

But What Will God Do for Us?

When we study passages like 1 Corinthians 13, we recognize that the age of miracles has clearly passed, and that God will no longer send fire from the skies or raise the dead in confirmation of His word. However, the Scripture also teaches us that we ought to pray at all times and not lose heart, and that the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. When we put those two concepts together, we come to the conclusion that God will still intervene in non-miraculous ways to bless His people, an activity that we often call providence.

When we look at the Biblical record of miracles, we see that God invariably uses miracles to prove a point. He doesn't heal a man who has been lame and begging by the temple gate for 40 years just because He wants to; He does it to bear witness to the sermon that Peter is about to preach. Miracles were designed to be spectacular and incontestable.

Providence is neither. When God acts providentially, He isn't looking to make a splash. When He heals a believer with late-stage cancer, the skeptic can still point out that atheists with late-stage cancer get better on their own all the time. When He gives a devout young man the wife he's been praying for, the critic still has room to argue that people of every religious persuasion get and stay happily married every day. Providence proves nothing because God is content for it to prove nothing. He has decreed that His word is sufficient to produce faith in the honest heart, and He sees no need to further reinforce it.

Providence, then, is intended for the faithful. It is an expression of God's goodness and care for His children. Of course, it is not an infallible safety net. Even the most devout Christians can pray repeatedly for a blessing and not receive it; even the most godly believer may well undergo hardship and even disaster. Do those things mean that God doesn't love us, or is something else going on?

The only way for us to understand the interaction between God and us is to examine the way God has interacted providentially with His people in days past. The entreaties of righteous men as different as David, Jeremiah, and Paul, and the way God answered them, help us to understand what we can expect today from providence and prayer.

About the Author

M. W. Bassford lives in Joliet, IL, with his wife, Lauren, and daughter, Zoë, where he preaches for the Joliet church of Christ.

Providence and Prayer



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