

THE BULLETIN

THIS WEEK:

Sunday:
Bible Study & Worship
Teen Dinner
Monday:
Fl. School of Preaching Class
Wednesday:
Bible Study

UPCOMING EVENTS:

PRIVILEGED TO SERVE:

Month of April

Announcements:
Ray Cauthen

Singing:
a.m. – John Loanzon
p.m. – Mark Nortz
Wed. –Luther Honey

Prayer:
Harry Collins

Bible Reading:

Preaching:
Doug Frazier

Lord's Supper:
Larry Pahman
Randy Howe
Doug Myers
Greg Green

Prepare communion
Ashley Lydon

4th Sunday Fellowship:

March
Kim Stanley
Chris Nortz
Jessica Frazier

A Study of Divine Providence by Wayne Jackson

The religious world is an environment of extremism. Some allege, for example, that if God does exist, he has no contact at all with humanity. He is a disinterested, distant deity. This philosophy is known as deism. Others, by way of contrast, assert that virtually every activity of Deity is a miracle. Miracles, they allege, are occurring in abundance every day. Such a view is equally at variance with the facts. The Scriptures plainly indicate that supernatural signs served a unique function in the divine scheme of things, and they are not being duplicated today (see [Miracles](#)). A correct view recognizes that Jehovah operates in the affairs of men, but not miraculously; rather, God works through the process we accommodatively call “providence.”

Providence Defined

The English term “providence” derives from the Latin providentia, which signifies “foresight.” Providence has to do with:

1. the Creator’s maintenance of the functional balance of the natural world;
2. the fulfillment of the divine purpose in the regulation of international affairs; and
3. God’s special operation in the lives of those who seek to do his will.

Before we consider each of these areas, it is necessary that we discuss the nature of providence. Exactly what is this phenomenon?

Providence is the activity of God as accomplished **through law**. It stands in contrast to the miraculous, by which the Lord operates **independent of law**. In providence, Jehovah manipulates his own laws for the accomplishment of his ultimate purpose. God respects man’s free will, and he will never overpower our freedom of choice in the use of providential activity; nevertheless, the Bible clearly affirms divine activity in the providential mode. It is a process that we simply cannot explain from our limited vantage point. We accept it because of our confidence in the credibility of the biblical record.

Perhaps the following will help illustrate the difference between the miraculous and the providential.

When Mary, a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), gave birth to Jesus, such was affected by means of miraculous power (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:30-37). On the other hand, when Hannah of Old Testament fame prayed for a son, the Lord heard her prayer and answered it. He did so, however, providentially; she conceived only after her husband “knew her” (a biblical euphemism for sexual union); ultimately Samuel was born (1 Samuel 1:19,20).

Here is another case in contrast. When the Assyrian army threatened the city of Jerusalem, God supernaturally destroyed 185,000 enemy soldiers in a single night (Isaiah 37:36). Over against this, Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, was dealt with in a different fashion. Jehovah caused him to “hear tidings” that prompted his return to Assyria (Isaiah 37:7); there, in accordance with divine prophecy, he was killed by the hands of his own sons (cf. 37:7,38). Unquestionably, providence was implemented! In each instance, Heaven was guiding certain events. In the one case, divine activity was direct, independent of means. In the other case, it was indirectly employed by the use of means.

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Providence and Nature

The holy Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) was responsible not only for the origin of the universe (Genesis 1:1ff; John 1:1-3), these divine Persons continue to regulate and sustain nature. Christ is “upholding all things [i.e., the entire universe] by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:3). Additionally, “in him all things consist [*sunesteke*, stand together]” (Colossians 1:17). The perfect tense form is used here in the sense of a present. Christ **keeps on holding together** the forces of the universe. Robertson noted that he “is the controlling and unifying force in nature” (1931, 479).

God providentially maintains the seasons (Genesis 8:22), and blesses the earth with his bounty (Acts 14:17). All earth’s creatures are in the hand of the Creator (Matthew 10:29), and he cares for them (Matthew 6:26; cf. Psalm 104:21; 147:9). There are many Bible examples where Jehovah used the forces and/or the creatures of nature for the accomplishment of his will (see Genesis 22:13; Numbers 11:31; 1 Kings 13:24ff; 17:6; 2 Kings 2:23,24).

God and the Nations

Since the fall of humanity God has been working a plan designed to make redemption available to fallen mankind. The plan was implemented with the death of Christ, and the subsequent establishment of his kingdom. Long before the birth of Jesus, however, God was providentially working among the nations of the world to prepare the human race for the coming of the Savior. The Lord is “ruler over the nations” (Psalm 22:28). Jehovah rules in the kingdoms of men, setting over them whomever he wills (Daniel 2:21; 4:17).

The Hebrew nation was very important in the divine plan for human salvation. Through this people the Messiah would come (Genesis 22:18). Accordingly, the Lord protected Israel (or at least a remnant) so that the promises regarding the Messianic line would be kept intact. For example, Jehovah providentially used Joseph to sustain the Hebrews as they sojourned in the land of Egypt. Joseph was sold by his jealous brethren into Egyptian slavery, but God used that situation for the preservation of the nation (see Genesis 39:2; 45:5-9). Every student should read J. W. McGarvey’s discussions of divine providence, dealing with the accounts of Joseph and Esther, as set forth in his book, *Sermons* (available from Gospel Light Publishing, Delight, AR).

