

What a comfort to *know* from Scripture and to *experience* in our lives, by faith, the reality of Gods' Providence.

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* #11 states:

Q. *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.

Heidelberg Catechism #26 & #27 cannot be matched in its description of God's providential attention to even the smallest and most unnoticed parts of our lives:

Q What do you believe when you say: I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and all that is in them, and who still upholds and governs them by His eternal counsel and providence, is, for the sake of Christ His Son, my God and my Father. In Him I trust so completely as to have no doubt that He will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul and will also turn to my good whatever adversity He sends me in this life of sorrow. He is able to do so as almighty God, and willing also as a faithful Father.

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 not by chance but by His fatherly hand.

This grand teaching of the mighty providence of God is clearly shown in the miracle of the calming of the storm. 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 after the storm*. 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 147:1-4

Providence, ever Practical

God's providence is on display through His Son's power even over the wild, fallen world of nature. We see the Lord preserving His disciples by governing the storm and bringing the wind and waves under His control with a sovereign rebuke. This broad and general providence "over all His creatures and all their actions" is what Christians believe when they use the term Providence. 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 “ins and outs” of our spiritual sicknesses. He knows well each of our dear loved ones and constantly counts them by name. 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!

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 (Isaiah 53)” and turning them to our eternal good. Jesus has 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*. 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 8:23-27 and Mark 4:36

Jesus, Sleeping in our Place

In the midst of the storm, Jesus is *sleeping the sleep of holy, human obedience*. He demonstrates His embrace of God's constant Providence. 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. Mark's version of the stilling of the storm shows that He falls asleep because He has been tireless in healing, teaching and saving sinners – so much so that 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 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 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 every 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.

[continued]

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

Haven of Rest

The amazing miracle of the stilling of the storm is foreseen 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 desirèd to see.*

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.”

The disciples, who must have had very weak knees from the storm as they landed on the shores of the Gadarenes, 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 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 demons! (Scholars say the word “legion” refers in the Roman army to at least this number.) “Haven of rest,” indeed!

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

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! Instead the demons come and fall on the ground, in the person of their host whom they possess, and beg for mercy at Jesus' feet!

Meditate and Pray: Jesus is totally superior over all creation! God the Father exercises His complete, providential governance of all creation through His Son! The Father had providentially seen that these demons would come shouting out of the tombs, and 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!*