

GOD PROVIDES AND CAUSES US TO SEE

by Danny Tunnell

Have you ever faced a difficult and perplexing problem or situation, and you just couldn't see any solution or way out of it? Did you know that God already has the answer, and he is waiting for you to discover it? To discover God's answer, you must wait on the Lord, look to Him, and trust Him. (Isaiah 40:31.)

God has several names in the Bible. He is EL SHADDAI, almighty God. He is Jehovah-T'Sidneuv, the Lord our righteousness. He is Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord of peace. He is Jehovah-Rapha, the Lord our healer. He is Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord our banner, who gives us the victory. He is Jehovah-Rohi, the Lord our Shepherd. He is Jehovah-jireh, the Lord who provides. (Genesis 22:14.)

In Genesis 22, God gave Abraham a challenge, a test. "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you." (Genesis 22:2.) Abraham's son was to be offered as a burnt offering as would be done with bulls and rams, goats and turtle doves!

God was testing Abraham's faith and obedience. Did he love God with all his heart? (Mark 12:30.) Did he

love Isaac more than he loved God? (Matthew 10:37.) God wants us to love Him with all our hearts. He wants us to place no other Gods in His place. (Exodus 20:3.) God wants us to obey Him at any cost. Is there anything so precious and important to us that we cannot give it up for God? How much do we really trust God? Do we really believe His word, or are we fearful that He might not come through for us?

Abraham was willing to give what was most important to him over to God.

The Bible says that Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. The Angel of the Lord stopped him. Abraham lifted his eyes and saw behind him a ram caught in a thicket by its thorns. Abraham offered the ram as a burnt offering instead of his son. Then Abraham called the name of the place, Jehovah-jireh, The Lord Will Provide. (Genesis 22:9-14.) The actual Hebrew rendering: "The Lord reveals or causes it to be seen."

The Bible says, "Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns." The sacrifice that God intended for Abraham to use was already there. The way out of Abraham's difficult

situation had already been made. But Abraham didn't discover the way out until he had passed the test of trust and obedience.

What is the lesson for us? If Abraham failed the test, he would have never seen what God had already provided. God has already provided a solution for any problem or difficult situation we may encounter. But we can miss it if we don't trust Him; if we don't obey Him.

God is Jehovah-jireh. He is the Lord our Provider. He is the Lord who reveals. He is the Lord who causes us to see. And He never fails; He is able to deliver us 100 percent of the time. No good things will He withhold for those who walk uprightly. (Psalm 84:11.) All things work together for good to those who love God. (Romans 8:28.) Bill and Gloria Gaither wrote these words, "We are so blessed by the things You have done. The victories You've won, and by what You've brought us through." Amen.

— Miami, OK

HIS HANDS

By Hershel Dyer

A little girl was once admiring her mother. She spoke of her eyes, her hair, her face, and then, stopped to add, "But your hands . . ."

The mother's hands were drawn and misshapen. She felt it was time to explain to her daughter the reason for this disfigurement. She told of a fire in her house about ten years earlier. Her baby was upstairs in its cradle and she had rushed up the stairs and into a room, which was ablaze, snatching the infant up into her arms. In doing so, she suffered severe burns on her hands, leaving them scarred for life.

The little girl, listening intently to her mother's words, now looked with reflection and deep affection upon her mother's hands. Finishing her

statement earlier begun, she added, "But I love your hands best of all!"

Another scene had transpired on the day of our Lord's resurrection. He appeared to His disciples behind closed doors and, at first, it greatly frightened them – thinking He was a spirit. However, when He showed them his nail-pierced hands and the hole in His side made by the soldier's spear, they rejoiced.

One of the apostles, Thomas, was not there that evening to see the Lord. When the others told him about it, he averred that he would not believe until he saw "in His hands the print of the nails." A week later, Christ again appeared to the group and this time Thomas was present. Again, as before,

the resurrected Jesus appeared. He especially addressed Thomas, saying, "Reach your finger here, and look at my hands . . ." (John 20:27.)

To the believer's eye, surely no set of hands could be so beautiful as those that were pierced for our redemption!

"I shall know Him, I shall know Him, and redeemed by His side I shall stand; I shall know Him, I shall know Him, by the print of the nails in His hand."

Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

SPIRITUAL ADULTERY

By Mark Lindley

Marriage is a wonderful blessing given by God. God wants those who are married to treasure this blessing by staying together and keeping the commitments they have made. On their wedding day, a couple promises to be faithful to each other. However, "cheating" within marriage, though always wrong, is fairly common. Infidelity ruins relationships and devastates the person that one has vowed to love and cherish.

There is another type of cheating that is common in our day - cheating on God. The Bible teaches that one may commit the sin of "spiritual adultery." This occurs when a child of God puts some thing or someone in the place of God. The Lord is worthy of first place in the lives of His people. Choosing other "gods" of the world is to commit spiritual adultery.

