

The Providence Of God

Romans 15:4-- For whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope.

How many times have we read this scripture, do we really understand the full import of it?

1 Peter 1:21--Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Do we believe what the Holy spirit has revealed to us? Do we take the time that God has granted unto us in this life to do as Paul directed Timothy to do " Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim.2:15 KJV) Do we really believe in God! Do we believe in God's Word!

There are so many Biblical narratives that touch our hearts when we read them, that sometimes it is hard to single only one out to discuss. Like the account of little Samuel who's mother took him up to the temple and left him there and she went up every year to see her child maturing both in physical growth and becoming trained and skilled in the service to God. Then we have Moses, his mother placing him in a little basket where Pharaoh's daughter would find him. Jesus, our Lord and Savior, as he lay in his manger in Bethlehem. This list could go on and on!!

When we look into God's word we are impressed by the brevity of it. Look at creation..... Therefore, when God has revealed something at length there is a reason behind it. Do you know the account of Joseph is longer and takes up more space in its narrative form than any other Old Testament account, with the exception of Abraham? That should spark us to ask why. Why should God pick out this man Joseph and go to such lengths to reveal his life for us. One thing we

can rest assured of, it was not to entrain us. The life of Joseph is repeated in many forms: Mohammed spends the twelfth chapter of the Koran entirely on Joseph, and represents him as a perfect beauty, and the most accomplished of mortals. Two of the finest poems in the Persian language were written by the poets Jami and Nizami on the subject of Joseph.

We could spend many hours discussing all the lessons that could be gleaned from Joseph's life, but we will only look at it in a capsule regarding God's providence.

In the first place, I believe that God uses so much space in giving the account of Joseph in order that we may see His providence, in order that we can see that the hand of God was working in the Life of Joseph and that we may clearly see that God would and could bring good out of every evil thing that happens to His devoted servants.

The Old Testament lays a foundation that is immovable with internal proofs that God is and that He is able to fulfill every thing that He has revealed to His creation. Therefore, when we pick up our New Testaments and read; Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." We need to believe it!

Christians should be an optimist in nature. Not arrogant, but as Joseph, patiently trusting in God's Word.

Philippians 4:6- Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

All through the Old and New Testaments there is that thread of optimism that reaches its highest degree when Paul states this: Romans 8:28--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.. When we are babes in Christ, we are immature in our study of God's Word, and if we are not directed and encouraged by other Christians we tend to gradually become aquainted with the spirit that permeates the world. We look at this scripture and possibly say; "Maybe, that

means "All things work together for the good of our souls, for eternal good but not for our good at the present time'."

Then, as we grow older, we learn more about God, and our faith becomes stronger. We realize that Paul meant exactly what he said that all things good and bad, wise and otherwise, temporal and spiritual--no exception to it--all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose. Simply put, Satan can not defeat a Christian, But a Christian can give up and not serve God.....

Let us now review the account of Joseph and see if we can identify the providence of God working. We First see that Joseph brought an evil report--Gen 37:2 -- These [are] the generations of Jacob. Joseph, [being] seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad [was] with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

Second we see his fathers favoritism for Joseph; V-3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he [was] the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of [many] colours. {colours: or, pieces} 4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

Third Joseph's dreams: V-5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told [it] his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

Can we see where Joseph stands in the eyes of his ten brothers? They hated him.

Remember, that he told his dream in front of his father; V-10 And he told [it] to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What [is] this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

Now I want you to notice as we go through Joseph's life and trails, that each incident is dependent upon the preceding one.

It is important to note, that God did not plan each event and reach down and

make it happen . He has the power to do so, but there is no evidence in the text that implies that He intervened miraculously, with the two exceptions, when he interprets the dreams in jail and at Pharaoh's house.

Joseph, 17 years old is told by his father to take a basket of food to his brothers, and inquire about their welfare. Gen.37:12-14.

When Joseph arrives at the location, his brothers and the flock are gone. How many people would turn around and go home at this point, remember he is only 17.

But a stranger finds him in the field and directs him to their new location and Joseph sets out to find them (what are the chances of a man being in that field at the very time Joseph was?). Joseph is doing this for the benefit of his brothers and his father. This is not a short two mile track, this is about sixty or seventy miles. We might look at Joseph enthusiasm as he sees his brother's afar off and would believe that they would be happy to receive him and the food that he brought for them.

