

MercyMail A Weekly Devotional by Steve Higginbotham

God's Providence

by Steve Higginbotham (August 30, 2019)

Typically, when the doctrine of God's providence is discussed, a handful of well-known Scriptures are used to illustrate his protective care and blessings. For example, we frequently reference Joseph (Genesis 50:19-20), Esther (Esther 4:14), and Onesimus (Philemon 15), but rarely have we referenced the following passage I want you to consider.

When Israel crossed the Jordan to take possession of the "promised land," the nations in Canaan took up arms against them and did what they could to destroy them. The Philistines, Amalekites, Moabites, and others were constantly at war with Israel. They continually sought out ways to destroy Israel and exploit any weakness they could find. (Numbers 30:16).

With their environment understood, consider one of the commands God gave Israel. God commanded all the men in Israel to travel to Jerusalem three times a year to worship (Deuteronomy 16:16). Have you ever considered how vulnerable that would have left Israel? With all the men gone from all the villages, Israel's enemies could have easily overrun these cities and villages occupied only by women and children? Three times a year, Israel made themselves vulnerable to their enemies who wanted to destroy them. Yet, there is not a single example of which I am aware, of any raid by Israel's enemies during these times when the men were gone from their cities.

The question that begs to be asked is, "Why not?" Why didn't Israel's enemies take advantage of this vulnerability? The Bible gives us the answer. God said, "Three times a year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year" (Exodus 34:23-24).

Did you see that? The reason Israel didn't suffer during a period of extreme vulnerability is because of God's providence and protection. He promised that the enemies of Israel would not covet Israel's land when the men were on their pilgrimage three times a year. Don't you find that interesting? Doesn't that impress you with the power of God and the control he wields in the affairs of men?

Next time you feel overwhelmed and defeated, you need to remember that you serve a powerful God who answers prayer and promises to work on our behalf for our good.

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