

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD
PRESENTED BY
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TONIGHT WE COME TO SPEAK OF ONE OF THE ASPECTS OF THE WORK OF GOD WHICH I SUPPOSE IS THE MOST TALKED ABOUT AND THE LEAST UNDERSTOOD, AND I AM NOT CERTAIN WHEN THIS LESSON SHALL HAVE CONCLUDED WHETHER YOU WILL UNDERSTAND ANY MORE ABOUT THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD THAN YOU NOW UNDERSTAND. I AM NOT GOING TO TRY TO GIVE YOU A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD WORKS BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW, AND I THINK THE REASON I DON'T KNOW IS BECAUSE THE BIBLE HASN'T REVEALED IT AND WHAT THE BIBLE HASN'T REVEALED I DON'T THINK WE NEED TO WASTE OUR TIME TRYING TO DISCERN AND TO DISCOVER. BUT I DO TRUST THAT WHEN THIS SERMON IS OVER, THOUGH WE MAY NOT UNDERSTAND ANY MORE THAN WE DO NOW ABOUT THE WORKINGS OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, THAT WE SHALL AT LEAST HAVE MORE FAITH IN THE FACT THAT THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS OPERATIVE, THAT IT IS A REAL FORCE IN THE WORLD TODAY.

I THINK IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR US TO FIND A TEXT TO USE FOR A LESSON PROVIDENCE, FOR IT MAY COME AS A SURPRISE TO SOME THAT, THOUGH THE BIBLE IS FILLED WITH TEACHINGS CONCERNING THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, THE WORD "PROVIDENCE" IS NOT TO BE FOUND IN SCRIPTURE AT ALL. CERTAINLY THE IDEA IS FOUND THERE, BUT NEVER THE WORD. WERE WE TO SEEK TO DEFINE PROVIDENCE, WE MIGHT DEFINE IT IN THIS LANGUAGE: "PROVIDENCE IS THAT CONTINUED EXERCISE OF THE DIVINE ENERGY WHEREBY THE CREATOR 1) PRESERVES ALL HIS CREATURES 2) IS OPERATIVE IN ALL THAT COMES TO PASS IN THE WORLD, 3) DIRECTS ALL THINGS TO THEIR APPOINTED END."

WHAT WE COMMONLY REFER TO AS PROVIDENCE CAN BE INFERRED FROM THE FACT OF CREATION FOR CERTAINLY WE CAN INFER AS WE CONSIDER THE CHARACTER AND THE NATURE OF GOD THAT GOD WOULD NOT CREATE SOMETHING AND THEN WITHDRAW FROM IT AND HAVE NO CONTINUING INTEREST IN THAT WHICH TRANSPIRES WITHIN IT OR WITH THAT WHICH HAPPENED TO IT. SOME HAVE SUGGESTED, HOWEVER, THAT THIS IS ABSOLUTELY THE CASE AND THAT IT WOULD BE UNWORTHY OF THIS GREAT GOD THAT WE HAVE DESCRIBED TO BE INTERESTED AT ALL IN THINGS AND ESPECIALLY IN THE LITTLE THINGS, THE MINUTE THINGS, THAT HAPPEN EVERY DAY IN THE LIVES OF EACH ONE OF US. BUT CERTAINLY AS WE THINK OF THE GOD WHOM WE HAVE DESCRIBED FROM SCRIPTURE, WE CAN SEE THAT IT IS NOT UNWORTHY OF GOD TO REMAIN INTERESTED IN THAT WHICH IT WAS NOT UNWORTHY OF GOD TO CREATE. THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING IN REASON OR IN SCRIPTURE TO JUSTIFY THE BELIEF THAT GOD HAVING PERFORMED THE WORK OF CREATION RETIRED FROM THE WORLD AND IS GIVING HIMSELF NO CONCERN ABOUT WHAT SHOULD BECOME OF THE WORKMANSHIP OF HIS HANDS.

BUT WHEN WE SPEAK OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THAT PROVIDENCE? GENERALLY, THE ANSWER IS THREEFOLD. IN THE FIRST PLACE, INVOLVED IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS THE PRESERVATION OF WHAT HE HAS MADE. IN NEHEMIAH 9:6 THE PROPHET SAID, "THOU, EVEN THOU, ART LORD ALONE: THOU HAST MADE HEAVEN, THE HEAVEN OF HEAVENS, WITH ALL THEIR HOST, THE EARTH, AND ALL THINGS THAT ARE THEREIN, THE SEAS, AND ALL THAT IS THEREIN, AND THOU PRESERVEST THEM ALL." SO IN THE SPACE OF THIS ONE VERSE, NEHEMIAH COVERS EVERYTHING IN EARTH, ON EARTH, AND IN THE HEAVENS, AND HE SAYS THAT GOD HAS MADE THEM AND THAT GOD PRESERVES THEM ALL. IN JOB 7:20 JOB SAID THAT GOD WAS THE PRESERVER OF MEN. IN PSALMS 36:6 THE PSALMIST SAID, "THY RIGHTEOUSNESS IS LIKE THE GREAT MOUNTAINS: THY JUDGMENTS ARE A GREAT DEEP: O LORD, THOU PRESERVEST MAN AND BEAST." SO OFTEN WE ARE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD EXTENDS TO MAN, BUT THE PSALMIST HERE INDICATES THAT PRESERVING WHAT GOD HAS MADE EXTENDS NOT ONLY TO MAN, BUT THAT IT EXTENDS ALSO UNTO THE BEASTS.

