**God’s Provision**

*by Stan Cox*

After leaving Egypt, the Israelites found themselves trapped on the shore of the Red Sea. With the sea at their backs, and Pharaoh’s army rapidly approaching, the people complained to Moses, saying that it would have been better for them to remain slaves *“than that we should die in the wilderness”* (Exodus 14:12). Moses responded, *“Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today”* (13). Since God was with them, victory was assured. The Egyptians were wiped out.

In contrast, Joshua and the people were routed by the weak and small denizens of Ai, as recorded in Joshua 7. Why? Sin was in the camp, and God said to Joshua, *“Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you”* (12). Since God was against them, they were defeated.

One of the most wonderful examples of God’s provision is recorded in Judges 7. There God sought to teach this very principle to the people. He wanted them to know how dependent they were upon His protection and deliverance. He instructed Gideon to limit his army to 300 men in fighting against a much larger Midianite force. While Gideon’s tactical plan was ingenious, without God’s provision victory would not be possible. The Midianites were defeated. As the text reveals, *“When the three hundred blew the trumpets,* ***the Lord set every man’s sword against his companion throughout the whole camp****; and the army fled…”* (22). The victory was complete, with the Midianite army ultimately completely destroyed, and its Kings and Princes killed.

The three examples noted above are all examples of God’s provision (or lack thereof) in military battle. But, the principle established has implications in every aspect of our own lives. God was concerned that Israel’s campaign against the Midianites would lead the people to trust in themselves. He limited the army, *“…lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’”* (2). Jehovah’s wording here is interesting. If Israel had claimed credit for the victory, God said it would have done so, *“for* ***itself*** *against* ***Me****.”* When credit is not given to God for our success, it is an act of rebellion against Him.

Instead, we must be aware of our own limitations and our dependence upon God. If we refuse to acknowledge His help, we in essence elevate ourselves. “I am the one responsible. I am the one in control.” Such is foolish. The King of Tyre did that very thing, and God said to him, *“Yet you are a man, and not a god, though you set your heart as the heart of a god…”* (Ezekiel 28:2). James told those who foolishly thought they were in control of their lives and future, *“But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil”* (James 4:16).

Remember the rich man who sat back satisfied at all He had accomplished. He thought himself self-sufficient, but God said to Him, *“Fool! This night your soul will be required of you…”* (Luke 12:20). In concluding his message about the rich fool, Jesus said, *“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”* (21).

The most important application as we consider our dependence upon God’s provision is seen in His words to the rich fool. *“This night your soul will be required of you.”* Ultimately, it is God who determines who will be lost and who will be saved. We are dependent upon His provision (grace) to have our sins forgiven and the hope of heaven. While the rich man teaches us the vanity of pursuing earthly riches, the greater lesson is the vanity of living a life without God as the focus. Our eternal destiny is in His hands. He is the one who determines who will and will not be saved. As such, we must heed His will for us, submitting to what He requires of us to be saved. By doing His will we acknowledge His preeminence. *“‘But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the Lord”* (Jeremiah 9:24).

This is key. We do not sit idly by, and trust the Lord to grant us all we desire. We obey. Just as Gideon worked diligently to secure the victory over the Midianites, God desires our diligence in obtaining the victory available through His extended grace. Paul wrote, *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:12-13). *“Work out your own salvation”* indicates necessary obedience on our part, even as we acknowledge that our redemption depends upon God’s part (cf. 13). This idea is also stated by Peter in Acts 2:40, *“Save yourselves from this untoward generation”* (KJV).

Most wonderful is the realization that victory is ultimately determined by where we will spend eternity. So, no matter what man may do to us (cf. Matthew 10:28), or what trials and tribulations we may suffer while here on earth (cf. 2 Timothy 3:12), with God’s provision our victory is complete! *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,* ***knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord****”* (1 Corinthians 15:58).