

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

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All Christians believe in the providence of God. David Lipscomb well said, describing the age in which we now live:

The Bible draws no distinction between special and general providence, as the terms are generally understood. God is always present in His laws. What is done through these laws, God does (518).

SPECIAL PROVIDENCE

In the age of miracles, there was no doubt many special providences manifested. Jesus conferred special blessings on certain individuals and groups. The apostles exercised special powers on certain occasions. These miracles did not interrupt the laws of nature. They demonstrated a power of God over and above the laws of nature. These miracles were confirmatory and temporary (Mark 16:20; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Cor. 13; Heb. 2:3).

INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Providence, whether special or general, was unrelated to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Christ raised Lazarus from the dead but not as a result of the prayers of Lazarus nor the fact that the Holy Spirit dwelt in Him. Christ showed special providence to many who were not even children of God. Balaam's ass spoke in an "**unknown tongue.**" God's general providence is manifested toward the birds (Mat. 6:26). The Christian farmer asks God to bless his fields. However, we know that the Holy Spirit did not dwell in Balaam's ass, a bird, nor a corn stalk. It is not correct to expect special providence to accomplish what may be gained through the ordinary channels of blessings.

TESTIFYING

That special providence was exercised in the case of miracles both in the Old Testament and the New is apparent even to the casual reader of the Bible. That God over-ruled circumstance in the life of Esther, Daniel, Joseph, or Paul, et al, cannot be denied. However, there was an inspired interpreter to certify the providence of God in these Bible characters. Today, we have no divine interpreter and, therefore, we cannot relate our experiences as the leadings of God. There have been things in my life, as in yours also, that appear to be providential. They may be, but I cannot preach such as I have no divine interpreter. I shall not and I cannot Scripturally relate my experience as an act of God. Paul said, "**For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake**" (2 Cor. 4:5). When you hear one of my brethren testifying, he is preaching himself, he is not preaching Jesus. I will not and cannot preach myself. Let me preach Jesus. All actions of the holy men of the Bible have certified to us by divine revelation. My message is a certified Gospel and not a human experience. I have no right to relate my experience as the leadings of God. Every false teacher makes the same claim and all have the same proof—their

tongues. I know a man who claims that the Holy Spirit has directed him all the days of his life but he now preaches the exact opposite of what he preached yesterday. Is his tongue reliable? It is high time that we quit preaching ourselves and start preaching Jesus Christ.

The testifying among us cannot be justified by referring to reports of work done whether in Acts or the News and Notes of the *Gospel Advocate*. It is good to report, but to relate an experience and claim it is a leading of the Holy Spirit is a different thing altogether. Since the only evidence one has of a special providence is his own experience, he has no right to relate it as an act of God. No one now has a divine interpreter of his life and any interpretation of his life is purely human. To preach such experiences is to preach oneself and thus to violate the instructions of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 4:5). We have a complete message revealed in the Word of God and we should proclaim it and not ourselves.~

WORK CITED

Lipscomb, David and Elisha Sewell. *Questions Answered*. Ed. Marshall Clement Kurfess. Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1921.

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