IN PRESERVING HIS CREATURES, GOD PRESERVES THEM BY SUPPLYING THEIR NEEDS. THE PSALMIST WRITING IN THE 104TH PSALM VERSES 27 AND 28 WROTE, "THESE WAIT ALL UPON THEE, (AND IN THE VERSE PRECEEDING HE HAD MENTIONED THE GREAT LEVIATHAN OF THE SEA) THAT THOU MAYEST GIVE THEM THEIR MEAT IN DUE SEASON. THAT THOU GIVEST THEM THE, GATHER: THOU OPENEST THINE HAND, THEY ARE FILLED WITH GOOD." HE REPEATED THE SAME THOUGHT IN THE 145TH PSALM VERSES 15 AND 16, "THE EYES OF ALL WAIT UPON THEE: AND THOU GIVEST THEM THEIR MEAT IN DUE SEASON. THOU OPENEST THINE HAND, AND SATISFIEST THE DESIRE OF EVERY LIVING THING." THIS IS A BROAD STATEMENT AND IT SAYS THAT THE SATISFACTION OF THE DESIRES OF GOD'S CREATION EXTENDS BEYOND MAN TO EVERY LIVING THING. IN PSALM 147:9 WE READ, "HE GIVETH TO THE BEAST HIS FOOD, AND TO THE YOUNG RAVENS WHICH CRY."

I THINK PERHAPS IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO FIND A VERSE WHICH SPEAKS MORE DIRECTLY TO THE THOUGHT OF GOD'S PRESENCE IN AND GOD'S PRESERVATION OF THE WORLD, AND INDEED BEYOND THAT OF THE UNIVERSE, THAN THAT WHICH LUKE RECORDED IN ACTS 17:28. PAULS WORDS INDICATE THAT GOD'S VITAL POWER SO PERVADES AND FILLS THE UNIVERSE THAT IT IS IN HIM THAT WE LIVE, WE MOVE AND WE HAVE OUR VERY BEING. WHAT HE IS SAYING IS THAT OUR DEPENDENCE UPON GOD IS SO GREAT THAT APART FROM GOD THERE IS NO LIFE IN US. OUR DEPENDENCE UPON GOD IS SO GREAT THAT WITHOUT GOD THERE IS NEITHER MOTION OR EXISTENCE. HE IS SAYING THAT IF GOD'S HAND WERE WITHDRAWN, THEN CREATION THAT WHICH GOD HAS MADE AND WHICH GOD IS PRESENTLY UPHOLDING BY THE WORD OF HIS POWER WOULD SINK INTO AN ABSOLUTE NOTHINGNESS—IT COULD EXIST NO MORE. SO THE FIRST ASPECT OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE IS THE FACT THAT GOD IS INTERESTED IN, AND INTERESTED IN TO THE POINT THAT HE PRESERVES, HIS CREATION.

IN THE SECOND PLACE, WE CONSIDER THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT GOD EXERCISES GOVERNMENT OVER WHAT HE HAS MADE. NOW THIS DIFFERS FROM PRESERVATION, THOUGH GOVERNMENT INCLUDES THE IDEA OF PRESERVATION, GOVERNMENT GOES BEYOND THE IDEA OF PRESERVATION IN THAT IT SPEAKS TO THE REASON FOR WHICH GOD'S CREATION IS PRESERVED. THE IDEA OF GOVERNMENT SPEAKS OF THE END OR THE DESIGN TO BE OBTAINED. WHEN WE SPEAK OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD, WE ARE SAYING THAT GOD IS EXERCISING POWER OVER AND CONTROLLING WHAT HE HAS MADE (GOVERNMENT), THAT IT MIGHT BE TO HIS GLORY AND PRAISE AND MAGNIFY HIM (DESIGN). WE FIND THAT GOD EXERCISES THIS GOVERNMENT NOT ONLY OVER WHAT WE MIGHT CALL THE BRUTE FORCES OF THE EARTH, BUT THAT GOD'S EXERCISE OF GOVERNMENT EXTENDS TO NATIONS AND BEYOND NATIONS IT EXTENDS TO MEN. SOMETIMES WE DO NOT FEEL THAT GOD HAS ANYTHING AT ALL TO DO WITH NATIONS THAT ARE RAISED UP AND NATIONS THAT ARE CAST DOWN, BUT THIS IS NOT THE TEACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD. TURN TO DANIEL 4:25. THERE WE READ, "THAT THEY SHALL DRIVE THEE FROM MEN, (SPEAKING OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR) AND THY DWELLING SHALL BE WITH THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD, AND THEY SHALL MAKE THEE TO EAT GRASS AS OXEN, AND THEY SHALL WET THEE WITH THE DEW OF HEAVEN, AND SEVEN TIMES SHALL PASS OVER THEE, TILL THOU KNOW THAT THE MOST HIGH RULETH IN THE KINGDOM OF MEN, AND GIVETH IT TO WHOMSOEVER HE WILL." IN DANIEL 4:35 WE READ, "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?" IN ISAIAH 10:5,6 GOD IS SPEAKING AND HE SAYS THAT ASSYRIA WAS AN INSTRUMENT IN HIS HAND TO PUNISH HIS PEOPLE. "O ASSYRIAN, THE ROD OF MINE ANGER, AND THE STAFF IN THEIR HAND IS MINE INDIGNATION. (THAT IS TO SAY THE STAFF WITH WHICH THEY SMOTE GOD'S PEOPLE WAS NOT REALLY EXERCISING THEIR POWER, BUT WAS REPRESENTING THE EXERCISE OF THE INDIGNATION OF GOD.) I WILL SEND HIM (THAT IS, I WILL SEND THE ASSYRIANS) AGAINST AN HYPOCRITICAL NATION, AND AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF MY WRATH WILL I GIVE HIM A CHARGE, TO TAKE THE SPOIL, AND TO TAKE THE PREY, AND TO TREAD THEM DOWN LIKE THE MIRE OF THE STREETS." SO GOD EXERCISES GOVERNMENT OVER NATIONS AND GOD RAISES ONE NATION UP AND GOD PUTS ANOTHER NATION DOWN. AND MAY I SAY JUST HERE THAT THIS MEANS THAT WE HAD BETTER

LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD WHEN IT TELLS US THAT "RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION, BUT SIN IS A REPROACH TO ANY PEOPLE." IT SEEMS TO BE AT LEAST PARTIALLY, IF NOT ALMOST TOTALLY UPON THIS BASIS, THAT GOD RAISES NATIONS UP AND CASTS THEM DOWN. OUR NATION TONIGHT HAD BETTER BECOME CONCERNED ABOUT RE-ESTABLISHING RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE LAND FOR, YOU MARK IT WELL, IF THE BIBLE TEACHES US ANYTHING, IT TEACHES US THAT WHEN OUR NATION BECOMES REplete WITH SIN AND DEGRADATION AND IMMORALITY GOD WILL PUNISH US AND CAST US DOWN. HE MAY USE AN INSTRUMENT MORE WICKED THAN OURSELVES WITH WHICH TO DO IT, BUT GOD WILL NOT LET SIN AMONG PEOPLE GO UNPUNISHED.

SOMETIMES WE CAN UNDERSTAND THAT GOD MAY BE ABLE TO DEAL IN THE AFFAIRS OF NATIONS AND BRING THINGS TO PASS THERE, BUT WE NEED TO EXTEND EVEN BEYOND THIS AND DISCOVER THAT GOD'S GOVERNMENT NOT ONLY EXTENDS TO THE NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, BUT THAT GOD'S GOVERNMENT ALSO EXTENDS INTO THE LIFE OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL. IN PROVERBS 16:9 THE WISE MAN SAID, "A MAN'S HEART DEVISETH HIS WAY: BUT THE LORD DIRECTETH HIS STEPS." THAT IS TO SAY MAN MAY MAKE HIS PLANS, BUT IT IS IN THE HANDS OF ALMIGHTY GOD TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THOSE PLANS SHALL BE EXECUTED. THE PSALMIST WROTE IN PSALM 75:6,7, "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." MAN'S LIFE IS IN THE HAND OF GOD AND GOD'S PROVIDENCE EXTENDS INTO YOUR LIFE AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND GOD'S PROVIDENCE EXTENDS INTO MINE. THE THIRD ASPECT OF THE EXERCISE OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD WE REFER TO GOD'S CONCURRENCE WITH THAT WHICH HE HAS MADE. IF WE WERE TO GIVE A RATHER FANCY DEFINITION, WE WOULD SAY THAT THE IDEA OF CONCURRENCE "REFERS TO THE CO-OPERATION OF THE DIVINE POWER WITH ALL SUBORDINATE POWERS ACCORDING TO THE PRE-ESTABLISHED LAWS OF THEIR OPERATIONS CAUSING THEM TO ACT AND TO ACT PRECISELY AS THEY DO." WHAT THAT SAYS IS SIMPLY THIS--THAT WE LOOK OUT INTO THE WORLD AND WE SEE THINGS THAT ARE PERFECTLY NATURAL TO US. WE STAND BACK AND WE SAY THIS IS OPERATING ACCORDING TO THE LAW OF NATURE. BUT WHAT IS THE LAW OF NATURE? THE LAW OF NATURE IS NOTHING AT ALL SIMILAR TO THE LAW OF THE LAND. THE LAW OF NATURE IS SIMPLY A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT GOES ON IN THE WORLD AS MAN HAS OBSERVED IT. BUT EVERYTHING THAT WE REFER TO AS A LAW OF NATURE IS A SECONDARY CAUSE AND SECONDARY CAUSES DO NOT OPERATE UNTIL THEY HAVE FIRST BEEN TOUCHED BY A FIRST CAUSE. AND THIS SIMPLY MEANS THAT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN THE WORLD IS OPERATING ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF ALMIGHTY GOD (FIRST CAUSE). GOD CAUSES THEM TO ACT AND GOD CAUSES THEM TO ACT PRECISELY AS THEY DO. I THINK AS WE TURN TO THE WORD OF GOD WE CAN SEE THAT THINGS WHICH MIGHT SOMETIMES BE ASCRIBED TO JUST PURE HAPPENSTANCE OR TO LUCK OR TO COINCIDENCE ARE ASCRIBED BY THE EYE OF FAITH TO THE HAND OF GOD. FOR INSTANCE, WE ARE GOING TO LOOK IN JUST A MOMENT AT ONE OF THE GREATEST ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD AS IT OPERATED IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH. IN GENESIS 45:5 JOSEPH IS SPEAKING AND HE SAYS TO HIS BRETHREN, "NOW THEREFORE BE NOT GRIEVED, NOR ANGRY WITH YOURSELVES, THAT YE SOLD ME HITHER: FOR GOD DID SEND ME BEFORE YOU TO PRESERVE LIFE." IN OTHER WORDS JOSEPH WAS LOOKING BEYOND WHAT WE WOULD CALL JUST LUCK, A HAPPENSTANCE, THE SECONDARY CAUSE, AND HE SAW IN IT THE OPERATION OF THE HAND OF GOD. HE REALIZED IT WAS NOT BY LUCK, IT WAS NOT BY HAPPENSTANCE, IT WAS NOT BY CHANCE, IT WAS NOT JUST THE DOVETAILING OF A NUMBER OF COINCIDENTAL OCCURRENCES, BUT RATHER IT WAS THE OPERATION OF GOD THAT TOOK HIM DOWN TO EGYPT THAT HE MIGHT PRESERVE HIS BRETHREN. IN JOSHUA 11:6 WE HEAR GOD SPEAKING: "AND THE LORD SAID UNTO JOSHUA, BE NOT AFRAID BECAUSE OF THEM: FOR TOMORROW ABOUT THIS TIME WILL I DELIVER THEM UP ALL SLAIN BEFORE ISRAEL: THOU SHALT HOUGH THEIR HORSES, AND BURN THEIR CHARIOTS WITH FIRE." THE MAN WHO DID NOT HAVE AN EYE OF FAITH WOULD STAND OFF

