

Promise of Providence

April 18, 2013

One of the *names* of our God is “The LORD Will Provide”—Jehovah-jireh! As the root word for providence, the derivatives of ‘provide’ are mentioned throughout Scripture: God provides and is providing; He is provider; He makes provision, because He, through **His promise** and **His matchless grace**, is provident God! In Genesis 22:14, **God provided the greatest need Abraham had, next to knowing Him!** After the LORD provided that substitute ‘ram in the thicket’ for his only-promised-son, Isaac, Scripture says of Abraham: “*So Abraham called that place **The LORD Will Provide**. And to this day it is said, ‘On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.’*”

Providence is the biblical teaching about God’s involvement...in everything under the sun, and it speaks the following to each of us loud and clear: **I Am** here with you; **I know** the need that you have, and **I am able to provide** exactly what you need at any moment—for all of your life! Job said of God in 10:12 “**You gave me life** and showed me kindness, and in your **providence** watched over my spirit.” Job identified the three areas where God provides for His children in particular: 1)**Life**: He gave us—everyone—life, breath, days, place, position, purpose;

2)**Offer of salvation**: He showed us kindness—after being patient with all our sin—“*God’s kindness leads you toward repentance,*” Romans 2:4c.

3)**Watch-care**—He watches over our spirit—our spiritual, emotional, social and physical lives. Charles Spurgeon said, “The Lord cares for all things, and the meanest creatures share in his universal providence, but His particular providence is over His saints.”

J. I. Packer, in *Knowing God*, said, “The doctrine of providence teaches Christians that they are never in the grip of blind forces (fortune, chance, luck, or fate); all that happens to them is divinely planned, and each event comes as a new summons to trust, obey, and rejoice, knowing that all is for one’s spiritual and eternal good.” Proverbs 16:9 “*In his heart a man plans his course, but **the LORD determines his steps**.*” Proverbs 16:33 “*The lot is cast into the lap, but **its every decision is from the LORD**.*” And Romans 8:28 “*And we know that in all things **God works for the good** of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*”

Recently, we looked at God as Protector; today we see God as Provider. The *Names* of God in the Old Testament clearly represent authoritatively the *Person* they describe—our God is so much more than we can imagine! **God promised providence**—through His word and through His name—and He is the supreme Promise-keeper! Numbers 23:19c—“*Does he (God) promise and not fulfill?*”

The three primary *Names* of God found in the Old Testament are:

◆**Elohim**—God: the Strong Creator—**Genesis 1:1** *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*

◆**Jehovah**—LORD: the Self-existing One—**Genesis 2:4** *“This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—”*

◆**Adonai**—Lord/Master: the Headship Name—**Genesis 15:1-2** *“After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward. 2But Abram said, ‘O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’”* But we know that God gave him Isaac! In

addition to the primary names of God all found in Genesis, the worksheet attachment lists 82 names and compound names with exactly **half of them found in Psalms; 11 in Genesis**, and the remaining 30 in Exodus (6), Deuteronomy (3), Joshua (7), Judges (3), 1 Samuel (1), Isaiah (4), Jeremiah (3), Ezekiel (2) and Micah (1). And we can see in a read-through that ‘provision’ is implied in every single name of God: He is Provider of everything we will ever need—and His *Name* promises and proclaims it!

In His *Name* we find **A**venger, our **B**anner and **C**reator; we discover provision of: **salvation** and **sanctification**; defense and deliverance; fortress and forger; helper and healer; life and light; mercy and might; provider and peace; redeemer and rock; refuge and rescuer; our recompense and righteousness; shield and shepherd; strength and sufficiency, and our Truth and our Judge! Hosea tells us in 12:5-6 *“...the LORD God Almighty, the LORD is his name of renown! 6But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice and wait for your God always.”* And 14:2 explains how: *“**Take words with you and return to the LORD.** Say to him: **‘Forgive** all our sins and **receive** us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.’”*

The ‘guilty-of-sin’ (that’s us) banished from the Garden of Eden, were rescued forever by ‘faith’ in our sin-Bearer (that’s Jesus) and His ‘power of love’ in the Garden of Gethsemane. Remember that the battle of Calvary’s cross was won in prayer with the Father in that garden: While it was our sin that made Jesus’ sacrificial death necessary, it was His gracious love that made it happen! Greater than any other gift that Providence has made to us, is this provision of God’s forgiveness through Christ, because it is our greatest need! In Psalm 25:18 David said *“**Look** upon my affliction and my distress and **take away my sins.**”* Many of us might say, rather: take away my affliction and distress and ‘look’ at my sins—placing physical needs above our desperate spiritual one. Not so David, as he recognized God’s perfect will in regard to ‘sin’ was repentance! But we can only know God’s will on healing to this limited degree: The ‘work’ that our God is doing through the affliction takes precedent over our comfort.

