

to those who ask Him!” (Matt. 7:11). “...For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:32-33; see Jn. 16:23-27).

This does not mean He will give us everything we desire. He provides everything we need. Even Jesus prayed, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Lk. 22:42; see 1 Jn. 3:21-22; 5:14-15; 1 Pet. 3:12; Js. 4:2-6; 1:5-8).

Do I really need riches? Would perfect health really be best for me? If I had them, would I be more humble and serve God with greater zeal? All through history, humans have shown that we forget God more when we have fewer troubles (Dt. 8:10-20; Neh. 9:25-26). “When they had pasture, they were filled; they were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore they forgot Me” (Hos. 13:6; see Prov. 30:7-9).

We should not want God to use His power for us without His wisdom guiding that power. He has far greater knowledge than you and I do about what will really bless our lives now and forever. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9). When we ask God for His special help according to His will, then we are trusting in both His power and His wisdom.

**When trouble comes, God makes a way for us to escape from sin and destruction:** “No temptation [test] has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted [tested] beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). God has already given His very best gift to provide for our greatest need, forgiveness and eternal life. Therefore, we should certainly trust Him to provide for all of our lesser needs. “...If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:31-32).

**God provides blessings out of bad events for those who love Him.** Sometimes we may think suffering and problems will destroy us. But out of our troubles, God brings blessings to us and others when we love Him. “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word” (Ps. 119:67). “It

is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver” (Ps. 119:71-72). “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28; see 2 Cor. 12:9-10; Heb. 5:8).

Which child will grow stronger in body and character: the one who has everything done for him and given to him, or the one who must work to help his family? Paul said, “...we also glory in tribulations [troubles], knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Rom. 5:3-4). So, “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Heb. 13:5). “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Pr. 3:5-6).

**God provides hope and eternal life!** He will give His faithful children a perfect, eternal home (Jn. 5:29; 14:1-4; 1 Cor. 15:50-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 2:10). “...I saw a new heaven and a new earth...He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people...And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 22:1, 3, 4).

If I live for God, I will receive special blessings in “the life that now is” and “that which is to come,” because “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want...Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (1 Tim. 4:8; Ps. 23:1, 6)!

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## The Marvelous Providence of God!

The blessings which God provides are far too vast for our human minds to fully comprehend! Even so, by studying about the providence of God, we can grow in our appreciation for God and His love for us.

### TWO “KINDS” of PROVIDENCE

The Bible shows us that God provides many blessings for all people — and then He adds **many more** blessings for those who love Him and obey Him. Some people call these the **basic providence** and the **special providence** of God. The words “basic” and “special” do not fully express the wonders and marvels of God’s blessings, but they do serve as good tools for our study.

As we consider the blessings provided by God, we need to remember that **all** of them come from **one source** — the true and living God. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights...” (Jas. 1:17).

### BASIC PROVIDENCE: Blessings which God Provides for ALL PEOPLE

There are many blessings which God provides for everyone. For example, He is the one who supplies all of our food. After He created everything, God told Adam and Eve, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all



the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food” (Gen. 1:29). Later, after the flood, God told Noah and his family, “...the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives

shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs” (Gen. 9:2-3).

But someone says, “I labor in the field to grow my own food,” or “I work hard and pay for my food,” or, “I prepare and cook the food.” All of this work is important. But did you make your hands? Can you create a plant, a seed — or one living cell?

The power of life comes from God. Without Him, there would be no plants, animals, soil, water, air, light, hands, minds, or strength. We are only able to work by using what God gives us. “...*He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*” (Acts 14:17). All of the things we eat are “...*foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth*” (1 Tim. 4:3). We owe our thanks to God for every bite of food — and for the ability of the human body to use the nutrients.

**God used many miracles to give us His basic providence.** He created the earth, sun, moon, stars, plants, animals, people, energy, atoms, and particles (Gen. 1-2; Ex. 20:11; Ps. 8:3; 33:6; 146:6; Jn. 1:1-3; Heb. 1:1-2; 11:3; Col. 1:15-16). We constantly receive abundant blessings from those miracles of creation!