Perhaps no book of the Bible emphasizes this more than the Old Testament book of Hosea. God instructed the prophet, Hosea, to go and take a wife who was given to harlotry: "When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea: 'Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord.'" (Hosea 1:2.) The immoral woman Hosea married was a fitting representation of how Israel had "cheated" on God. Notice in the last part of the Lord's statement to Hosea: "for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord."

But how had Israel been unfaithful to God? The answer is found in Hosea 4:17: "Ephraim is joined to idols, Let him alone." "Ephraim," in this verse, stands for Israel. The problem was that Israel had turned from the true God to idols. Serving these false gods made Israel guilty of spiritual adultery; guilty of cheating on God.

Spiritual adultery is very prevalent today. The true God who loves all is often ignored and rejected for things of the world. Money, recreation, earthly possessions, sensual pleasure, and selfish interests often take God's place. There is no room for God, no time for being faithful to Him. The Lord who provides each breath, gives life and every blessing is given second place!

God was long-suffering and patient with Israel, but in time He "put her away." (Jeremiah 3:8.) God is still patient. However, we should learn from the unfaithful nation of Israel that spiritual adultery will not be tolerated forever.

— Ripley, MS

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

By Hank Lawrence

In 1995, park rangers in the Grand Canyon National Park had to kill over two dozen mule deer because they became hooked on junk food left by visitors to the park - things like potato chips, cheese curls, and candy. It was reported that once they got a taste of the sugar and salt, the deer developed an extreme addiction and went to any lengths to eat only junk food. As a result, the animals ignored the food they needed, leaving them in poor health and on the edge of starvation. Their junk food cravings caused them to lose their natural ability to digest vegetation. Their pursuit for pleasure was their downfall in the end as the deer ultimately had to be put down. These deer remind me of a child who has no idea of the consequences of their actions and seeks only pleasure without any regard to their personal well-being. However, there comes a time when we must all be asked, "Why don't you just grow up?" As a basic observation, children are flighty creatures who live for the moment. They don't look ahead to see the consequences of their actions and they tend to avoid all responsibility. In the parable of the feast (Luke 14:16-24), the Lord deals with the need for us to spiritually grow up.

The parable begins with the invitation to a great feast. The people invited to the feast knew of it in advance, but when the time came, suddenly they came up with excuses right and left to avoid going. Just to put these excuses in our modern understanding, here is why they are so foolish. One said he needed to look at land he had just bought, but how many times have you bought land unseen? Another gave the excuse that he needed to try out the fine yoke of oxen he had just bought. How many of you buy an automobile without a test drive? One even said he had just married and could not come. Why not bring the bride along with him? The lord was rightly angry and filled his home with people willing to come; people who would truly appreciate what he offered.

The Lord applies this parable in Luke 14:25-35 and unveils an issue we see all too frequently today. There are many people who accept the Lord's invitation to become a Christian, but they are unwilling to follow through on commitment. Some will put family first, others will put themselves first. "If any man comes to me, and hates not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26.) Family is important, and so is taking care of ourselves, but our main focus must be on God. Children want to go to their grandparents to play but don't want to take the trip to get there. People want heaven, but don't want to be forced to sit through worship. (Malachi 1:12-13.) We want the wisdom, but not the education. (James 1:2-5.)

Children are wonderful gifts from God. However, we cannot remain spiritual children forever. There comes a time when we must grow up. That time is now. (Romans 13:11-14; 2 Corinthians 6:1,2.) Let us strive to heed the words of the writer of Hebrews: "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (Hebrews 4:11.)

— West Plains, MO

Why Does God Allow Trials?

By Joe Slater

Trials, especially severe ones, tempt us to doubt God. "If God exists, and if He really is good, then why does He permit pain and suffering?" But does God's goodness require that our lives be a bed of rose petals?

Through Moses the Lord told His people Israel, "You shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and to test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He **humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.**" (Deuteronomy 8:2,3).

The Israelites needed to suffer hunger to know the source of their blessings and to learn that satisfying one's physical hunger isn't the main purpose of life! Living by God's word surpasses filling the stomach with food.

What kind of parents would just give their children everything they want with no conditions or expectations? Such children would become soft, flabby, lazy, self-centered, and entitled. (Just look around! We're reaping a bitter harvest!) Children need to be tested, challenged, and made to endure difficulty so they mature into responsible, realistic adults.

It's no different with God's children. Though we may not enjoy it, we benefit from experiencing trials. Think of Joseph in Egypt; think of Daniel and his friends in Babylon. Most of all, think of Jesus, "the captain of (our) salvation," who was made "perfect (complete) through suffering." (Hebrews 2:10.)

Let us learn to see God's hand in trials.

— Justin, TX

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." (James 1:2-5.)

EDITORIAL . . .

TALK, TALK, TALK

By Dalton Key

"The wise do what they are told, but a talkative fool will be ruined." (Proverbs 10:8, NCV.) It seems the world is being overrun with talkative fools these days!

