



# GOD'S PROVIDENCE

By Carmen D. Hilliard

## INTRODUCTION

The term "providence" is used in this article as "**God's provision for the Christian by natural means**". It describes the activity that God engages in on behalf of the Christian to provide the guidance, knowledge, wisdom, and comfort necessary for man to live on the earth and go to heaven. God is always ready and willing to provide for our needs. He made many promises to the Christian which are permanently recorded in the Bible. These promises give man the assurance that his life is not left to chance, fate, or luck. God's power and wisdom are always on the Christian's side, acting endlessly on his behalf. God works behind the scenes manipulating His laws of nature to take care for man's needs and to accomplish His purposes. Things happen in our life which appear to be bad at first, yet many times these things turn out to be great blessings because of God's help. Christians are not aware of God's activities in their life but He is always there providing for our needs as He promised.

## WILL GOD WORK MIRACLES TODAY!

**No!** God no longer uses miracles as He did in the first century. Miracles ended when the Bible was completed and circulated among the people. God only used miracles to get the gospel out to the world until the Bible was completed. Every time a miracle was performed it was used in conjunction with teaching the New Law of Christ. **Miracles were never used without teaching.** They have never been the answer for the suffering of the world. Suffering started because of sin. Miracles were never used to take sin or sickness out of existence. God uses painful situations to develop our character, to bring us to our knees and help us realize the need for spiritual growth. Pain and sorrow will always be a part of the Christian's life while on earth. The purpose of miracles were to show the power of God and reveal the truth. When a miracle was seen, the person had no doubt that the message they heard came from God. With the Bible, we have complete knowledge of Christ and miracles are no longer needed to peach or prove the truth.

## MIRACLES AND GOD'S PROVIDENCE

When the miracle of healing was performed in the first century, a person was instantly cured with no pain or left-over scars. His body was healed by supernatural power and cured as though it had never been ill. God uses medicine, doctor's skills

and the natural healing processes that He built into man's body to help it recover from illness. Healing is accomplished over a period of time, **not instantly**. When the miracle of tongues was used in the early church, a person could speak languages he had not learned before to preach the truth. Tongues are not needed any longer because the Bible has been translated into every language. With the help of the printing press, people are taught the truth by studying the Bible just as you are doing. In the first century, Christians had only the Old Testament telling of man's history. The New Testament had not been written. The Holy Spirit gave some of the Christians gifts of supernatural power and knowledge so they could teach the New Law. The knowledge they were given is **now** contained in the New Testament. Knowledge is available to **everyone today**, not just a select few. You can have what they had, by studying the Bible. No one learns the plan of salvation by supernatural means any longer. We teach and prove the truth today with the Bible. It replaced all of the miracles used by the Holy Spirit in the first century. Those who believe in miracles today are trusting in a lie.

## GOD'S PROVIDENCE BLESSES THE CHRISTIAN

1. **Instruction provided:** God gives Christians guidance, direction and knowledge through the Bible. Wisdom comes to those who apply it to their life and obey its principles.
2. **Continual Care Provided:** In Acts 17:27, we are told that God is never far from each of us. He is near us, constantly caring for our needs. Angels are sent out to render service and provide care, Hebrews 1:14. We are told not to worry about physical needs but to seek *first* the kingdom of God and these things will be given, Matthew 6:25-33. Everything that is good comes from God, James 1:17. Does this mean the Christian will never have anything bad happen to him? No! It means that God blesses the Christian by working all the things that happens to him for his good, Romans 8:28. God will take each event or circumstance and see that the Christian is blessed in the end, helping him to grow from it.
3. **God uses suffering, failure and loss to bless the Christian:** The Bible does not promise the Christian that he will have a pain-

free life while on earth. This will come later in heaven. Our life here must be lived among the thorns, with sickness, disease, death and a battle with sin. We will suffer at the hands of unmerciful people who will mistreat us. But trials, suffering and sorrow can strengthen our faith, 1 Peter 1:6-9. God may teach you patience by allowing you to face adversity. Even repeated failures teach patience. Pain is sometimes the only way to humble a proud spirit and cause a person to think seriously about the direction of his life. We are told to cast our cares on Him, 1 Peter 5:6-7. Paul asked the Lord three times to remove a thorn in the flesh, but He didn't. The Lord allowed him to keep it because it made him a better person, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. We could not learn courage and bravery without the presence of danger. Trials teach us reliance on God and deepens our trust in His power. We are told in Hebrews 5:7-9 that Christ learned obedience from the things He suffered. Personal suffering is the greatest teacher on earth. God uses it to make us grow and mature. It is not bad to suffer.. When we suffer, it doesn't mean we have done something wrong or that God is punishing us. He allows us to experience pain for growth and strength of character. Some of the most valuable lessons are learned through pain. Failure and loss turn a person's eyes toward God. It teaches him compassion for the sorrow of others.

