

## God's Providence #4

**Review:** Providence is God's activity as the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Creator, whereby He

1. Directs, sustains, preserves, and provides for all his creation, from galaxies to electrons
2. Directs all things to the ultimate conclusion of his sovereign will and purpose.

"God's providence is best seen in the rearview mirror." We are studying God's providence by stories – some from scripture, and some from history, illustrating how God directs all things to accomplish His ultimate purpose

Many of the things that happened in the Bible that we recognize as God's actions, would not necessarily be seen as such to outside observers, who would just consider it bad luck (for them), or chance (like the cannonball beaking the anchor chain of the British warship during the defense of Ft. Bowyer). So today, God is moving in many ways, whether seen or not, whether recognized or not. Our place is to believe that he is a good God, in control, and moving all things to the conclusion of his perfect will.

### **Story #11: Shunammite woman regains her land – 2 K. 8:1-6**

Earlier, Elisha had prophesied that she would have a son, and then raised her son to life after an apparent heat stroke. Then he told her to get out of Israel for a time because there would be seven years of famine. She stayed in the land of the Philistines for those seven years. Then just before she and her son came to the king to ask to get her land back, "it just so happened" that the king asked Gehazi, the servant of Elisha to recount all the amazing acts of Elisha. Just as he was telling the king of how Elisha had raised a Shunammite woman's dead son, in she came. Gehazi said, Here they are right now! This worked in her favor so she received her land back.

How was it that the king wanted to hear about Elisha? Why right then? And that Gehazi happened to be there? How was it that the woman and son came before them at that very instant? Coincidence? I think not! This also shows that God is not only concerned with great historical actions, nations, and wars, but even in the lives of seemingly insignificant people.

### **Story #12: George Washington at Battle of Monongahela** (see biographical books, or internet. Especially The Bulletproof Washington by David Barton, of WallBuilders)

French and Indian War, 1755. Washington was a civilian aide-de-camp to Gen. Braddock, who was supposed to get the French out of the Forks of the Ohio (Pittsburg) area. With almost 1500 British soldiers, they were attacked by French and Indians, and it turned into a bloody disaster. Gen. Braddock was severely wounded and died after a few days. Washington coordinated the retreat and kept it from being a total loss. He was riding in the midst of the main battle for two hours in plain sight, and had two horses shot out from under him. His coat had several bullet holes, but he was not wounded, by bullet, arrow, axe, or anything. 80 years later a gold seal with his initials was found at the battle site, having been shot off him. Years later, Indian chiefs would testify that they instructed their braves to target him especially, and the one chief said he personally took 17 "fair fires" with his own rifle, without effect. They said they finally concluded that he was under special protection and stopped trying to hit him. Years later an Indian chief "prophesied" that Washington was destined to be a great leader, and that he would never die by a wound.

### **Story #13: Washington's Retreat from Brooklyn Heights** (see Washington: a Life by Ron Chernow, or any number of other biographical books, or the internet as "Battle of Brooklyn")

1776. Washington divided his forces between Manhattan and Brooklyn (on Long Island) because he wasn't sure where the British would attack. As it turned out, it was Long Island, and things went extremely badly for the patriots. There were 9500 troops, a fourth of them sick, and most of them badly clothed and fed. To prevent a total loss, it was decided to remove all forces from Brooklyn across the East River to Manhattan in a single night. The river was a mile wide with treacherous currents, and if the British saw them, their ship cannons would blow them to smithereens. It had to be done in the dark of night and completed before daylight. Many of the boats were so overloaded they were only inches above the water. However, Washington was determined to be the last to go, and when the sun came up there were still troops on the Brooklyn shore. But then a dense fog rolled in with

almost no visibility, covering their final escape. When Washington boarded the last boat, the British had started firing, and discovered that the Americans had escaped their trap in a single night, undetected, with not a single loss of life.

Why did Gen. Howe decide against advice to storm Brooklyn Heights when he could have destroyed the American army and cause? How is it that 9000 men could cross a treacherous and wide river at night in normal commercial boats without being detected? What kept the horses from panicking and upsetting the boats? How was it that the dense fog came up to hide them, when the sun came up? Providence.

**Story #14: Battle of Trenton** (see Washington: a Life by Ron Chernow, The Crossing by Jack Levin, or any number of other biographical books, or the internet as "Battle of Trenton")

After their escape from Brooklyn, they also lost Manhattan and crossed the Hudson into New Jersey, being followed by Gen. Lord Cornwallis. The bedraggled and starving army marched 100 miles across New Jersey, then crossed the Delaware into Pennsylvania. Instead of pressing the attack, British Gen. Howe decided not to continue the battle in the wintertime, thinking that by spring there wouldn't be anything left of the American army anyway. He took Trenton, NJ, and left it in the charge of his Hessian troops, vicious professional mercenaries.

During this time period, Thomas Paine began a series of essays called The American Crisis, which was instrumental in reviving American courage and the will to fight. ("These are the times that try men's souls ...")

Meanwhile, Washington knew that at the end of December most of his troop enlistments would expire and his army would evaporate. Also, the lack of success against the British was hurting general American support for the war. Washington knew he needed to take drastic measures for a victory, to keep things going. They decided on a Christmas day crossing of the Delaware River and then a 9 mile march to attack Trenton at sunup when the Hessian soldiers were still recovering from their Christmas drunkenness.

The weather was horrible: extreme cold, wind, sleety ice, and large chunks of ice clogging the river. They had to bring cannons and horses across on boats, The crossing was done by normal fisherman and river men with their commercial boats. When they finally got across they were 3 hours behind, with 9 miles to go on ice-covered roads. Many of the men had no shoes, and horses were falling on the ice. Many of their rifles wouldn't work because of the rain.

In spite of all this, the attack was a surprise and they successfully took the town from the Hessians. This was a great victory which strengthened public and congressional support for the war (they had been growing disillusioned because of the long string of defeats), and influenced Washington's men to "re-up" instead of going home at the end of the year.

Why did Howe not press the attack? What motivated Thomas Paine to write so eloquently? How could the Americans cross the Delaware in such dangerous conditions? Why was the weather so bad in the first place? (the bad weather was one of the reasons the Hessians thought there is no way the Americans would attack, a similar situation with the D-Day crossing at Normandy) What drove the troops on in spite of all hardships? Did they "feel like" God's hand of Providence was on them, walking barefoot through the snow and ice?

So what about your lives? Can you look back and see how God was providentially moving to preserve your life, or to guide you in the major decisions of your life? Some things you may have no way of knowing (in this life). For example, why did you get that last minute phone call? Maybe it was to prevent you from being in the intersection when someone ran a red light. For things like that we usually have no way of knowing, but when we are past this physical life, perhaps God will reveal to us how many times he kept us, even by angelic intervention.

Trust God that he is even now working his providential will in your life. Submit to him in all things and fear not.