

Rain's Reminder

Proverbs 3:13-20 on November 29, 2020

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Please read Proverbs 3:13-20 before going further in this transcript.

This morning, we've been focusing on sharing our testimonies of thankfulness. Giving thanks for both the hills and the valleys. The year 2020 has had its share of both. In light of all of the things we're thankful for, today we're going to consider God's Sovereignty and Providence. Proverbs 3:20 says, "by his knowledge the watery depths were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew." This one simple verse gives us a glimpse, not only into God's sovereign power and rule, but also His Providence.¹ Sovereignty and Providence are NOT the same thing. Admittedly, they are closely related ideas, BUT they are uniquely different in significant ways.

Sovereignty is about God's power. His ability to do anything, anywhere, at any time. Job 42:2 begins, "I know that **you can do all things**...." God's Sovereignty is "his right and power to do all that he decides to do... When he decides to do a thing, he does it, and no one can stop him."² But the Providence of God goes beyond His Sovereign power.

Providence is about God's purpose. The reason behind what He chooses to do, why He chooses to do it. Job 42:2 goes on, "I know that you can do all things; **no purpose of yours** can be thwarted." God's providence "includes what sovereignty does not... it is sovereignty in the service of wise purposes. Or you could say providence is wise and purposeful sovereignty."^{3 4} In other words, God is NOT just powerful, He is also purposeful.

I've titled today's sermon "Rain's Reminder." I actually chose that title a couple of months ago. Back when we were doing our summer series through the book of Proverbs, I came across a Thanksgiving Meditation by John Piper. It was recorded in a Proverb's Commentary by Ray Ortlund. He quotes Piper:

"Picture yourself as a farmer in the Near East, far from any lake or stream. A few wells keep the family and animals supplied with water. But, if the crops are to grow and the family is to be fed from month to month, water has to come on the fields from another source. From where? Well, the sky. The sky? Water will come out of the clear blue sky? Well, NOT exactly. Water will have to be carried in the sky from the Mediterranean Sea, over several hundred miles and then poured out from the sky onto the fields. Carried? How much does it weigh? Well, if one inch of rain falls on one square mile of farmland during the night, that would be 27,878,400 cubic feet of water, which is 206,300,160 gallons [so picture 200 million milk jugs!], which is 1,650,501,280 pounds of water [That's over 1 ½ billion pounds!]. That's heavy. So how does it get up in the sky and stay up there if it's so heavy? Well, it gets up there by evaporation. Really? That's a nice word. What's it mean? It means that the water sort of stops being water for a while so it can go up and not down. I see. Then how does it get down? Well, condensation happens. What's that? The water starts becoming water again by gathering around little dust particles between .00001 and .0001 centimeters wide. That's small. What about the salt? Salt? Yes, the Mediterranean Sea is salt water. That would kill the crops. What about the salt? Well, the salt has to be taken out. Oh. So the sky picks up a billion pounds of water from the sea and takes out the salt and then carries it for three hundred miles and then dumps it on the farm? Well, it doesn't dump it. If it dumped a billion pounds of water on the farm, the wheat would be crushed. So the sky dribbles the billion pounds of water down in little drops...."

Here's the point: there's a tendency for us to read a verse like Proverbs 3:20 rather flippantly, "by his knowledge the watery depths were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew." "Ok, fine. So rain comes from rain clouds. What's the big deal?" We become accustomed to God's sovereignty and

¹ To learn more, check out John Piper's soon to be released book *Providence* by Crossway in 2021.

² John Piper interview October 18, 2019. *Are God's Providence and God's Sovereignty the Same?* Episode 1383. www.desiringgod.org/interviews/are-gods-providence-and-gods-sovereignty-the-same

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⁴ In Isaiah 46:10 God says, "...My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."

providence. Not only to God's Sovereign power in this world but also to the way He exercises that power for OUR good. We find ourselves becoming unappreciative and unimpressed.

Here's the big deal: God cares for us. He is mindful of us.⁵ He powerfully provides for us, day in and day out. This is where the related ideas of Sovereignty and Providence come into play. Sovereignty is about God's power. Providence is about God's purpose. You see, God can sovereignly use His power to do whatever He wants, and He COULD decide to do NOTHING about our particular needs, NOTHING about our individual hurts, NOTHING about our interests. But that's NOT what God is like. Just because God makes the rain look easy, that shouldn't keep us from standing in awe of His power. That shouldn't keep us from marveling at His kindness and His generous, providential care toward us. God's Sovereignty and His Providence should cause us to be profoundly grateful for SO MANY of the everyday blessings that we tend to take for granted. In fact, even if we're not sure that there even is a God, we should at least stop and ponder the wonder of creation. We should at least ask ourselves the question once again: can we really go on believing that the incredible world that we live in, is merely the result of our good fortune, merely the result of random chance and mindless evolution?

Acts 17:24-28 tells us, "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth... he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being....'" Therefore, if we are having trouble finding things to be thankful for this year, let's consider Rain's Reminder. Each and every day, our loving Heavenly Father is on His throne. He is watching over this world day-by-day, hour-by-hour, minute-by-minute... raindrop by raindrop. And He is providing for our needs.⁶

As we celebrate the Lord's Supper this morning, let's be deeply grateful for the greatest of all of God's acts of Providence: the cross of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:7-9 reminds us, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ."⁷ ***God treats us well, on purpose.*** He uses His sovereign power to providentially care for us, by providing for our redemption. This act of Providence is the result of His gracious purpose for us. Today, let's give God praise for the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ!

⁵ We actually touched on this briefly when we looked at Psalm 8 back on May 26, 2019. I preached a sermon called, "Creation Psalms."

www.efcbemidji.org/sermon/creation-psalms

⁶ Psalm 8:3-4 makes this observation, "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" God is sovereignly ruling in power; and, He is providentially working out His purposes in this world. One of those purposes is you and me. So let's pay attention to all that God is doing for us. And let's give Him all of the praise/honor/glory that He is due!

⁷ Ephesians 1:3-14 is really designed to be read all together. In fact, in the original Greek, it's all one long run-on sentence.