AND LOOK AT THAT BATTLE AND HE WOULD SAY, "WELL, THE ISRAELITES WERE SURE LUCKY." BUT GOD SAID IT WAS NOT LUCK, GOD SAID IT WAS NOT HAPPENSTANCE, GOD SAID IT WAS NOT COINCIDENCE, GOD SAID, "I WILL DELIVER THEM INTO THINE HANDS." IN PROVERBS 21:1 WE READ, "THE KING'S HEART IS IN THE HAND OF THE LORD. AS THE RIVERS OF WATER; HE TURNETH IT WHITHERSOEVER HE WILL." GOD GOVERNS IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN. REFERRING ONCE AGAIN TO ISAIAH 10:5, "O ASSYRIAN, THE ROD OF MINE ANGER, AND THE STAFF IN THEIR HAND IS MINE INDIGNATION." MAN WOULD SAY WELL, THE ASSYRIANS WERE LUCKY, THEY CAUGHT ISRAEL IN A MOMENT OF WEAKNESS, BUT GOD SAID IT WASN'T LUCK, GOD SAID MY PEOPLE SINNED AND I DELIVERED THEM UP TO THE ASSYRIANS THAT THEY MIGHT BE PUNISHED FOR THEIR DISOBEDIENCE. WE FIND THEN THAT GOD OPERATES IN THE WORLD, AND THAT GOD IS BEHIND SO MUCH OF WHAT WE REGARD AS SIMPLY BEING COINCIDENCE.

BUT NOW WE ASK THE QUESTION, "HOW DOES THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD WORK?" I MUST COME BACK WITH THE ANSWER THAT I DO NOT KNOW. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT ANY MAN REALLY KNOWS HOW THE OPERATION OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE IS CARRIED OUT, BUT ALL WE CAN DO WITH THE EYE OF FAITH IS TO STAND BACK AND PRAISE GOD THAT HE DOES MOVE IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS HIS WONDERS TO PERFORM. WHILE WE MAY NEVER KNOW HOW, AT LEAST UNTIL THE SCALES ARE REMOVED FROM OUR EYES, WE CAN LOOK AND WE CAN SEE THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD AT WORK. LET US LOOK AT AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE MARVELOUS PROVIDENCE OF GOD. THERE ARE TWO OF THEM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WHICH ARE OUTSTANDING. ONE OF THEM OCCURS IN A BOOK WHERE THE NAME OF GOD IS NOT EVEN MENTIONED AND THAT IS IN THE BOOK ESTHER, BUT THERE IS NO BOOK IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WHICH IS MORE FILLED WITH GOD AND HIS WORKINGS THAN THAT WONDERFUL BOOK. THE OTHER IS FOUND IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH AS JOSEPH IS CARRIED DOWN INTO EGYPT.

