

Providence of God

“And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with certain elders, and with an orator, one Tertullus; and they informed the governor against Paul. And when he was called, Tertullus began to accuse him saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy much peace, and that by thy providence evils are corrected for this nation, we accept it in all ways and in all places, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness” (Acts 24:1-3).

You may have heard individuals speak of the Providence of God, saying, “It was by God’s providence that this or that took place. In World Wars I and II, Bibles were passed out to the soldiers going into battle and were to be carried in their left breast pocket to protect the heart. The Bibles were equipped with a metal front, with the inscription, “May the Lord be with you,” to prohibit, and/or deflect, enemy bullets from penetrating the heart of the soldier if shot. Of one such event it was reported, “The combined Bible, prayer book and hymnal was carried to the front by a 19-year-old dispatch rider with the Army Cyclist Corps in 1915. And when a German sniper got him in his sights during a night mission near Arras, in northern France, “the hand of God” intervened to answer his prayers. The enemy crack-shot opened fire but hit the Bible, which Private Harry Taylor always carried in the left breast pocket of his uniform. The bullet knocked Harry off his bike but he was otherwise unhurt, thanks to the book taking the force of the impact.”

On the humorous side, one individual appealing to providence indicated that parking spaces opened up for him by the providence of God. Another, speaking about going to Krispy Kream said, “If I drive by, and a parking place is opened close to the door, it is God’s providence telling me to stop and have a doughnut.” So, he tested his theory, and sure enough, “after five trips around the block a parking place close to the door became available.” On another occasion, a woman attributed not being incarcerated for the transportation of illegal items to the Providence of God.

Many such applications are made, i.e., an individual misses a scheduled flight, or an ill-fated ocean liner: John Mott was an influential evangelist and longtime YMCA official, who shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946. He and a colleague were supposedly offered free passage on the Titanic by a White Star Line official interested in their work but declined and instead took the more humble liner Lapland. According to a biography by C. Howard Hopkins, when they reached New York and heard about the disaster, “It is said that the two men looked at each other and one voiced their common thought: ‘The Good Lord must have more work for us to do.’” Thus, there are a myriad of

applications from being “providentially hindered” to that of being “providentially protected.”

All in all, it is interesting that the only reference to “providence,” in the scriptures, is used not in reference to God, “but to the forethought and work of man:” Felix.

Nevertheless, generally, “the doctrine of divine providence has reference to that preservation care and government which God exercises over all things that He has created in order they may accomplish the ends for which they were created” (ISBE).

Meditate upon the words of Mordecai to Esther, saying, “Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father’s house will perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:13-14). ret