

# The BEACON

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## How We Should Live Under God's Providence by Mike Willis

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (**Rom. 8:28**). When Paul penned these words, he was encouraging saints to persevere in the face of suffering. Previously, he had stated that the "sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glories that follow" (**8:18**). He included in these sufferings the physical results of the fall on God's creation. While there is disagreement about what is included in "all things" that work together for good, the context certainly includes the sufferings of this present life. The text emphasizes God's overruling providence in the affairs of men.

### The Providence of God

The word "providence" means "foresight; timely care; particularly, active foresight, or foresight accompanied with the procurement of what is necessary for future use, or with suitable preparation... . the care or benevolent guidance of God or nature" (Webster). Homer Dailey defined providence as God's "foresight and forethought in creating the universe whereby he could be in control and carry out his purpose to its ultimate consummation"

(**Prayer and Providence 115**). The Scriptures teach the providence of God.

1. God controls nature. "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (**Acts 14:17**). "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (**Matt. 5:45**). "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (**Matt. 6:30**) "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father" (**Matt. 10:29**).

2. God controls the animal world. "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (**Job 12:10**). "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God... . These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good" (**Psalms 104:21, 27-28**). "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into

barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (**Matt. 6:26**) "Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (**Acts 17:25**).

3. God controls the nations. "He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves" (**Psalms 66:7**). "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (**Dan. 4:35**) "And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding" (**Dan. 2:21**). ". . . the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (**Dan. 4:25**).

4. God controls individuals. "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up" (**1 Sam 2:6-7**). "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou halt not known me" (**Isa. 45:5**). "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps" (**Prov. 16:9**). "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another" (**Psalms 75:6-7**). "My times are in thy hand:

deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me" (**Psalms 31:15**).

God controls kings. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (**Prov. 21:1**). "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem" (**Ezra 7:27**).

God's providential direction can especially be seen in the lives of these prominent men: (a) Joseph. God oversaw and providentially directed the events in his life for the express purpose of saving the descendants of Abraham during a famine and to give them a place to grow and develop apart from the influences of the Canaanite immorality during Israel's infancy as a nation (see **Gen. 50:20**). (b) Esther. God raised up the young Jewish girl to the position of queen over the powerful Persian nation to deliver his people from the wicked devices of Haman (see **Esth. 4:14**). (c) Paul. A chain of events in the life of Paul developed in fulfillment of the Lord's appointed purpose of Paul preaching in Rome. In each of these cases, a series of events were directed by God to accomplish something in his divine purpose and will.

5. Even the most minute things are under God's providential rule. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (**Matt. 10:29-30**).

The providence of God includes man's free will. Because God has given man free will, sin has entered the world. The sins of man occur under God's permission, but not with his approval. God is not responsible for man's sin (**James 1:13**). The sins of man are under divine restraint and are overruled for good (for examples, Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers, Pharaoh's obstinacy, the wicked men crucifying Christ).

This is a very brief summation of what the Bible teaches about God's providential rule over his creation.

### **How Then Should We Live?**

1. One should actively seize every opportunity that God gives him. The providence of God is not designed to encourage human passivity. Rather, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (**Eccl. 9:10**). Daniel took advantage of every opportunity given to him to advance in the kingdoms of Babylon and Persia. The early apostles used their privileges under the Roman government to evangelize every place they could. The providence of God does not encourage passiveness.

2. There should be a quiet resignation to accept those things one cannot control. **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8** lists things that occur under divine government:

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to

break 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 cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Solomon said that we should accept these things and enjoy whatever blessings come to us in our time: "I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God. I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him" (**Eccl. 3:12-14**).

Paul manifested this resignation, accepting his "thorn in the flesh." After his third request for the Lord to remove it, the Lord told him "no," stating, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength

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**“God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.” Reinhold Niebuhr (1892 - 1971), in a sermon in 1943**

### **THE VALUE OF ONESELF**

A well known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill.

In the room of 200, he asked, "Who would like this \$20 bill? Hands started going up.

He said, "I am going to give this \$20 to one of you but first, let me do this."

He proceeded to crumple the dollar bill up.

He then asked, "Who still wants it?"

Still the hands were up in the air.

"Well," he replied, "What if I do this?" And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now all crumpled and dirty. "Now who still wants it?"

Still the hands went into the air.

"My friends, you have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth \$20.

"Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way."

"We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value. Dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless."

**(Author Unknown)**

### **The Bible in Fifty Words:**

God made. Adam bit. Noah arked.

Abraham split.

Joseph ruled. Jacob fooled. Bush talked.

Moses balked. Pharaoh plagued.

People walked. Sea divided. Tablets

guided. Promise landed. Saul

freaked. David peeked. Prophets warned.

Jesus born. God walked.

Love talked. Anger crucified. Hope died.

Love rose. Spirit flamed. Word spread.

God remained. (Author Unknown)

### **THE UNSEEN GOD'S HAND**

A boy while flying a kite was so successful that the kite went out of sight. He stood in the field with a cord in his hand that bent upwards into the sky.

Someone asked him how he knew the kite was there, and he let them put their hand on the string. They could feel the pull of the unseen kite.

Similarly, the world may not recognize the existence of God, but those who are in Christ know Him.

They recognize His invisible power in every phase of their lives, and unbelieving bystanders are forced to admit that the true believer possesses something which they do not have.

**“IT MATTERS NOT THAT WE CAN'T SEE - I LIVE BY FAITH!**

**IT MATTERS ONLY THAT I KNOW HE STILL CARES AND LOVES ME FOR WHO I AM**

**NOT WHAT HE THINKS OTHERS WANT”**