BEFORE WE GET JOSEPH DOWN IN EGYPT WE NEED TO GO BACK TO GENESIS 15 AND PICK UP SOMETHING THAT GOD SAID TO ABRAHAM. ABRAHAM WAS DISCOURAGED AND ABRAHAM WANTED SOME ASSURANCE FROM THE LORD. SO IN GENESIS 15 GOD RENEWED THE PROMISE THAT HE HAD MADE TO ABRAHAM, AND IN RENEWING THE PROMISE THAT HE HAD MADE, ABRAHAM ASKED FOR A SIGN. "HOW DO I KNOW LORD THAT I SHALL INHERIT IT?" GOD GAVE HIM A SIGN, BUT AS THE EVENING OF THE DAY CAME ABRAHAM WENT TO SLEEP AND HE HAD SOME KIND OF DREAM APPARENTLY, AT ANY RATE THE HAND OF GOD WAS OPERATING IN IT, AND IN THE DREAM ABRAHAM LEARNED SOMETHING AND HERE IS WHAT HE LEARNED. "THY SEED SHALL BE A STRANGER IN A LAND THAT IS NOT THEIRS, AND SHALL SERVE THEM; AND THEY SHALL AFFLICT THEM FOUR HUNDRED YEARS; AND ALSO THAT NATION, WHOM THEY SHALL SERVE, WILL I JUDGE; AND AFTERWARD SHALL THEY COME OUT WITH GREAT SUBSTANCE." SO WE GO BACK TWO HUNDRED YEARS REALLY BEFORE ISRAEL OR JACOB AND HIS FAMILY FINALLY GOT DOWN YONDER INTO EGYPT'S LAND, AND WE HEAR GOD AS HE PROPHESES TO ABRAHAM: "ABRAHAM, I HAVE PROPHESED THAT YOU SHALL HAVE A NATION. THERE SHALL FLOW FORTH FROM YOUR LOINS PEOPLE THAT ARE AS NUMBERLESS AS THE STARS IN THE HEAVENS. BUT BEFORE THIS OCCURS THESE WHO ARE YOUR SEED ARE GOING TO BE DELIVERED INTO A LAND OF STRANGERS." NOW WE LEARN FROM SUBSEQUENT HISTORY SOMETHING THAT ABRAHAM NEVER DID KNOW AND THAT IS THAT THE FOREIGN LAND INTO WHICH ABRAHAM'S SEED WERE TO BE DELIVERED WAS THE LAND OF EGYPT AND THAT THE REMOVAL OF HIS POSTERITY TO THAT LAND WAS NECESSARY AS A FULFILLMENT OF THE WORDS THAT JEHOVAH HAD SPOKEN. THIS DID NOT OCCUR IN THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM, FOR ABRAHAM LIVED AND HE DIED IN CANAAN. JACOB, HIS GRANDSON, CAME AND, ASIDE FROM 40 YEARS OF HIS LIFE LIVED IN PADANARAM, HE LIVED IN CANAAN UP TO THE VERY HOUR WHEN HIS SONS CAME BACK FROM THE SECOND JOURNEY INTO EGYPT AND SAID, "JOSEPH IS ALIVE AND IS GOVERNOR OVER ALL IN EGYPT." UP TO THAT MOMENT, UP UNTIL TWO HUNDRED YEARS AFTER GOD HAD SAID UNTO ABRAHAM YOUR PEOPLE ARE GOING TO GO DOWN INTO A LAND OF STRANGERS AND THERE THEY WILL SUFFER FOUR HUNDRED YEARS, ABRAHAM'S DESCENDENTS NEVER HAD THE FIRST IDEA OF GOING DOWN INTO THE LAND OF

