

# The Godly Man's Portion & Sanctuary

## Lesson 7: Cautions, Objections, and Inferences about God's Good Providence

- I. All things *will undoubtedly work for good* to them that love God, Rom 8.28-29.
- II. Two Cautions
  - A. Don't limit the Lord to your times and ways.
    1. God will make good His Word, but we must leave Him to do it in His own way. "Put no more into the promise than God's put into it, lest you miss and come short of that which is in it." "Don't make the promise of God of no effect by looking for its effect out of season." "Until God has manifestly said, don't you say, "This is the time" (cf. Acts 1.7).
      - a) If you put your confidence in what you think and your faith in what you'd do, then both your faith and your confidence will prove poorly misplaced.
    2. *This* alone you may safely depend upon and *this* alone will be enough when you have nothing else: that God will make good on His word to you. Sooner or later, at one time or another, in one way or another, in the best time, in the best way, in the time appointed, His promise will be fulfilled for you, Hab 2.2-3.
      - a) At least at the end of days, when you look back from Canaan on all your wilderness journeys, you'll see and say, "God is faithful, and not one word failed of all that He promised me. Now I understand, and now I see, how every wheel was turning, every instrument was moving, and every event was working toward my good in life and my glory in eternity."
  - B. Don't let your expectation of deliverance hinder the purpose of an afflictive providence.
    1. It's as a man on his deathbed diligently giving himself to prayer and repentance so he can set his house in order, and as soon as he hears that he'll recover, suddenly putting off all dying thoughts and preparations. So when we find ourselves under God's afflicting hand and see that our deliverance is near, let us be careful to see that our expectation doesn't hinder the humiliation and repentance which the providence was sent to work in us.
    2. Hope in God and wait patiently for the promise of His coming; but know that until the rod has done its work, it's not going to be laid aside; and know that it's better to remain in the furnace until all our dross is removed than to be brought out of it with our dross still intact.
- III. Two Objections
  - A. Can it ever be said that the removal of the gospel and the preaching of it can be for good?
    1. It's true that the removal of the gospel ministry is a great judgment, Amos 8.11. Is there anything worse that can befall a people than a soul-famine, a shutting of the door to the Kingdom of Heaven in their faces, or a season of hellish darkness when the light of the gospel no longer shines? Such a plague is nothing less than *a hell above ground*, the devil's wholesale market, in which he vents his hellish wares, snares, temptations, deceits, and delusions. Where the preaching of the gospel is removed, the devil may spare his pains to ruin the souls of men because men rush headlong into hell on their own by their sins.
    2. And yet, this grievous judgment shall work for the good of the saints.
      - a) The gospel shall never be totally removed from them. If they have no Bible in the house and no preaching in the pulpit, yet they have a Bible in their hearts and a preacher in their breasts that shall instruct and comfort them, Isa 30.21; Ezk 36.26-27; 1Jn 2.24-27. Whatever scarcity there may be, not one of them will lack the supply they need to bring them to their journey's end, Phil 1.6; Eph 4.13.

- b) Perhaps the removal of a good pastor was in order that he may return with a greater blessing, Rom 15.29. Or perhaps the removal of the means of grace was in order that it may be replanted more deeply and permanently next time, Jer 1.9-10.
  - c) Empty pulpits can work to bring home a preacher's messages more powerfully and effectively as it convicts the people of the messages they ignored and resisted.
  - d) A silent pulpit can bring to the memory all the messages that were gladly received and offer renewed refreshment in them.
  - e) Whenever ordinary means fail, God will either feed them with extraordinary means or will feed them Himself, Ps 34.9-10; 23.1, 6. Only let the saints be sure to be wanting, thirsting, seeking souls, and the Lord will give what they seek, Ps 50.15. One way or another He won't let His people starve, for He never told us to seek Him in vain, Isa 45.19. "If His Word cannot, then His works shall speak to them. If preachers cannot, His providence shall preach to them. If their friends cannot, their enemies, their stripes, their wounds, their rods shall instruct them. And if all should fail them, the Spirit Himself will not fail to be their Teacher and Comforter."
- B. What good could ever come of a saint falling into a mental disorder like Alzheimer's until he's utterly deprived of the use of his reason and has to live like that until he dies?
1. First of all, this is undoubtedly for the church's good as it teaches them many lessons. It reminds them of the frailty of the body, the necessity to redeem the time, and the blessing of community. It also gives them needed opportunities for intercession, service, self-denial, love, and acts of mercy. God will bless the church through her weak members.
  2. But it also works for the person's own good.
    - a) It may be that the Lord chose his dementia to spare him the many sorrows and heartaches that He knew would come upon him or his church or his family. And if the remedy seems worse than the disease, let us add that it may be that the Lord blessed him with his dementia to spare him from the gross sins into which he would've fallen, sins that would've made him a terror to himself, a disgrace to his family, and a scandal to the gospel. And every affliction which prevents a transgression is a true blessing.
    - b) And if we *can't* prove that this is God's exact reason for such a hard providence in a man's life, neither can we prove that it isn't. But what we *can* prove is that the God who governs all our providences works in them with an eye to accomplishing all His good purposes for us and fulfilling all His good promises to us. And if that's the case, then we have every reason to know for certain that *whatever* His providence is, the reasons behind them are good, the very execution of them is good, and the work they're accomplishing shall therefore be good as well, Rom 8.28-29. In that light, all objections come to nothing.

#### IV. Two Inferences

- A. Rejoice in this promise of God to you. It's far better that He's undertaken to care for you and work for you than if He'd given you the liberty to care and work for yourself, because He is God and you are but a man.
1. With God on your side, you can submit to and thankfully embrace every providence, knowing that it's on a mission from God to do you good and not harm. And whether your enemies ride over your back or you tread on their necks, the issue will be the same in that both events will be used of God to bring about your good.
  2. This means your troubles and your comforts only differ in their countenance, because under every frowning providence is the smile of God's good promise being fulfilled. There's no providence that comes to you but it bears this promise from God in its hand, "Yes, even this will work for your good." So read it by faith and rejoice.
- B. Lay yourself down quietly under every hard providence.

1. No more perplexing or distracting cares about what will become of you. No more sinful shifting to try to deliver or save yourself. Leave God alone to do what He promised.
2. Don't let the malice of men disturb your peace or provoke you to avenge yourself. Neither give place to anger, murmuring, or fear.
3. Instead, in patience possess your soul, your God, and His good promise, Rom 8.25. Your strength in such a trial is in sitting still and waiting on the salvation of God, Ps 46.10.
4. You have nothing to do but to look to your holiness. Let it be your only care, to be holy, to respond holily, to come out of the furnace more holy than you went in. Love God and leave your entire interest in His blessed promise: *all things will work for your good*.

"If the God of peace, the God of power, the God of patience, the God of hope, the heart of God, the help of God, and the presence of God, are *with the godly*, and not merely with them, but with them as the God of all providences *to work all things together in their lives for their temporal, spiritual, and eternal good*, then what foolish creatures we are when we're afraid of religion, afraid of holiness, afraid to own, obey, and follow God and His holy ways!

"This way of following God in holiness is the only way, the sure way, to put yourselves forever out of all danger, and to put yourselves forever into the heart, the arms, the presence, and the protection of the Almighty God of heaven and earth. For if you but get into the arms of God, you'll always be safe and happy, no matter whose hands you fall into, because He has promised to engage all of creation to do you a kindness and to help you into the possession of Himself, both in this life and forevermore."

#### V. General Applications

- A. To the ungodly.
- B. To the godly.