But this is not the case, as they see him approach they made plans to kill him. When Joseph was thrown into the pit he might have thought that they were pulling a prank on him. If it wouldn't have been for Ruben, they might have tried to kill him right away.

(V-22)

Now, we have Joseph in the pit and what per-chance comes along, a caravan of Ishmaelites headed toward Egypt(V25). Look at what Judah says, lets sell our brother instead of killing him. It is also important to notice how one sin leads to another and another--Gal.5:9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. It is also worthy to note how man will justify his actions to do wrong!!!

Joseph is now in the custody of the Ishmaelites going to Egypt. Think of how this 17 year old boy feels. Look at his father and see the anguish that he goes through. Why? Because of sin. Brethren, Satan is having a field-day with a family that profess to love God. Do you suppose that Joseph was thinking that God was going to use this event to save a whole nation or do feel that he thought he was deserted never again to see his family? What good could possibly come from these events.

We have Joseph in Egypt, he is sold to Potiphar; V36 And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, [and] captain of the guard. {officer: Heb. eunuch: but the word doth signify not only eunuchs, but also chamberlains, courtiers, and officers} {captain...: or, chief marshal: Heb. chief of the slaughter men, or executioners} (Brown/Driver/Briggs Hebrew & English Lexicon states on page 710, as eunuch)

We are told that God was with Joseph Chapter 39:2- And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. 3 And his master saw that the LORD [was] with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. Note: That it does not state that God performed any miracles, only that he prospered Joseph. Please take note that Potiphar could see Joseph's devotion to God. Those that we come in contact with can they see our devotion to Christ? If not why not?

The next event is with Potiphar's wife; Look at the situation, Joseph had charge over everything of his master's, with one exception, his wife. Recall the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve had freedom to eat of all the trees in the Garden except one? Could not of Joseph reasoned thus, I'm away from my father's house, he didn't even come looking for me, My brother's suppose to love me but they hated me, what hypocrites they are, my master's wife would never tell, remember this young mans age, Satan has laid a perfect scheme for Joseph to sin, did he? NO!!!! He fled. Would we be that loyal to Christ if we were in a similar situation?

Joseph is now cast into prison unjustly, no trial, no chance to repudiate the charges. But here he spends a least two full years. It is here that he meets the Butler and the chief baker and interrupts their dreams.. Notice that the Butler does not hesitate to tell Joseph his dream, but the chief baker listens to see how the butler's dream comes out. Then, when he see a good interpretation, he is willing to relate his dream to Joseph. When somebody is willing to sit down with us and explain God's word more clearly to us, do we hesitate, and possible procrastinate? Why? Could it be because it might condemn some of our actions?

Look how soon these two events take place after Joseph interprets their dreams..3 days.

One would think that the Butler would remember the kindness that Joseph had done for him just three days ago. Joseph while in prison made the best of it. He

gained the trust of the people that were in charge of the prison. Now, let me ask you this, do you think this boy who stood up for his convictions when he was tempted, then cast into prison for years, do you suppose he could possibly see the good that God was going to bring about at this time? No, I don't think so.

Lets move ahead to his being second in command to Pharaoh. It is important that we see that Pharaoh has recognized that Joseph's God was superior to all of the Egyptian gods and because of this he made Joseph ruler of all, and that not one man could oppose him. Gen.41:37-45.

Joseph is now thirty years old, that means that he has been in Egypt for Thirteen years. Now that Joseph is second in command, If you were the butler how would you feel? What about Potiphar/his wife? OR Now that Joseph had all Egypt subject to him except Pharaoh, why didn't he make the journey home to see his father? Remember, this 17 year old boy didn't know the story his brothers told his father, all he knew is that his father didn't come looking for him. Remember, that Jacob was extremely fond of Joseph and had in the past given him everything that he need. So far as he knew his father never turned a hand to help him, wouldn't this be cause enough not to go home?

From what is revealed, it appears that Joseph had good family life in Egypt.

