

Introduction: What a comfort to *know* from Scripture, and to *experience* in our lives by faith, the truth of God's "most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions". The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q & A # 11, puts it this way:

Q. 11. *What are God's works of providence?*

A. God's works of providence are his most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.

And the Heidelberg Catechism should be quoted here as well:

**27.Q.What do you understand by the providence of God?**

A. God's providence is his almighty and ever-present power, whereby, as with his hand, he still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, indeed, all things, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand.

This grand teaching of the mighty providence of God, our theme in this week's notes, is clearly shown in the miracle of the calming of the storm - especially in its emphasis on sovereign, Divine peace – both in Christ's rest *during the storm*, and in the *complete stillness which Christ's miracle produces over the wind and waves*. Our goal, therefore, and my prayer is that these Bible notes would give us a fresh experience of the truth of Divine control of all things, well-expressed in hymn # 689 in our red hymn book:

*Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.  
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
In every change, He faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend  
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

*Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake  
To guide the future, as He has the past.  
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;  
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know  
His voice Who ruled them while He dwelt below.*

**Monday: read Matthew 8:23-27 and Psalm 147:1-3.** As we see the Lord preserving His disciples by governing the storm, and bringing the wind and waves under His control with a sovereign rebuke in Matthew 8:26, we are reminded of the extent of God's providence on display through His Son's power even over the wild, fallen world of nature. This broad and general providence "over all His creatures and all their actions", is

what Christians believe when they use the term ‘Providence’. But do we recognize what a practical doctrine this is, and how it anchors our lives in the midst of the storms we experience? For example, in Psalm 147:3-4, do you see that God has the same exhaustive knowledge of our *wounds*, (v. 3), as He does of the *cosmos*, (v. 4)? Just as He can organize the stars, and name each one, so He knows all our infirmities, and all the “aches and pains” of our spiritual sicknesses. Through Jesus Christ, God has a *universal* knowledge of all our trials, weaknesses and needs, with a view to healing them all, in good time! His Providence extends from the highest galaxies down to the most intimate of wounds in our hearts!

Meditate and Pray: Thank God for His investing in Jesus all holy, wise and powerful ability to “take up our infirmities and carry our diseases,” with healing power for all who come to Him by faith, (Mt. 8:16-17)! Ask God to renew your willingness to come to Jesus, *each and every day of your life*, and wait upon Him to cure your every spiritual malaise, and deliver you from “the sin that so easily entangles,” (Heb. 12:1).

**Tues/Weds: read Matthew 8:23-24 and Mark 4:36.** The first way in which Jesus expresses God’s providence in the midst of the storm, is in His *sleeping the sleep of holy, human obedience*. In other words, even in the storm, Jesus Christ takes our place in obedience to His Father’s will – even to the point of His own exhaustion in the boat! This is why He falls asleep – because He has been tireless in healing, teaching and saving sinners – so much so that in Mark’s version of the account of the stilling of the storm, (Mark 4:36), the disciples have to rescue Him from the crowds, taking Him in the boat “just as He was”, that is, without food, drink or any preparation. Our Savior then shows us the cost of His exhausting ministry by falling asleep immediately in the back of the boat.

To help us further to ponder our Savior’s obedience unto exhaustion, consider Douglas Milne’s words in his Bible study guide on Luke’s version of these events:

*The everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who never becomes weary (Isa. 40:28), the Lord the Keeper of Israel who never sleeps (Psa. 121:3), experienced both as the man Jesus. His first-hand experience of human weakness and limitations should be a source of endless encouragement to those who rely on Him (Heb. 2:17-18).*

Meditate and Pray: “Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your commitment to our fallen race through your incarnation. Help us to bind the truth of your protection of us to our hearts, believing that you are ever watchful, mighty, attentive and wise to guide us by your providence through every storm of life. Amen.”

In closing today, sing St. Patrick’s ancient hymn, adapted and translated by Edmund Clowney, in # 104 of our red hymnals, taking note especially of verse 3.