EGYPT. WELL, HOW WAS IT THEN THAT AFTER SO MANY YEARS THERE CAME A MIGRATION OF DESCENDENTS OF ABRAHAM INTO THE LAND OF EGYPT THAT LED TO THEIR FOUR HUNDRED YEAR ENSLAVEMENT? YOU ANSWER THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE WAS THAT JOSEPH WAS THE GOVERNOR OF EGYPT AND HE WANTED HIS FATHER AND HIS BROTHERS TO COME AND LIVE WITH HIM AND BE WITH HIM, SO HE JUST SENT FOR THEM TO COME. BUT THE QUESTION THEN IS ASKED, HOW DID JOSEPH BECOME GOVERNOR OVER ALL OF EGYPT? WE REPLY THAT THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE WAS THE FACT THAT HE PREDICTED YEARS OF PLENTY AND YEARS OF FAMINE AND HE SUGGESTED A REASONABLE WAY BY WHICH TO PROCEED TO AVOID THE FAMINE AND THE EFFECTS THEREOF TO THE KING AND THE KING SAW THE WISDOM OF IT AND HE APPOINTED JOSEPH TO BE THE GOVERNOR OVER EXECUTING THE PLAN THAT HE HAD SUGGESTED. BUT THIS LEAVES ANOTHER QUESTION AND THAT IS, HOW IS IT THAT JOSEPH PREDICTED THE FAMINE? THE ANSWER IS THAT HE INTERPRETED THE DREAM AND THAT ANSWER IS CERTAINLY TRUE. BUT HOW DID JOSEPH COME TO INTERPRET THE DREAM THAT PHAROAH HAD? WE SAY SIMPLY BECAUSE ALL OF THE MAGICIANS OF EGYPT HAD MADE AN EFFORT TO INTERPRET AND THEY HAD FAILED. BUT WHY HAD THEY FAILED? IF YOU GO BACK AND READ THE HISTORY OF EGYPT, YOU WILL READ OF THE WORKS THAT THESE MEN HAD DONE IN THAT DAY AND AGE. YOU WILL LEARN THAT THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS ON THE PART OF MAGICIANS WAS AN EVERYDAY OCCURRENCE IN THAT DAY AND AGE, YOU WOULD FIND THAT THESE MEN HAD DEVELOPED BOOKS OF RULES WHEREBY DREAMS WERE TO BE INTERPRETED. BUT YOU SEE THIS PARTICULAR DREAM APPARENTLY WAS OUTSIDE OF ALL OF THE RULES THAT THEY HAD DEVELOPED WHEREBY DREAMS COULD BE INTERPRETED. IN OTHER WORDS THE FAILURE OF THE MAGICIANS TO BE ABLE TO INTERPRET PHAROAH'S DREAM WAS ONE OF THE NECESSARY CAUSES OF JOSEPH'S BEING CALLED TO INTERPRET IT. BUT HOW DID JOSEPH HAPPEN TO BE CALLED ON? WELL, IF THAT BUTLER HAD NOT FORGOTTEN HIS PROMISE TO JOSEPH MADE ABOUT TWO YEARS BEFORE, JOSEPH MIGHT HAVE ALREADY BY THIS TIME BEEN RELEASED AND BEEN HUNDREDS OF MILES FROM EGYPT AND NOWHERE TO BE FOUND. BUT YOU SEE A BUTLER FORGOT, HE HAD A POOR MEMORY, AND THE FORGETFULNESS OF THE BUTLER WAS A NECESSARY LINK IN THE CHAIN. WHEN THIS DREAM CAME UP IT MADE THE BUTLER REMEMBER WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM BACK IN PRISON AND HOW JOSEPH HAD INTERPRETED HIS DREAM AND TOLD HIM THAT HE WOULD BE RETURNED TO HIS POST AND DUTY. BUT HOW DID JOSEPH HAPPEN TO INTERPRET THE DREAM OF THE BUTLER AND THE BAKER? THAT DEPENDED UPON THEIR HAVING THE DREAMS IN THE PRISON AND IT DEPENDED UPON JOSEPH BEING IN SUCH A SITUATION THAT HE WAS THE MAN IN CHARGE OF THE PRISON. HOW DID JOSEPH HAPPEN TO HAVE CONTROL OF THE PRISON SO AS TO HAVE ACCESS TO THESE PRISONERS OF THE KING? WELL, THAT DEPENDED UPON SOMETHING ELSE. THAT DEPENDED UPON JOSEPH'S BEING IN PRISON AND BEHAVING HIMSELF IN SUCH A WAY THAT HE WOULD BE PUT IN THE POSITION OF OVERSEER BY THE JAILOR. BUT THEN, NOW IN THE WORLD DID JOSEPH HAPPEN TO BE IN PRISON? BECAUSE POTAPHER'S WIFE ACCUSED HIM. BUT WHY WAS HE PUT IN JAIL FOR THE ACCUSATION THAT WAS LODGED WAS THAT HE HAD MADE ADVANCES TOWARD HIS MASTER'S WIFE, AND THE COMMON PUNISHMENT IN THAT DAY FOR A SLAVE WHO HAD BEHAVED IN THAT MANNER WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN TO BE PLACED IN PRISON, BUT TO BE KILLED. WHY WASN'T JOSEPH KILLED? THE ANSWER TO THAT MUST BE THAT POTAPHER KNEW HIS WIFE, AND THAT POTAPHER ALSO KNEW JOSEPH, THAT YOUNG MAN OF STALWART CHARACTER THAT HE SO TRUSTED HE HAD PUT HIM IN CHARGE OF ALL THE POSSESSIONS THAT HE HAD. BUT YOU SEE, THAT LEAVES ANOTHER QUESTION UNANSWERED AND THAT IS, HOW IN THE WORLD DID JOSEPH GET TO BE A HOUSEBOY IN THE HOME OF POTAPHER? IT WAS BECAUSE HE WAS SOLD INTO SLAVERY. BUT WHY WAS HE SOLD INTO SLAVERY? BECAUSE HIS BROTHER DID NOT KILL HIM. WHEN THEY LOOKED UP AND SAW JOSEPH COMING FROM HIS FATHER'S HOUSE THEY SAID, "LO HERE COMES THAT DREAMER, LET US RISE UP AND KILL HIM." BUT REUBEN, THE ELDER BROTHER, PERSUADED THEM NOT TO, AND THEY PUT HIM IN A PIT. THEY CAME BACK LATER WITHOUT REUBEN AND THEY WOULD HAVE KILLED HIM, BUT THEY LOOKED UP JUST IN TIME TO SEE A CARAVAN OF TRADERS COMING BY. NOW HOW WAS IT THAT THAT CARAVAN OF TRADERS JUST HAPPENED TO BE THERE? IF THEY HAD BEEN 15 MINUTES EARLIER AND IT HAD ALREADY GONE BY, JOSEPH WOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED THERE ON THE SPOT BY HIS BRETHREN. BUT WHY WERE HIS BRETHREN WILLING TO SELL HIM INTO SLAVERY? BECAUSE THEY WERE JEALOUS. WHY WERE THEY JEALOUS? BECAUSE JACOB HAD HAD A DREAM AND THAT SAID YOU WILL BOW DOWN AND SERVE ME. WELL THIS MIGHT NOT

