

TEACHING GOAL

To study the grace of God to His people in particular and to all mankind in general.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

- Q. What are God's works of providence?
- A. God's works of providence are His most holy wise and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures, and all their actions.

S.C. 11; L.C. 18-19; W.C. of F. V; Savoy 5; Young 13

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Isaiah 43

Support Passages: Psalm 145:8-12; II Kings 10:29-30, 12:2-3, 14:3-4; Matthew 5:43-45, 10:29-31; Luke 6:35-36; Romans 2:13-14, 10:5; II Thessalonians 2:6-7; Revelation 20:1-3

BIBLE STORY

Exodus 7:20-11:5; The Ten Plagues. Note particularly Exodus 9:12, 15-16, 10:27 in regard to the providence of God. The Plagues were God's special act of providence to redeem His people from Egypt.

MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

"The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made." (Psalm 145:9, ESV)

APPLICATION

It is of great comfort to us to know that God provides for all mankind and that His watch care is specially favored upon His own people who are bought by His own blood.

SUMMARY

That God's providence extends to all of God's creatures, whether they hate Him or love Him, is an amazing doctrine of Scripture. It is hard indeed for us to show love to our enemies, yet He commands us to do just that in Matthew 5:43 and 44 where He tells us, "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." The Synod of Dordt declared that "Touching the favorable attitude of God toward mankind, and not alone toward the elect -- that there is, besides the saving grace of God, shown only to those chosen to eternal life, also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general -- Touching the restraint of sin in the life of the individual and in society, -- there is such a restraint of sin -- Touching the so-called civic righteousness by the unregenerate -- the unregenerate, though incapable of any saving good can perform such civic good."¹ So long as the church of Christ, His own bride, is in this world, the forces of evil will be restrained in her behalf. Paul clearly teaches this in II Thessalonians 2 where speaking of the man of lawlessness he writes, "And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way." Civil government also is provided to us for the same purpose and to the extent that it administers justice and restrains evil it is God's minister to us (Romans 13:1-4). God however, is specially concerned for His own chosen people.

Although the study passage, Isaiah 43, is directed to Israel, yet we must not cast off this great passage as belonging to another dispensation of time, or one that does not apply to the church. Believing Israel was and still is God's church into which we gentile Christians have been grafted (Romans 11:17-24). We are, by the blood of Christ, no longer aliens and strangers, but are fellow-citizens with the saints, that is to say the commonwealth of Israel, and are of God's household (Ephesians 2:11-22). It would be utterly foolish to ignore such great promises as, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you (Isaiah 43:1b-2). It would be foolish to ignore such promises simply because they are addressed to Israel. We are Israel, brethren, if we belong to Christ. We are truly the offspring of Abraham (Galatians 3:26-29).

Do we fully grasp the statement that we are "precious in the sight of God?" Because of God's kind disposition towards His people, He provides for all of their true needs. When God wipes out their transgressions, He does so for His own sake and does not continue to remember them but human beings bear their grudges until the bitter end. Therefore, we learn the wisdom and holiness of God's providence, its gracious character towards the saints and His powerful directing of the affairs and estates of all mankind.

"The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them. The Lord preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy." (Psalm 145:17-20, ESV)

¹ The Banner, June 1, 1939, p. 508ff.