Paul, in his epistle to the churches of Galatia, contended that God sent his Son “when the fulness of time came” (Galatians 4:4). Without a doubt the apostle here alludes to Heaven’s providential preparations among various nations, which would facilitate the arrival and success of Christ’s redemptive mission. The Hebrews, for example, prepared the antique world with its sacred Scriptures, replete with Messianic prophecies. The Roman Empire provided a peaceful environment, a highway system for the rapid spread of the gospel, etc. The Greeks contributed the most precise instrument for the conveyance of human thought ever devised, the Koine Greek language (in which the New Testament was composed). Galatians 4:4 fairly shouts of the providential activity of the Creator. An excellent discussion of this point is found in A. H. Newman’s, *A Manual of Church History* (1933, 20ff).

Next week there will be the conclusion to this article and it will discuss “Special Providence”. The following is the first paragraph in that discussion so you can know what it will be about.

“When we speak of “special providence,” we are thinking primarily of two things. First, there is the providential operation of God in the lives of those who earnestly are **seeking the truth**. Second, there is the divine activity that operates in the interest of **Christian people**. Let us consider each of these.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SICK AND/OR INJURED:

- Nancy and Leonard Sherouse are feeling much better.
- Harry Collins was sick with the flu this past week but is feeling much better. They are at Hawthorne this morning worshipping.
- Larry Pahman's father was released from the hospital this week. He is continuing to recover.
- Jean Gause hurt her back and had to be brought to the hospital on Friday by ambulance. She was released on Saturday and is at home recovering.
- Cathryn Scruggs fell on Thursday morning and broke her hip. She had surgery on Thursday evening. She came through her surgery successfully on Thursday night. She was able to sit up on the side of her bed Friday morning and by Friday afternoon she was able to stand up on the floor for a few minutes. Though painful, she is making good progress. The family would like to thank everyone for all of the phone calls and emails.
- Rhonda Howe is improving some. She is still having problems with her asthma but is working with the doctors to try and get it under control.
- Continue to remember Mike Elledge, Randy Adams, Shirley Rogers, Jean Gause, Carl Lee, Sherrelle Kendrick, Randy Howe's mother, Linda Martin, Tommy Mikell, Della Brunson, Ann Ewing, Diane Jones, Terry Dickerson (nephew of Ruth Gufford), Betty Hitchcock, Shirley Kirby, Carolyn Canady (Rhonda's Mom), James Harrison, Edward Brown.

Please keep these loved ones in your prayers. Many of those who have chronic conditions suffer from day to day. Those that are confined need not only our prayers but visits, calls, cards or letters.

Teen Dinner:

The teens will be having their teen dinner tonight following PM worship service. We will be eating at Moe's in Alachua. Please bring enough money to cover your meal.

Ladies Night Out:

The ladies will be meeting for their monthly LNO on April 12 @ 7:00PM. We will be meeting at Olive Garden on Archer Road. Hope to see everyone there.

TO OUR VISITORS

It is our sincere desire to help all men and women understand what God's will is for their life. Here at the Alachua Church of Christ, we stand ready and willing to help you with any needs you may have. Here are just a few of the services we offer: Marriage Counseling, Family Counseling and Addiction Counseling, free audiotapes of any lesson and In-home Bible Study. Feel free to make your request know. Ask any member of the congregation.

“If I Don’t Preach On Hell”

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Meeting Times:
Sunday Morning
Bible Study: 9:30
Worship: 10:30

Sunday Evening
Worship: 5:30

Mid-Week Bible Study
Wednesday 6:30

- A. The topic of hell is not a popular topic.
- B. There are many in this world that do not believe in hell but according to Gods’ word it does exist.

1. If I don’t preach on hell then I am not preaching the whole counsel of God.

- i. Acts 20:27, Paul told the elders that he did not shrink to declare the whole counsel of God.
- ii. The Almighty God will punish the sinner.
- iii. People must be warned about the _____ and that God is going to punish them.
- iv. Eternal condemnation is _____.
- v. _____ is the only person that benefits if hell in down played or not taught about.

2. If I don’t preach on hell then I am not following the examples found in the Bible.

- i. Is preaching about hell part of preaching the Gospel?
- ii. The good news is Jesus came and died to save man from our sins.
- iii. Jesus came to save humanity from _____.
- iv. Can you teach a lost person about salvation without warning them about their current situation?
- v. On many occasions in the New Testament Jesus himself taught about hell. Matthew 5:22, Matthew 23:33, Matthew 25:41 and many more.
- vi. Jesus not only taught about hell He described it. Matthew 25:30, Matthew 25:46, Mark 9:43-44 and many others.
- vii. Jesus described hell as a place of outer _____ with the weeping and gnashing of teeth, a place of eternal _____ and a place of _____ fire.

3. If I do not preach on hell I do not have love.

- i. Preaching is all about _____.
- ii. People often say that God is a God of _____ but that does not mean that He will not punish them. 2 Thessalonians 1:8
- iii. God loves every soul and does not wish any to perish but to come to repentance.
- iv. If we love someone we will teach them the gospel, warn them about eternal death and never give up on them.

We’re on the Web!

alachuachurchofchrist.org