

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

In the article inside the bulletin, we can see how providence is provable and unprovable at the same time. We can prove that God works within the laws of nature to involve Himself in our lives. But we cannot prove specific cases. As Mordecai said to Esther, “*Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*” (Est. 4.14). While we cannot know for certain if God is working providentially, there are some things to keep in mind.

First, we need to remember that God is in control of everything. There is nothing that escapes His notice, nor is there anything that happens outside of His will. In Matthew 10, Jesus prepares His disciples for the severe persecution that are about to face. He tells them not to be afraid of what they will do. He then gives them a reason why. He says, “*Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will*” (Matt. 10.29). Even the life and death of an insignificant bird does not happen outside of the will of God.

Second, we need to remember that God allows things to happen which can be both good and bad. In Isaiah 45.7, God says, “*I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.*” The idea behind this statement has nothing to do with sin and morality. Through some would suggest otherwise, God is not telling us that both righteousness and unrighteousness originate with God. We are reading about the providential judgment of God. If you back up into the text, God is using the nation of Persia as an instrument of judgment (Isa. 45.1). As Persia destroys the nations, God is telling us that He is responsible for it. The geopolitical realm was being controlled providentially by God. If there is peace between nations, God did that. If there is war among the nations, God did that.

Everything that happens in our lives is because of God. When things just seem to work out, when the timing is just perfect, this is God working in our lives. Even when things do not work out like we had hoped, this is still God working in my life for our good. That because nothing happens outside of God’s will. Even matters of time and chance are things that God has allowed to happen (James 4.13-16). How comforting to know that no matter what comes into our lives good or bad, we can know that God is at work for our benefit. CLP

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“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”
-Mark 16.15

April 2, 2023

MEETING TIMES:

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS : 9:00 AM

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP: 9:50 AM

SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP: 6:00 PM

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS 7:30 PM

“THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE”

Is there a more well-known and oft quoted expression found in the Bible? It is an expression that has been applied to a host of different topics from financial freedom to political freedom. Many of those quote who Jesus are not even aware of the origin of this statement let alone what it means. But Jesus has in mind a single and simple point.

There are many ways that one can become enslaved. The worst possible servitude is when one is in bondage to sin. The devastating consequences of sin extend beyond the physical world. Paul wrote that “*the wages of sin is death*” (i.e. spiritual, eternal death; Rom. 6.23). When Paul wrestled with sin, he decried, “*Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death*” (Rom. 7.24)?

Another problem is the fact that many do not even know of their enslavement. When Jesus spoke of freedom, they replied, “*we have never been in bondage to anyone*” (v. 33). Jesus revealed to them something they did not know. “*Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin*” (v. 34).

All of mankind is a slave of sin (Rom. 3.23). The truth of the gospel, when believed and obeyed, can break the bondage of sin and bring us eternal life (1 Cor. 15.1,2).

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

NEHEMIAH 2:12

INTRODUCTION:

1. Understanding God helps us believe in His providence.
 - a) God is personal. (Ps. 23.1)
 - b) God is helpful. (Heb. 13.6)
 - c) God is reliable. (1 John 1.9)
2. Consider the providence of God as seen through Nehemiah.

I. THE CONCEPT OF PROVIDENCE

- A. God works providentially in a general way.
 1. God providentially takes care of nature giving us our seasons. (Gen. 8.22)
 2. God providentially takes care of the animal kingdom providing for their physical needs. (Matt. 6.26)
 3. God providentially takes care of humanity providing for everyone whether good or evil. (Matt. 5.45)
- B. God works providentially in a specifically way.
 1. God keeps His promises. (Matt. 1.1; Dan. 2.44)
 2. God has planned out our lives. (Ps. 139.13-16)
 3. God provides for our needs. (Ps. 37.25; Matt. 6.33)

II. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN NEHEMIAH

- A. The book of Nehemiah.
 1. The name Nehemiah means “God comforts.”
 2. The book of Nehemiah records the third group of Jews led by Nehemiah returning to Jerusalem (Neh. 4.6)
 3. The book of Nehemiah can be divided into the first and second term that Nehemiah served as governor.
- B. God worked providentially through one man to benefit the nation of Judah in restoring the walls of Jerusalem.
 1. Nehemiah could see the providence of God with the Jews return to Jerusalem. (Neh. 1.1-3; Jer. 25.9; 29.10)
 2. Nehemiah could see the providence of God in how he prayed. (Neh. 1.4,11)
 3. Nehemiah could see the providence of God in his plan to return to Jerusalem. (Neh. 2.12)

CONCLUSION: God worked personally in the life of Nehemiah, and He still works in our lives today.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Providence is both provable and unprovable. We can read through the Bible and prove that God does indeed work providentially. There are numerous examples of God working within the laws of nature to involve Himself in the lives of His people. But without divine revelation, we cannot prove specific instances of God’s involvement.

It brings to mind the word of Mordecai in Esther 4.14: *“For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* In context, the king of Persia promoted a man named Haman “above all the princes who were with him” (Est. 3.1). The king then issued a command that everyone was to bow down to Haman (Est. 3.2).

Mordecai refused to obey the king’s command and bow down to Haman. When Haman learned about Mordecai’s disobedience, he approached the king and convinced him to decree that all the Jews within his kingdom be killed because, *“they do not keep the king’s laws”* (Est. 3.8). The king agreed, and a decree was issued and sent out to all the provinces that said, *“to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions”* (Est. 3.13). This would be in roughly two weeks.

When Mordecai heard the decree, he implored Esther, who had become queen, to speak to the king *“to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people”* (Est. 4.8). Yet doing so was risky. Anyone who approached the king without permission would be killed unless the king extended his golden scepter (Est. 4.11). Thus Mordecai responded that if she did not help, then God would bring deliverance by someone else. But who knows if God has placed her in such a position for the purpose of saving the Jews?

It is of great interest to me that Mordecai did not know if God was working providentially through Esther. The Bible tells us that God works providentially in our lives today. We also know that *“time and chance”* happen to us all (Ecc. 9.11). Suppose I am delayed from leaving the house on time. Because of that delay, I miss an accident which I would have been involved in if I left on time. Was my delay a matter of time and chance, or was it God’s providence? Without divine revelation, there is no way for me to know. However, there are some things to keep in mind when we think about God’s involvement in our lives. [continued on back]