

Providence and Trials #2

Luke 17:11-19, Romans 1:18-23 – Thankful in the Easy Things

Introduction – We’re still wading in from the shallow end in our discussion of God’s providence in all things. Before we deal directly with the hard providences God has and will give His children, let’s start with the ‘easy’ ones. God has showered His blessings upon us. They are as clear as day and far as the eye can see. And how have we responded?

How Ungrateful (Luke 17:11-19) – In the greatest of possible miracles (for a leper), Jesus gives immeasurable mercy. The lack of thanksgiving in the passage is stark. Those who would have most easily given thanks didn’t. Similarly, when it is most easy to give thanks, we often do not. Instead, we tend to think that God should be grateful for all our wonderful works (vv 7-10).

A Fallen Response (Rom 1:18-23) – Creation declares the glory of God, and fallen man refuses to acknowledge it. But this created world is also full of gifts for us from God, and fallen man, refusing to acknowledge God, also refuses to be thankful. A life full of blessings but lacking thanksgiving leads to futility in thinking, a darkened heart, and foolish man. This is not the description of one who will be able to see God’s hand in the hard providences.

Thankful or Drunk (Eph 5:18-21) – While Romans 1 is the description of an unsaved man, it certainly remains a temptation in our flesh as well, which is why Paul exhorts us in Eph 5:20 “giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”. In this passage we see the same problem occurs. Either we are always giving thanks (along with other manifestations of the Holy Spirit in us), or we try to escape reality because we think it is so bad.

This is not simply a command to thank God for the hard things in life. It is a command to thank God for all things in life.

Cultivate Thankfulness in Everything – But let’s start with the easy things, where we learn to give thanks for everything else.

Pleasant Lines (Psalm 16:5-6) – Do you have any idea the vastness of your inheritance, the abundance of the mercy, you have received?

Life and the World (Gen 1:28, Psalm 139:13-16) – He formed you and ordered your days. Then He placed you upon this earth for you to subdue and fill to your heart’s content.

Abundant Provision – He makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust (Matt 5:45). And He particularly watches over His children (Psalm 37:25).

Salvation to Eternal Life – “*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” (Phil 1:21).

Sanctifying Power (Micah 7:19) – We still struggle with sin. But we must remember how good the Lord has been to us in subduing our sinfulness.

The Mercies of God that Work for Good – Not only are we given innumerable mercies, but these mercies then work more good into us. Mercy heaps upon mercy. So, for instance –

The Word of God Works for our Good – In our reading, hearing, meditating, and applying, God’s Word does not return void. And in that we are sanctified, nourished, convicted, instructed and assured.

The Lord’s Supper Works for our Good – It is an emblem of the marriage-supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9) and an earnest of that communion we shall one day have with Christ in all its fullness in glory. But it is a spiritual feast as well now, where we are strengthened, quickened, and revived in our hope and faith.

The Fruit of the Spirit Works for our Good (Gal 5:22) – God does not command what He does not provide, so these gifts work themselves out in us in obedience to His law.

The Communion of the Saints Works for our Good (Heb 10:24-25) – We are commanded to gather together on this day, and in doing so, our fellowship works for good in one another.

Prayer Works for our Good – God commands us to pray, gives us Christ as our perfect Mediator, and then prayer works. It accomplishes more good things (James 5:15, Is 37:4, 36, Acts 12:5-7).

Conclusion – We will only be able to give thanks in the hard providences of God to the extent that we are giving thanks in the easy providences. We must –

Pray and Give Thanks Without Ceasing (1 Thess 5:16-18) – In your heart and in your home, this must be the atmosphere. Again, start with your thoughts on the easy providences.

Learn to Feast With Remembrance Before the Lord – Setting aside time to rejoice in the good things God has given you with friends and loved ones He has given you forces you to not forget the mercies of God. And forgetfulness begets thanklessness.

Humble Yourself in Thanksgiving – Giving thanks keeps you from thinking that you ever deserved any of these blessings – “*Then King David went in and sat before the Lord; and he said: “Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?”*” – 2 Sam 7:18

Dave Hatcher – April 8, 2001