ORDINARILY BE ENOUGH TO MAKE THEM JEALOUS ENOUGH TO KILL THEIR BROTHER, BUT THEY HAD ALREADY HAD AN INSULT ALMOST TOO MUCH TO BEAR WHEN OUT OF JACOB'S PREFERENCE HE CALLED JOSEPH IN AND GAVE UNTO HIM A COAT OF MANY COLORS. AND SO THE FIRST LINK IN THE CHAIN WAS JACOB'S PREFERENCE TO HIS SON JOSEPH WHICH CAUSED HIM TO GIVE HIM THE COAT OF MANY COLORS WHICH CAUSED HIS BRETHREN TO BE JEALOUS, WHICH CAUSED THEM TO SELL HIM, WHICH BROUGHT HIM TO POTAPHER'S, WHICH PUT HIM IN PRISON, WHICH PUT HIM IN A POSITION TO INTERPRET THE DREAMS, WHICH CAUSED HIM TO BE CALLED OUT TO INTERPRET PHAROAH'S DREAM AND WHICH MADE HIM THE OVERSEER OR THE GOVERNOR OF EGYPT. NOW EVERY-ONE OF THESE CAUSES STANDS AS A LINK IN A LONG CHAIN THAT STRETCHED OUT OVER SOME SIX HUNDRED YEARS. SOME OF THESE LINKS AS WE LOOK AT THEM ARE GOOD, AND SOME OF THE LINKS AS WE LOOK AT THEM ARE NOTORIOUSLY EVIL. BUT THE IMPORTANT THING IS THIS THAT OUT OF THAT WHICH IS GOOD AND OUT OF THAT WHICH IS EVIL, GOD BY HIS PROVIDENCE USED IT FOR HIS GLORY AND TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE IN THE EARTH. THUS HERE IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH WE HAVE AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD BY WHICH HE CAN BRING ABOUT HIS WILL WITHOUT THE INTERVENTION OF THE MIRACULOUS, EXCEPT, IN THIS CASE, IN TWO PLACES--ONE, WHEN JOSEPH INTERPRETED THE DREAM OF THE BUTLER AND BAKER AND SECONDLY, WHEN JOSEPH INTERPRETED THE DREAM OF PHAROAH. EVERY OTHER EVENT IN THIS SIX HUNDRED YEAR LONG CHAIN IS JUST AS NATURAL AS IT CAN POSSIBLY BE, AND THESE NATURAL EVENTS AS FAR AS THE EYE OF MAN COULD TELL BROUGHT ABOUT THE WILL OF GOD AS EFFECTIVELY AS IF GOD BY ONE MIGHTY MIRACLE HAD PICKED UP JACOB AND HIS DESCENDENTS AND TRANSPORTED THEM THROUGH THE AIR AND SET THEM DOWN OVER YONDER IN THE LAND OF GOSHEN. YOU ASK AGAIN HOW GOD OPERATES THROUGH THESE NATURAL MEANS, OR THAT WHICH APPEARS TO US TO BE NATURAL, AND THE ANSWER COMES BACK TO YOU, I DO NOT KNOW. BUT WHILE I DO NOT KNOW HOW IT HAPPENS, THIS MUCH I DO KNOW BY FAITH, THAT GOD DOES DO IT AND THAT GOD IS ACTING PROVIDENTIALLY IN THE WORLD TODAY.

THIS DOCTRINE, I BELIEVE, IS A DOCTRINE THAT SHOULD BE FULL OF THE GREATEST CONSOLATION FOR THE SAINTS OF GOD BECAUSE THE SAINTS OF GOD BY THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE ARE ASSURED THAT THE WORLD IS NOT UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF EITHER FATE OR BLIND CHANCE. THESE THINGS HAVE NO VALUE. THESE THINGS ARE IMPERSONAL. THESE THINGS WOULD JUST TOSS IT UP IN THE AIR AND LEAVE IT TO WHATSOEVER WILL TO DETERMINE THAT WHICH TRANSPIRES. BUT MAN, MAN NEEDS AN INFINITE GOD, A GOD WHO IS INFINITE IN WISDOM, A GOD WHO IS INFINITE IN POWER, A GOD WHO IS INFINITE IN HIS GOODNESS. SUCH A GOD THE BIBLE REVEALS AND SUCH A GOD HIS PEOPLE WORSHIP. "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD RUN TO AND FRO THROUGHOUT THE WORLD TO SHOW HIMSELF STRONG IN THE BEHALF OF THEM WHOSE HEART IS PERFECT TOWARD HIM." THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE IN EVERY PLACE AND WHERE THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TO BE FOUND THERE WILL BE FOUND THE OMNIPOTENT ARM OF GOD TO PROTECT. IT WAS THIS REALIZATION THAT ENABLED THE PSALMIST TO SAY, "FOR THE LORD GOD IS A SWORD AND A SHIELD, THE LORD WILL GIVE THEM GRACE AND GLORY." IT WAS THIS REALIZATION WHICH ENABLED THE APOSTLE PAUL OUT OF A LIFE RICH IN EXPERIENCE AND A HEART FULL OF FAITH TO SAY, "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."