**4. Prayer is answered through God's providence:** We are told to ask for our needs in faith. When a child of God prays in trust, he is demonstrating complete dependence on God instead of his own abilities. Asking shows God that he realizes who has the power to supply all of his needs. By telling us to ask, God allows us to be a partner with Him in giving us what we need and in blessing **others**, Matthew 7:9-11. Asking in faith is the **only** way we will receive anything from God, James 1:6-8. Before we ask, we must be willing to **accept** the answer that God gives. When the answer comes, it will be the best one. Many times we are not willing to accept it, which shows we have not truly trusted God with finding the solution. Instead, we want Him to give us what we think is best. By this attitude, we display more confidence in ourselves than in God. He never gives the wrong answer. Even though we do not have the knowledge at the time to understand everything God does, we can be certain it is always correct. Do you ask God, in advance, to defeat your efforts if they are not right? If He gives you the opposite of what you ask, do you accept His answer as being the best one? True faith can and does.

**God is not bound by time to answer prayer.** He will locate all the missing pieces to the puzzle, but we must be willing to wait for the right answer. The missing pieces are things that we don't know. God must take these things into consideration before answering a request. Sometimes, the unknown things take time to work out. We must be patient and trust. God never forgets, even though He puts some things on hold. The solution may depend on other things that must be worked out first before He can bless you. **The blessing may be blocked by a sin that needs to be removed.** If the sin is yours, be willing to repent. When a rule of God has been broken, it must be corrected before we can pray in true faith. If we doubt that God will answer, we have left out the most important ingredient in prayer, faith. Watch for the answer and do your part by keeping

yourself open and obedient to God's Will.

**Obedience to God is essential to answered prayer.** Are you willing to submit your life to God and allow Him to direct you through His Word? We are told in Matthew 7:7-8 to **ask, seek and knock**. It is promised to those who do that they will receive. Christ's prayer in Gethsemane is a perfect demonstration of obedient prayer, Matthew 26: 36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46. In this Scripture, we find that Jesus was overwhelmed with sorrow, nearly to the point of death. In a short time, He would bear the sins of the whole world on the cross. Because of His humanity, Christ was overcome with sorrow. He threw Himself to the ground in prayer to the Father, asking to be spared if it could be done another way. He prayed in great anguish, saying, "**Not my will, but your will be done.**" We read in Luke 22:43, an angel came to **strengthen Him; thus He was able to endure the answer.** Look at His prayer from the Father's view. God answered Christ's prayer but did not take away His suffering. He had to bear it. The problem of sin could not be conquered without Christ's death on the cross. To spare His Son would deny the world of all hope of being saved from sin. God gave the only right answer. Christ's death provided mankind's salvation. He accepted the Father's answer and obeyed.

**How does God answer prayer?** When the Christian prays, the Holy Spirit is there interceding on his behalf. Many times, he is grieving or under great stress. It is impossible for him to express the needs of his heart adequately to God. The Holy Spirit sifts through the Christian's feeble attempts at prayer, untangling the meaning and rewording his cries of emotion and pain. Then, He presents the requests to God in the correct manner, Romans 8:26.

**God will never cross over His natural laws or interfere with man's free will to answer pray.** For example, God will not force a person to stop sinning so He can bless him. He will not bring a dead person back to life to stop grief. God will not wipe out a fatal disease which has gone too far, in order to save the person's life. If a miracle is needed to keep a person from dying, he will die. *All of us must face death.*

In prayer, we ask God to supply the missing information that we do not know and use it to decide what is best. We cannot be sure of **how** God answers prayer or **when**. But we can be sure that He **does** answer because He has promised, and God never lies. Don't look for a signal from God as proof that He has answered, you will not receive one. Faith does not demand a sign. **Faith is being sure, in advance, that God will give what is best, before getting on your knees to pray.**

**God's providential care** includes all the action He takes on behalf of the Christian to bless, help, answer, teach, and save him. God's providence is not of a miraculous nature. **It is how He uses His natural laws to provide for our needs.**