

BLESSEDNESS OF THE TRUTH: DIVINE PROVIDENCE

- Intro:** - We have seen in Lord's Day 9 that God is our Father, he is almighty, and that by his hand he created all things.
 - Now we go on to see that same hand caring for all of his creation, ruling over it, and he does so for his glory and for our salvation!
 - In Nehemiah 9, that hand belongs to a covenant God who is faithful to his people, preserving them in good and in evil.
 - May we say with joy in every circumstance we find ourselves, "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice..."

I. THE MEANING.

- A. Our instructor speaks of the 'hand of God'. (three times)
1. A beautiful picture is the hand: holding, feeding, leading, instructing, protecting.
 2. this is figurative language for God is a Spirit.
 3. It pictures sovereign control over everyone and everything.
 4. It pictures our dependency.
 5. It pictures an intimate relation between God and his creation, and God and his people.
- B. Negatively:
1. Providence is not a Scriptural, but a theological term, meaning to see before, thus to provide.
 2. But this not mean that God merely sees, is just a great clairvoyant, or that he sees ahead and runs there to correct.
 3. Providence is not that God exists to cause my plans to come to fruition.
 4. Many speak of providence with a capital 'P', some higher force that must be reckoned with, whatever you call him.
 5. Among the Greeks and Romans were many epicureans who believe that the world was governed by chance.
 6. Moreover, providence is not the power of a despot with arbitrary rule subject to moods and whims.
- C. Positively: God upholds and governs all things according to his eternal counsel.
1. It is an eternal decree of God. All things must lead to the end that he has determined for them in his counsel.
 2. God in his power executes that counsel in history.
 3. This power is called an "everywhere present power" because it influences all the motions and operations of his creatures
 4. This power is called "almighty" because it is irresistible and everyone and everything is subject to it.
- D. Three elements in God's providence:
1. God upholds and sustains all his creatures in his power.
 2. God governs all things and all acts of his creatures according to his eternal counsel.
 3. Cooperation - idea is that God directs the actions of moral, rational creatures, yet is not the author of sin: examples
 4. We see this hand of God in the life of his people Israel in Nehemiah 9, and we must see this daily in our lives.

II. THE SCOPE.

- A. God's providence is all-embracing. God's hand touches everything.
1. Great things and small things.
 2. Special things and common things.
 3. Pleasant things and difficult things.
 4. The life of God's people who walk in faith, and the wicked who live in sin and rebellion.
 5. God directs the pathway of each person individually, and collectively, the life of a congregation, denomination, nation.
 6. God controls every thought, word, and deed.
- B. How can that be?
1. God is God!
 2. God causes all things to serve the cause of his people's salvation (Romans 8:28).
 3. God causes all things to serve his glory. All the details of life, even the evils that we face, including our enemies that hurt
 4. It is beyond comprehension: "it is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it (Ps. 139:6)."
 5. Believing, we commit our way to him as our wise and loving Father.
- C. We see God's preservation, and government especially in the coming and life of Christ Jesus.
1. All of history is God's story of preparing the world in the way of sin and grace for the Savior.
 2. In the fullness of time, God sends his Son into the world.
 3. No one can touch God's anointed one until his time is fulfilled that he should go to the Cross for us.
 4. And Christ will not return until the appointed time when all the elect are born and saved, and the wicked filled iniquity.

III. THE BENEFIT.

- A. We are led in a proper godly life.
1. We confess that what befalls us is directed by God.
 2. This means that we do not rebel against God's way for us.
 3. It means that we do not believe that we have the power to change things, nor do we gamble to try to become rich.
- B. We are thankful in prosperity.
1. Prosperity is common for God's people, for some more than for others. We do not have to be ashamed of this.
 2. For this we are thankful, going to the Giver, and living a life of gratitude and obedience.
- C. We are patient in adversity.
1. Adversity is common for God's people. Be under no illusion that God will spare you from trouble (Ps.94:12 Heb.12:6).
 2. In adversity, we are patient because we know God loves us and is longsuffering, and will work it for good.
- D. We are fearless regarding the future
1. How often we are so afraid of the future: what will happen to me, my children, etc.
 2. We are confident, because we know that nothing is able to separate us from his love. All the way he faithfully leads me.