*We lift up as our shield God’s name, the strong name of the Trinity, by invocation of the same: the Three in One and One in Three, our Rock and Tower, God of Light, Eternal Father, Spirit, Word; we claim the name of grace and might: salvation is of Christ the Lord.*

*Immanuel, incarnate Lord, from Mary’s womb was given breath, was baptized at the Jordan’s ford, and gave his life to conquer death. He rose triumphant from the tomb, was lifted to the Father’s throne to come on God’s dread day of doom and bring salvation for his own.*

*By faith we claim his grace today: the pow'r of God to hold and lead, his eye to watch, his might to stay, his ear to hearken to our need; the wisdom of our God to teach, his hand to guide, his shield to ward, the word of God to give us speech, his heav'nly host to be our guard.*

**Thurs/Fri: read Matthew 8:23-29; Mark 5:1-8 and Psalm 107:23-30.** It is good to remind ourselves that the amazing miracle of the stilling of the storm is foreseen in the Psalms, particularly in Psalm 107:29-30, which we can sing in the Scottish Psalter's translation: (Sing to "Amazing Grace"):

*The storm is changèd into a calm  
at his command and will;  
So that the waves, which ragèd before,  
now quiet are and still.*

*Then are they glad, because at rest  
and quiet now they be:  
So to the haven he them brings,  
which they desired to see.*

But now – there may be an objection when we compare the Gospel account of the stilling of the storm with the *prediction of that event* in Psalm 107. There does not appear to be *any safe haven* for the disciples after Jesus stills the storm – even though Psalm 107:30 predicts the happiness of the mariners when the Lord “brings them to their desired haven”?!

Instead, the disciples, who must have had very weak knees from the storm as they landed on the shores of the Gadarenes in Matthew 8:28, move “from frying pan to fire” as they encounter with Jesus two very violent demoniacs. Can we imagine our fear in facing such intense spiritual warfare? After an exhausting battle with the waves, they now encounter a more fearful, Satanic foe. Moreover, in the eye-witness account of this encounter in Mark 5:1-5, it is made clear to us that there will be no easy, quick human solution to this Satanic encounter. Sailors may be able to escape storms, but no one had ever been able to quell the more than 2,000\* “legion” of demons from Gadara! (\*Scholars say the word “legion” refers in the Roman army to at least this number). “Haven of rest” indeed!

But we must learn the wisdom of God's dark providences, when evils multiply. Yes, when it comes to unexpected grief, God does indeed “work in a mysterious way”! His ways are not our ways. Trials can come upon us in rapid succession. For a moment, the disciples may have thought all their troubles were over when they beheld the great stillness over the Sea of Galilee! Then “another breaker”, like the battering of waves on a beach, swept over them as these terrifying demoniacs sprang out of the tombs!

Yet did this Satanic ambush really impede God from giving the disciples rest after the storm? No! For while demons rage, Christ is completely in control and able to keep His disciples safe. Our Savior, standing alone, is not in the least intimidated by this “legion” of demonic foes! Mark 5:6 even declares that the demons come and fall on the ground, in the person of their host whom they possess, begging for mercy at Jesus' feet!

Meditate and Pray: What total superiority Jesus has over all creation! God the Father exercises His complete, providential governance of all creation through His Son! Jesus knew beforehand that these demons would come

shouting out of the tombs. Jesus was ready for them! Jesus anticipated just how they would be destroyed! The demons have no control over the day “appointed”, (Matt. 8:29), for their judgment! Sing about the great certainty of Christ’s victory on the Day of Judgment, and celebrate Christ’s domination even now over “all the works of the Devil”, (1 John 3:8). Use hymn # 318 in our Trinity Hymnal:

*Lo! He comes with clouds descending,  
Once for favored sinners slain;  
Thousand thousand saints attending,  
Swell the triumph of His train:  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
God appears on earth to reign.*

*Every eye shall now behold Him  
Robed in dreadful majesty;  
Those who set at naught and sold Him,  
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,  
Deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing,  
Shall the true Messiah see.*

*Every island, sea, and mountain,  
Heav’n and earth, shall flee away;  
All who hate Him must, confounded,  
Hear the trump proclaim the day:  
Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to  
judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!*

*Now redemption, long expected,  
See in solemn pomp appear;  
All His saints, by man rejected,  
Now shall meet Him in the air:  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
See the day of God appear!*