WE ALSO REALIZE THAT THERE IS GOING TO BE A DAY WHEN THE SOLUTION TO THE MYSTERIES OF PROVIDENCE ARE GOING TO BE MADE KNOWN. SURELY MANY OF THE WORKS OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD ARE OBSCURED IN DARKNESS. EVEN THOSE WHO WROTE BY INSPIRATION REALIZED THAT THIS WAS SO. JOB SAID, "HE HOLD-ETH BACK THE FACE OF HIS THRONE AND SPREADETH HIS CLOUD UPON IT." THE PSALMIST SAID, "THY WAY IS IN THE SEA AND THY PATH IN THE GREAT WATERS, AND THY FOOTSTEPS ARE NOT KNOWN." AND AGAIN HE SAID, "CLOUDS AND DARKNESS ARE AROUND ABOUT IT, RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUDGMENT ARE THE HABITATION OF HIS THRONE." DARK PROVIDENCE, MAN'S INABILITY TO SEE THE WORKING OR TO UNDERSTAND THE WHY OF THE WORKING OF THE HAND OF GOD HAS OFTEN PUT THE FAITH OF GOD'S PEOPLE TO SEVEREST TESTS. WE HAVE MENTIONED JACOB. GO BACK TO GENESIS 42:36 BEFORE JACOB LEARNED THAT JOSEPH WAS ALIVE AND GOVERNOR OVER EGYPT. THEY HAD LEFT SIMEON BACK IN EGYPT AND THEY HAD COME BACK TO GET BENJAMIN, "AND JACOB THEIR FATHER SAID UNTO THEM, ME HAVE YE BEREAVED OF MY CHILDREN; JOSEPH IS NOT, AND SIMEON

IS NOT, AND YE WILL TAKE BENJAMIN AWAY: ALL THESE THINGS ARE AGAINST ME." HE LOOKED AT WHAT WAS HAPPENING AND SAID IT IS AGAINST ME, IT IS NOT FOR ME, BUT HE JUST COULDN'T SEE THAT IN THESE EVENTS THERE WAS THE WORKING OUT OF THE PURPOSE OF THE ALMIGHTY GOD. THE PSALMIST WAS PERPLEXED OVER THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED AND IN PSALM 73:13 HE SAID AS HE OBSERVED IT, "VERILY I HAVE CLEANSSED MY HEART IN VAIN," THAT IS, WHY DO I GO TO THE TROUBLE TO CLEANSSE MY HEART AND TO LIVE ACCORDING TO YOUR WILL, GOD, WHEN THE WICKED ARE PROSPERING IN THE EARTH? JEREMIAH THE PROPHET HAD THE SAME PROBLEM. IN CHAPTER 12 AND VERSE 1 OF HIS PROPHECY HE SAID, "RIGHTEOUS ARE THOU, O LORD, WHEN I PLEAD WITH THEE: YET LET ME TALK WITH THEE OF THY JUDGMENTS; WHEREFORE DOTTH THE WAY OF THE WICKED PROSPER? WHEREFORE ARE ALL THEY HAPPY THAT DEAL VERY TREACHEROUSLY?" EVEN AS WE COME TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION(6:10)AND SEE THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO HAD BEEN BEHEADED FOR THE WORD OF GOD UNDERNEATH THE ALTAR, WE HEAR THEM CRYING THE SAME CRY. "AND THEY CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE, SAYING, HOW LONG, O LORD, HOLY AND TRUE DOST THOU NOT JUDGE AND AVENGE OUR BLOOD ON THEM THAT DWELL ON THE EARTH?" YES, AS WE LIVE WE ARE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND ALL OF THE WORKING OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD. BUT REST ASSURED OF THIS ONE THING, THAT THE DAY IS GOING TO COME WHEN WE SEE THAT JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT WERE EVER THE HABITATION AND THE BASIS OF THE EVERLASTING THRONE OF ALMIGHTY GOD. REST ASSURED THAT THE DAY IS GOING TO COME WHEN THE TRIALS THAT BREAK ROUND ABOUT US WHICH SEEM TO CRUSH THE SPIRITS OF THE SAINTS AND WHICH SO OFTEN BREAK DOWN OUR VERY HEARTS ARE GOING TO BE SEEN FOR THE BENEFIT THAT THEY ACCRUED UNTO US AND THEY SHALL DRAW FORTH FROM OUR ETERNAL SPIRITS GLORIOUS HALLELUJAHs IN THE PRESENCE OF ALMIGHTY GOD. REST ASSURED THAT THE DAY IS GOING TO COME WHEN WE SHALL SEE THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE STATEMENT OF PAUL THAT "THEIR LIGHT AFFLICTION WHICH IS BUT FOR A MOMENT WORKETH FOR US A FAR MORE EXCEEDING AND ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY." HOW TRUE THE WORDS THAT WE SANG A MOMENT AGO:

"YE FEARFUL SAINTS, FRESH COURAGE TAKE,
THE CLOUDS YE SO MUCH DREAD
ARE BIG WITH MERCY AND SHALL BREAK
IN BLESSINGS ON YOUR HEAD."

SUCH IS THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN TONIGHT? ARE YOU A SAINT THAT YOU CAN SAY THE THINGS THAT ARE WORKING IN THIS WORLD ARE WORKING FOR YOU A FAR MORE EXCEEDING AND ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY, KNOWING THAT WHATSOEVER TRIALS YOU MAY PASS THROUGH IN THIS LIFE THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS WORKING THEM FOR YOUR PRESENT AND YOUR ETERNAL GOOD, AND IF FAITHFUL UNTO GOD YOU WILL BE, GOD WILL SET YOU TRIUMPHANT ON THE OTHER SIDE AND YOU MAY PRAISE GOD FOREVER AND FOREVER MORE SAYING, "TRULY GOD DOETH ALL THINGS WELL."