The Lord has blessed all of us with two ears and one mouth. Perhaps this suggests that we should double up on our hearing and throttle back on our talking. The Bible encourages us to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." (James 1:19.) Jesus warns that we should "take heed how (we) hear." (Luke 8:18.)

A young Simon Peter often struggled in this area just as we do. He was usually the first among the apostles to speak up, on most any subject, at most every opportunity, but too often he spoke when he should have been listening.

When Peter, along with James and John, witnessed the remarkable Transfiguration of Christ, he should have felt content basking in the glory of the moment, with eyes and ears open and mouth firmly shut. But, alas, this was not Peter's way of doing things! He just had to say something, even something glaringly wrong. His impetuous speech, demoting God's Son to the level of mere men, was so grievously in error that heaven's reproof came thundering forth from a cloud. Had the apostle been more interested in listening than in speaking, he not only would have avoided divine correction; he almost certainly would have learned something as well. (Matthew 17:1-6.)

This wasn't the first time the apostle had created such a problem for himself. Just a few days earlier, Peter had actually rebuked the Lord, resulting in this curt and cutting correction: "Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." (Matthew 16:23.)

And yes, this was the same Peter who would later rebuff his Master by blurting out, "You will never wash my feet!" (John 13:8.) And shortly after making that misstep, Peter foolishly dismissed the words of Jesus, brashly boasting, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble . . . Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" (Matthew 26:33,35.)

The good news? Peter changed. Peter grew. He became a tremendous force for good in the early New Testament church. Whose inspired words reached the hearts of obedient souls on the day of Pentecost? Were they not Peter's? (Acts 2:14-41.) Who stood boldly before the council, defying orders to desist in preaching Christ and proclaiming, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Was it not Peter? (Acts 5:29.)

Peter had learned a valuable lesson: there is a huge difference between having something to say and having to say something. We can all learn a lot from Peter.

The world has plenty of talkative fools as it is without our adding ourselves to the mix!



TWO HOUSEHOLDS, ONE CHOICE

By Milton Smith

For all accountable adults, there exist two households upon earth. One belongs to Jesus Christ and the other belongs to Satan. Those who do the will of God belong to His household, but those who obey Satan belong to his.

But who would dare "obey" Satan? In a very real way, those who refuse to obey God are obeying Satan. When a person knows what God expects of him but chooses rather to ignore such instructions, he is actually choosing to follow Jesus' adversary. The Bible often emphasizes this fact.

When Eve chose to rebel against God's clear instructions regarding the famous tree, whom did she choose to follow? When Judas made the decision to betray his Lord, who was behind that decision? John 13:27 tells us that Satan actually "entered" into Judas. But what does this mean? Obviously, Satan found a quick entrance into

this man's corrupt heart and took full advantage of it. When Ananias and his wife Sapphira chose to lie to the church, who do you suppose was behind this evil decision? Acts 5:3 tells us that Peter told Ananias that it was Satan who had "filled his heart to lie to the Holy Spirit." When Simon the sorcerer offered money to the apostles in an attempt to purchase the ability to give the Holy Spirit to others, Peter said to him: "Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money . . . your heart is not right in the sight of God, for I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." In other words, he was under the influence of the dark side. When Jesus said to Peter, "get behind me Satan," it seems obvious that He knew who was influencing Peter's words. (Matthew 16:23.)

It is easy for a person to know which household he belongs to by

simply observing whom he chooses to follow. All faithful Christians are heirs with Christ. His riches become our riches and His joy becomes our joy. In the same manner, His character should become our character. But to follow Satan is to develop his characteristics. To secure eternal life we must remain faithful to the Lord. Those who reject eternal life are choosing to remain faithful to Satan. The promise of eternal hope belongs only to those who make the personal choice to remain faithful members of Jesus' household. To those who make this wise choice, the death of the physical body is merely the beginning of life eternal.

— Tulsa, OK

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24.)

SAVE US!

By Bobby Key

There was rebellion in the camp. The way had been hard, and the people were discouraged. Complaining about food, water, and hardships of the journey now turned into speaking against their leader, Moses. In fact, it went further and turned into speaking against Almighty God.

Punishment was equally swift. Fiery serpents appeared among the people, and by their bites the Israelites began to die. "We have sinned," the nation cried. "Save us. Take away these snakes!" Their plea was presented to God by an interceding Moses, and a gracious God hearkened unto them. "Make a fiery serpent. And it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he sees it, shall live."

Those who did as they were told, lived. (Numbers 21.)

More is embraced here than just an historical event. Christ says this is an analogy of the redemption of fallen man. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the

Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:14,15.)

Sin is the deadly malady that has spread through the world. Wherever man is found, there sin is found also.

Like the venom from the snake, sin is deadly. Victims died from the venom. In a more awful way the victim of sin pays the penalty of death.

Remedy for both snake bite and sin are prescribed by the Lord. The Israelites could not heal themselves; neither can we! They escaped punishment just as we will, by heeding heaven's instructions!

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16.) "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38.) "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized,

and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16.) "There is also an antitype which now saves us - baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 3:21.)

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