We need to yield completely to God's will in affliction and distress; to trust Him completely with the outcome, to ask that His will be done. God is so good to give us the answer to 'sin'; so gracious to forgive and so faithful to fulfill His promise of providence. Spurgeon: "...providence is nothing more than goodness in action. Goodness is the bud of providence in the flower, or goodness is the seed of which providence is the harvest." David in Psalm 27:13-14 *"I am still confident of this: **I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.** 14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD."*

God's kindness and goodness is His grace extended to us: grace for salvation, for sanctification; grace for living and grace for dying. Spurgeon again: "To pretend a right to grace is to insult God!" See, the picture frame is solid gold—refined and pure—and the picture is pastoral. This is what the 'grace' of God has accomplished for the repentant sinner. But stepping into the picture before 'grace' is like climbing into a sin-trough: aborted fetuses, murdered bodies, lewd acts on children, animal cruelty, beggars with boils, dungeons of dung, filthy money strewn, leprous and cancerous, deformed and maimed, liars and thieves, envious haters, slanderers and gossips, thrown away lives—deserted, dejected and despised. We like to think these 'sinners' represent the worst of us, but we need to know that these 'sinners' were us before grace!

Oswald Chambers quotes an unknown preacher saying that *what any human being has done any other human being is capable of*. And Charles Spurgeon warned, "What might not the best of us do if it were not for the checks which the Lord sets upon us both in providence and in grace." We must have God's grace upon us: we must appropriate His grace by confession of our sin. The same Book of Romans, penned by Paul, that outlines our horrendous sinful nature left unchecked by grace, begins graciously in 1:5-6—"***Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace*** and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. ***And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.***" Paul further states in Ephesians 1:11 *"In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will."* Someone said that the will of God will never take us where the grace of God cannot keep us!

J. I. Packer said, "God is good to all in some ways and He is good to some in all ways." As believers, we are the 'some'—those who have repented of sin and by faith received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord! **Knowing what God wants from us can only be learned by knowing His words to us! God's word is vital, it is critical, it is pivotal and it is central to our call and our walk! We must learn it; love it, live it!** We so need God's guidebook. Jeremiah 10:23 *"I know, O LORD that a man's life is not his own; **it is not for man to direct his steps.**"*

♥God’s provision to an ‘unlikely’ woman in Scripture prompted her to give Him the name: “**the God who sees me**” in Genesis 16:13. Hagar, whose Egyptian name means ‘fugitive’, was a slave in the household of Abram—before God cut covenant with him at 99 years of age, renaming him Abraham, and Sarai became Sarah. Hagar was given to her master as another wife by Sarai—who wanted to help God out with His promise of a ‘son’ to her and her husband through a surrogate. And in order to bear an inheriting son, Hagar would have to be more than a concubine. As servant to Sarai, she had no ‘say’ in the matter, and the two women became bitter rivals. Scripture says of Hagar in Genesis 16:4b *“When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.”*

Hagar became proud in her position as the very **potential** ‘heir-bearing’ wife, and drove Sarah to blame Abram in verse 5: *“You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me.*

6*“Abram said, ‘Do with her whatever you think best.’ Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.”* We are not told the details of the mistreatment that Hagar endured from her mistress, but it was such abuse that she fled: she was now a lonely frightened foreigner, and a pregnant immigrant with no resources in an unforgiving desert. Who would provide for her and her child?

Providence is watching: Genesis 16:7-12 *“The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. 8And he said, ‘Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?’*

“‘I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,’ she answered.

9*“Then the angel of the LORD told her, ‘Go back to your mistress and submit to her.’ 10The angel added, ‘I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.’*

11*“The angel of the LORD also said to her: ‘You are now with child and you will have a son.’ (God’s word is better than ultrasound!) ‘You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery. 12He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.’”*

God was there with Hagar: He knew she was pregnant; He told her she would have a son, and what she should name him, and the last phrase of verse 11 says: *“the LORD has heard of your misery.”* And Hagar is convinced, and she obeyed His word to go back and submit to Sarai. Just before leaving, verses 13-16 say:

“She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me.’ 14That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

15*“So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. 16Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.”*

Abram gave his son the name that Hagar was given by the God who saw her!

♥And God's **promised providence** to a 'likely' woman: It is sixteen years later, and now Hagar is 'sent' away by Sarai—God has changed her name to Sarah. Genesis 21:1-5 ***“Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised.*** ²*Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, **at the very time God had promised him.*** ³*Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.* ⁴*When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him.* ⁵*Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.”* God had promised this very son to Sarah and Abraham, and at the exact time he was to be born—he was born! This is the same promised son that God would ask Abraham to sacrifice to Him; and as Abraham was being obedient to God's request: there was the provision of the ram in the thicket to take Isaac's place—as God had provided Isaac to Abraham at just the right time, God provided the ram for Isaac—*The LORD Will Provide!*

On the day that Isaac was weaned, Abraham had a feast to celebrate, but Sarah saw Ishmael mocking, and so she told Abraham in Genesis 21:10 *“Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”* Understandably, Abraham was distressed, but God told him not to be distressed and to listen to Sarah...and the reason: ¹²*“...because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. ¹³I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring.”*

Abraham got together some food and water, gave them to Hagar and sent her and the boy off. Scripture tells us that she wandered in the desert of Beersheba. When the water was gone, she placed Ishmael under a bush and sat down nearby thinking that he would die, and she began to sob. This 'single' mother is in another desperate situation. Who will provide? Genesis 21:17-21 answers: ***“God heard the boy crying,*** *and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, ‘What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.’*

¹⁹*“Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.*

²⁰*“God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. ²¹While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.”*

“All of life unfolds at the appointing of Providence,” said David Jeremiah. Ishmael is Abraham's son, though not the 'son' the provident God promised to Abram and Sarai. Isaac was the promised son and heir. That's why, in Scripture, our God proclaimed Himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! Romans 3:9 *“What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that **Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.**”* Both nations will require God's promise of providence: we will all need His grace!