - 1. The story of Esther and Mordicai (see Esther 1:1-10:3).
 - 2. The story of Joseph (see Gen. 37:1-43:34).

3. Paul's journey to Rome (Rom. 15:30-32; Ac. 23:11; Phil. 1:12).
(Rom 15:30-32) Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.
(Ac 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."
(Phil 1:12) Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,

III. PRAYER IS THE PROOF OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE AT WORK TODAY.

- A. If there is no way in which God can work in the affairs of men, what is the use of prayer?
- B. God does not answer prayers by miracles, He answers by providence (Jn. 15:7; Jas. 5:16; 1Pet. 3:12; 1Jn. 5:14-15).
(Jn. 15:7) "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."
(Jas 5:16) Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.
(1Pet 3:12) "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE UPON THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."
(1Jn 5:14-15) And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
- C. In our weakness we may reason that God is limited today because:
1. Miracles have ceased.
 2. No inspired apostles left.
 3. All instruction has been given.
- D. Because these things are true, we can not reason that God is less concerned or less able to help. He continues to exercise His care over His people.
1. The God who created is the God who sustains (see Gen. 1:1; Jas. 1:17).
 2. The God who sent X, rewards us (see Heb. 11:6).
 3. The God of OT is not a God of the past (see Ex. 3:14).
 4. The God who created and will destroy is timeless (see Rev. 1:4).

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. It is my conclusion that there is no limit as to what God can do in His providence (Eph. 3:20-21; Rom. 8:28).
(Eph 3:20-21) Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.
(Rom 8:28) And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
- B. It is up to me to live a proper life and pray continually (see Mt. 6:33; 1Th. 5:17).
- C. God's providence can only be seen when looking back, it is impossible to foreknow. Let us not fit God into our own mold, but look ahead for the blessings/discipline to come our way.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.