**PROVIDENCE (#1)**

***God Fashioned My Life For A Divine Purpose***

*I Sing The Mighty Power Of God*. Isaac Watts wrote this very moving hymn in 1715 to include in a children’s hymnal he published. While we often sing it as adults in our public worship, it was specifically written in phrases that children could easily memorize and meditate upon. As I write a series of articles this week on God’s providence, I want to begin with this hymn, requesting that you sing it with me during the course of the week. Here are the simple, yet emotional, lyrics:

I sing the mighty pow’r of God, that made the mountains rise;
That spread the flowing seas abroad, and built the lofty skies.
I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day;
The moon that shines full at His command, and all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord, that filled the earth with food;
He formed the creatures with His word, and then pronounced them good.
Lord, how Thy wonders are displayed, where’er I turn my eye;
If I survey the ground I tread, or gaze upon the sky!

There’s not a plant or flow’r below, but makes Thy glories known;
And clouds arise and tempests blow, by order from Thy throne.
While all that borrows life from Thee, is ever in Thy care;
And everywhere that man can be, Thou God art present there!

Mr. Watts focused his words on the natural wonders of creation – mountains, seas, skies, sun, moon, stars, food, animals – but it’s those last two lines that draw my attention here. “While all that borrows life from Thee is ever in Thy care; and everywhere that man can be, Thou God art present there!”

God is here. God is there. God is everywhere. As Paul reminds us, “…*He is not far from each one of us*” (Acts 17:27). While that terrifies many, I do not cower in the fear that God knows even the thoughts and intents of my heart (Heb. 4:12). I relish the very idea that God is so intimate in my life that He can, and does, record every word and deed (2 Cor. 5:10). I feel His presence. Don’t you? Go with Paul and sit in that amphitheater in Athens and lean forward with your ears cupped and with bated breath hang on every word as he explains to those philosophers the philosophy of divine providence:

24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ … “ **(Ac 17:24-31).**

It might seem odd to Bible students to realize that the word “providence” is only mentioned one time in the Bible, and that only in the old King James version where it is not even speaking of God’s actions, but man’s. At Paul’s trial before the Roman procurator Felix, the Jewish prosecutor, Tertullus, flattered him (i.e. buttered him up) by saying, “*Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence*” (Ac 24:2). But even in that sentence you get the idea of its meaning as we apply it to God.

Providence is a Latin word *PROVIDERE* and is broken down as: pro (before), videre (to see). It means to foresee; to look into the future and see the end of a thing. The Greek word *PRONOIA* means forethought, to think ahead and know what is there. God can see into the future and thus plan ahead. The combination of His omniscience (all-knowing) and omnipotence (all-power) allows Him to make future plans and then carry them out to His purposes. Paul gives us an inspired definition of providence in Colossians 1:16-17,

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”

If all things were created by Him, through Him, and for Him, and if all things are held together (controlled) by Him, then we should logically conclude that He is moving history in the direction He planned at creation. Glory! Hallelujah! The world has a divine purpose! We are not on this tiny planet in the midst of an immense universe without reason. God foresaw a goal for my existence and then made me to fulfill that purpose. David, obviously a providential product of God, described his life, and ours, with these beautiful words:

14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days **fashioned** for me, When as yet there were none of them.

Did you catch that? In God’s book are written “*the days fashioned for me*…” What was “fashioned?” Surely not just my existence, but God’s plan for my existence! As George Bailey learned the hard way in Frank Capra’s story *It’s A Wonderful Life*, each of us has a purpose. George saved his brother Harry from drowning at age 9, who then won the Medal of Honor by saving an entire crew from sinking in World War 2, thus changing the lives of thousands. That story was fictional but explains so well how God can order the details of our life to impact so many others, and ultimately the eternal destinies of our families, friends, neighbors and even generations yet unborn! Our life is not fictional. We live our own story of *It’s A Wonderful Life*. God’s providential hand is guiding us to that divine purpose if we will but use our free will to trust and obey Him.

“While all that borrows life from Thee, is ever in Thy care;
 And everywhere that man can be, Thou God art present there!”

Where you are now, God is there. He has a fashioned plan for you. That, dear friend, is God’s providence.

I love you. - Rick