He had a wife and two sons. He named the first Manasseh. Do you Know what this name means? "I have forgotten" Gen.41:50-51 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. {priest: or, prince} 51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, [said he], hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. {Manasseh: that is, Forgetting}

Joseph's second son was named Ephraim. V52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. {Ephraim: that is, Fruitful} Notice, where Joseph gives credit for his happiness and good fortune, not to himself as we see people in this age do, but to the God of Heaven, where it properly belongs. Do we not see this same type of humility in the Apostle Paul-Acts 20:19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews.

In Chapter 42 we see the famine and Jacob knew that there was grain in Egypt

and he sent his ten sons to buy grain for his household. But kept Benjamin at home, this is the only remaining son of Rachel.

Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize Joseph. It is necessary to keep in mind that God was with Joseph. We do not know what was in Joseph's mind, simply because it is not revealed to us. But by accusing them of being spies does not put them in a very good relationship with him.

Joseph places them in an area for three days to think of what he has just accused them of, that is being spies....In any country that is a most serious crime.

How do suppose they felt, having this time to ponder their situation. Now that do not know if they will return to their home. It is apparent that much talking went on between the brothers and they must have spoke in their native language believing that this Egyptian Governor did not understand it. (V23)

We see a lot of confessing going on but no sign of repentance.

This is the first time that Joseph knew that Ruben had tried to save him from his other brothers. (V22) Look at the compassion that swelled in Joseph's heart, it caused him to cry.(24). Still he did not reveal himself to his brothers. He had Simeon bound in front of them.

Joseph not only gives them enough grain, but provision for the way and returns all their money to each one. Remember, that they have been accused of being spies, now they have all their money back, what do think is going through their minds? But we know that repentance has not yet entered the picture. How do we know this, by verse 28 And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, [it is] even in my sack: and their heart failed [them], and they were afraid, saying one to another, What [is] this [that] God hath done unto us? {failed...: Heb. went forth}

Why do you suppose it is that ever time something happens that appears to be bad that God gets blamed for it and when anything good happens that man takes the credit?

Look at the cunning of Joseph, he appears to want to see his real brother so bad

that he has devised a plan that would with all certainty bring Benjamin to him. Gen.42:24-43:15 and it did 43:16 And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring [these] men home, and slay, and make ready; for [these] men shall dine with me at noon. {slay: Heb. kill a killing} {dine: Heb. eat}

Listen to what Joseph's steward said in reply to their telling of the money being in their sacks; (V23) And he said, Peace [be] to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them. {I had...: Heb. your money came to me}

It appears that this is the first time that the brothers came to Joseph's house, this should be a moment of joy but instead the brothers are afraid of what they might be accused of next. Joseph had the brothers at the table according to the custom of age. The brothers were perplexed at this.

We see Joseph again full of compassion toward his mother's son, his brother. It was so over powering that he had to leave the room. He wept so hard that he had to wash his face in order to cover up his feelings.(29-31)

It would appear from the text that Joseph wanted to get rid of his half brothers and have Benjamin stay with him in Egypt. (44:17)

Looking at Judah we see a brother who at first was the main instigator in getting rid of Joseph, but now, he has matured. He not only wants the safety of Joseph's brother but is concern about his father's feelings and would give his very life for them. What a turn around in and individuals faith. Do we posses that type of faith?

Do you see how each event relies on the previous event, without all these small events in their proper order of occurrences we would not have the saving of Jacob's family. God made a promise to Abraham, He kept that promise.

Now I do not want anybody to misunderstand me, I am not stating that when a terrible thing happens that it is the act of God! All I am saying is that good can

come from any event as long as we are doing as Joseph, serving God with a pure heart with humility and love for our brethren. God will provide, but we must be intelligent enough to see the opportunities that are set before us, and respond to them in accordance to God's Word.

Eph.1:21

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 And what [is] the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, {his mighty power: Gr. the might of his power} 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set [him] at his own right hand in the heavenly [places], 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all [things] under his feet, and gave him [to be] the head over all [things] to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Rom.8:38 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. 9:1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

Brethren, where do you stand, are you serving God to the best of your ability, or are you serving Satan....There is no middle ground....you can not find any scripture that states that God approves of idleness or a form of Godliness.... But there are scriptures that condemn these attributes... Make your self right with God.