Now, the universe continues according to “physical laws” or “natural laws.” Scientists work hard to discover and explain these laws. And, to honor their work, sometimes a natural law bears the name of the scientist who discovered it. But ultimately, all of the “laws” belong to God. Nothing could exist without Him. He holds all things together by His power (Col. 1:17; Neh. 9:6; Heb. 1:3).

Every time I take a breath of air — or marvel at the beauty of a flower — or take a drink of water — or behold the smile of a child — I am receiving a wonderful gift from God! I could not even exist without God’s blessings. Paul said, “...*in Him we live and move and have our being*” (Acts 17:28).



God provides these “basic” gifts to all people — to those who do not believe He exists, those who ignore Him, those who hate Him, and even those who speak against Him by using the mind and tongue which He gave them. “...*He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*” (Matt. 5:45). We ought to imitate God in this and do good things for all people, even those who hurt us (Matt. 5:43-48; Rom. 12:14, 17-21).

How many years of life does God owe you or me? 100? 60? 20? Actually, God does not owe us even one minute of life. Each day we live is a gift from God’s love. Does He owe us the ability to see, speak, run, walk, hear, or think? If we have been able to do any of these — even for a short time — we should love Him and thank Him for His gifts!

### **SPECIAL PROVIDENCE: Blessings which God Provides for HIS CHILDREN**

**God provides our purpose for living.** Life on earth is short. Without God, life would have no lasting purpose. He tells us where we came from, why we are here, how to be happy here, and how to live forever. God created us because He wants us to be His children and wants to give us endless blessings. He also wants us to love Him and live with Him forever (see Gen. 1:26-31; Eccl. 12:13; Isa. 43:4, 21, 25; Jn. 3:16; Eph. 2:10, 12; Matt. 5:13-16; 28:18-20; Heb. 12:5-11). John tells Christians, “*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 Jn. 3:1-2).

**God provided the greatest gift of all when He gave His Son to pay the penalty for our sins.** “...*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Rom. 5:8). “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*” (Jn. 3:16).

The benefit of His death is **offered to all people** (Mk. 16:15; Acts 10:34; 1 Tim. 2:4, 6; 2 Pet. 3:9). When you believe, repent, confess your faith, and are baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins, you become a **child of God**. A sinner is saved by faith when he or she is baptized into Christ. Paul reminded Christians, “...*you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*” (Gal. 3:26-27; see Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 22:16; Col. 2:12). God provides abundant life in Christ! “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*” (Eph. 1:3; see Jn. 10:10; Rom. 6:3-6).

**In Bible times, God provided SOME of His special help through miracles.** Those miracles had several purposes: to **show** His love, to **demonstrate**

His power, to **reveal** His message, and to **verify** His message for all time (see Matt. 14:14; Jn. 3:2; 16:12-13; Mk. 16:17-20; Acts 2:1-12, 22, 43; Heb. 2:4). The miracles in the Bible show us that God has the **desire** and the **ability** to help His people. But some refuse to believe in God unless they see miracles with their own eyes. “...*Teacher, we want to see a sign [miracle] from You.*’ But He answered and said to them, ‘*An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man [Jesus] be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*’” (Matt. 12:38-40). His resurrection from death is the greatest miracle of all!

We who are alive today have not seen Jesus or His miracles. Instead, we must examine the testimony in the Bible and decide to believe or disbelieve. Jesus does not rise from death every year for us to see with our own eyes. It happened only once. Hundreds of witnesses saw Him alive again (Jn. 20; Lk. 24; Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:1-8). To one, Jesus said, “*Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*” (Jn. 20:29; see 1 Pet. 1:8). “*And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name*” (Jn. 20:30-31). Jesus said, “*I do not pray for these alone [the apostles], but also for those [us] who will believe in Me through their word*” (Jn. 17:20; see Rom. 1:16; 10:17). The testimony of the witnesses leads people to believe in Jesus. So, His resurrection and all of the other miracles in the Bible are still blessing us today!

Even in Bible times, miracles were not the primary way God provided for the needs of His people. His miracles were “**sudden samples**” of His great power which He uses **every day** to help us! Every time God wants to bless us, He does not need to interrupt His “natural laws” and perform a miracle. He has enough **power and wisdom** to work for us “behind the scenes” — constantly preparing amazing solutions before we even understand our problems!

**God provides special help for His children in answer to prayer.** When you are a child of God, you can go to your Father in prayer and receive His special help. “*If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things*