

How to Meditate on the Providence of God

Lessons drawn from Puritan John Flavel & Dr Sinclair Ferguson

Flavel's book, ***The Mystery of Providence*** —

“...is a tapestry woven from biblical principles and history, with additional illustrations and practical application.” Dr S. Ferguson

4 principles for meditating on God's providence:

1. Work hard at remembering and exploring the providence of God toward you.
 - (a) do this *extensively* — across your life
 - (b) and *intensively* — think deeply on particular events.
 - (c) Keeping Romans 8:28 in mind

2. Trace the connection between the *providence of God* in our life and *the promises* of God in His *Word*. God is *always* faithful to His Word.

3. Look beyond events and circumstances of providence to God Himself as author and provider.
 - (a) Think of the attributes of God (His mercy, love, wisdom, etc.)
 - (b) Recognize how He reveals these in His dealings with you.
 - (c) Remember, too, that God often works out His sovereign purposes through painful trials.

4. Respond to each providence in an appropriate way.
 - (a) Even if that response is sorrow or grief.
 - (b) Remember that no element of God's providence should be read as a mark of His enmity against us. We are His beloved.

What if our providences do not seem to fit with God's promises?

1. Learn how to resist discouragement.
 - (a) God is teaching us patience.
 - (b) It may not yet be God's time to act.
 - (c) We may not be ready yet to receive the blessing.

2. Learn not to assume you fully and clearly understand God's ways and purposes.
 - (a) Ferguson: "There are hard texts in the works, as well as in the word of God."
 - (b) See **Psalm 73**...

Meditating on God's providences leads to communion with God

1. God manifests Himself in all His works, including providence.

2. Such meditation serves to "over-power and suppress the natural atheism that is in your hearts." [Flavel]

3. Review and reflection on past providences brings present help
 - ◊ see this **in the life of David**:
 - (a) how he drew strength from shepherding memories when he was facing Goliath
 - (b) how, much later, he drew strength by seeing Goliath's sword

4. This is **faith** at work.

When we still have unanswered questions?

A. Flavel says *to govern yourself in your search* by these rules:

- Get the **true fear of God** upon your hearts; be really afraid of offending Him...
- Study the **Word** more, and the concerns of the world less...
- Reduce what you know into **practice**, and know your duty...
- **Pray** more for illumination and direction in the way you should go; beg the Lord to guide you in and through these difficulties...

B. *Stand* upon **clear truths from the Bible** especially in difficult times:

- God is in control of all things
- God is working out His purposes
- God is not my servant
- God's ways are far more mysterious and wonderful than I can understand
- God is good — all of the time; I can trust Him at all times
- God's timetable is not the same as mine
- God is far more interested in what I become than in what I do
- Freedom from suffering is not part of the promise of the gospel
- Suffering is an integral part of the Christian life
- God works through suffering to fulfill His purposes in me
- God's purpose, not mine, are what bring Him glory
- God guides me by enabling me to read His providences through the lease of His word
- I have few greater pleasures than tracing the wonders of God's ways!