

The Mystery of God's Providence

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and turn to Isaiah chapter 45. We've been learning our God is a God of providence.

! I will go before you and will level the mountains.

I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name.

For the sake of Jacob, my servant of Israel, my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me.

I am the Lord, and there is no other. Apart from me, there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting, men will know there is none besides me.

[1 : 29] I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness. I bring prosperity and create disaster. I, the Lord, do all these things.

Amen. You heavens above, rain down righteousness. Let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide. Let salvation spring up.

Let righteousness grow with it. I, the Lord, have created it. Woe to him who quarrels with his maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground.

Does the clay say to the potter, what are you making? Does your work say he has no hands? Woe to him who says to his father, what have you begotten?

Or to his mother, what have you brought to birth? This is what the Lord says, the Holy One of Israel and its maker, concerning things to come.

[2 : 31] Do you question me about my children or give me orders about the work of my hands? It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it.

My own hands stretched out the heavens. I marshaled their starry host. I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness and I will make all his ways straight.

He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the Lord Almighty. This is what the Lord says, the products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush and those tall Sabaeans.

They will come over to you and will be yours. They will trudge behind you, coming over to you in chains. They will bow down before you and plead with you, saying, surely God is with you and there is no other.

There is no other God. Truly, you are a God who hides himself. Oh, God and Savior of Israel, all the makers of idols will be put to shame and disgrace.

[3 : 36] They will go off into disgrace together, but Israel will be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation. You will never be put to shame or disgraced to ages everlasting.

For this is what the Lord says, he who created the heavens, he is God. He who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it. He did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited.

He says, I am the Lord and there is no other. I have not spoken in secret from somewhere in a land of darkness. I'm not laid to Jacob's descendants. I've not said to Jacob's descendants, seek me in vain.

I, the Lord, speak the truth. I declare what is right. Gather together and come. Assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save.

Declare what is to be. Present it. Let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago? Who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord?

[4 : 41] And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a savior. There is none but me. Turn to me and be saved.

All you ends of the earth. For I am God and there is no other. By myself, I have sworn. My mouth has uttered in all integrity, a word that will not be revoked.

Before me, every knee will bow. By me, every tongue will swear. They will say of me, In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength.

All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But in the Lord, all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exalt.

Let's hear the preaching of God's word. As Pastor Jason just said, we are studying the providence of God and what the Bible has to say about it.

[5 : 44] Our definition is a simple one. It's just that God upholds and controls all his creatures in all their actions all the time.

Folks from Bremen, say it with me. God upholds and controls all his creatures in all their actions all the time.

We've looked at the purpose of God's providence to bring to pass all that he has planned. So he's a God who works out everything, literally everything, in conformity with the purpose of his will.

And then we looked last week at the extent of his providence. Just how far does God's control reach? And we saw it is literally all his creatures, living and non-living, human and non-human.

It's all their actions, both the good and the evil actions. And it's all the time, not just when the result is extraordinary, but also in the ordinary, humdrum of daily life.

[6 : 59] All the time, not just when the result is good, but also when it is bad. Now today we're beginning to take up some of the problems of God's providence.

Not that God has any problem controlling all of his creatures in all their actions all the time, but I speak of the problems that men have with God's providence.

Some of those problems are philosophical by nature, others are practical. We'll treat some of each. But questions as personal as why has this happened in my life?

Why did that take place? Questions like how? How does God exercise this control over all things? How did he make the axe head swim?

How did he make that bush be on fire and yet not be consumed? How can he direct the very heart of a king to do his will without destroying his will?

[7 : 58] And so on, the king's will. Now most of these problems arise on account of the mystery of God's providence. And that's the study that we're on today.

The mystery of God's providence. It's 350 years ago, a Puritan pastor, John Flavel, wrote a book all about the providence of God. And he named the whole book the mystery of God's providence.

Which is to say, he put us on notice right up front that if you're going to study the providence of God, be ready for mystery. And mystery, by very definition, is something beyond our comprehension.

Something beyond our mind's ability to understand. Now there's much about God himself that we do not understand. Do you understand how God is eternal without beginning or ending?

How he is three in one? Just one God, three persons? The two natures of Christ, that he's both fully God and yet one of us, fully man.

[9 : 11] How great is God beyond our understanding? His understanding no one can fathom. Who has understood the mind of the Lord? Great is the Lord. His understanding has no limit, no boundary.

So the point is this. If there's mystery in God himself, we should not be surprised to find mystery in his works and his ways on the earth.

Which is exactly what we run into with his upholding and controlling all of his creatures and all their actions all the time. Mystery. Beyond our comprehension.

Why? How? If we can't comprehend God himself, how can we comprehend all his ways? So, how far beyond our comprehension is God's providence?

Last week, a group of doctors at Riley Children's Hospital held a consultation with our daughter Julie about their baby Maya's condition and the future treatments that she may need.

[10 : 21] And at the outset, they said to her, you're only going to understand about 5% of what we're going to tell you. You see, with their years and years of specialized study and experience with the human body and infants, they know more than Julie.

and 95% more, evidently, according to their thought. Does that illustrate how far beyond our comprehension God's ways in providence are from us?

I don't believe so. It's greater, isn't it? It doesn't go far enough, that example. So, let's take Maya herself, the three-month-old baby. Lying in her bed.

And she gets a shot every morning and every evening to be sure that her blood doesn't clot. And she's poked with needles for blood samples and IVs and PICC lines. And she gets tubes shoved down her throat and into her stomach and into her lungs.

Now, think of those doctors trying to explain to Maya how this pain is really for her good. It's really something for her good that is happening to her.

[11:44] Oh, we say, no, it's beyond her comprehension. She cannot understand. She can't even begin to fathom that. And we get that, don't we? Then why do we think that our finite minds should somehow be able to understand the infinite mind that invented the human cell, that created the universe and everything in it and that we think that we should be able to comprehend his works and ways, why he's doing this, why he did that, how this pain is really the best thing for me, how this affliction so evil and so debilitating can really be a part of a perfect plan.

And we demand an explanation. We must understand it now. Oh, no. Maya should sooner understand those doctors than you and I understand the mind of the infinite.

Well, that's my poor illustration to try to show you just how far God's providence is beyond our comprehension. Would you like to hear God's own illustration?

He gives us one in Isaiah 55, 9. As the heavens are higher than the earth, well, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

My ways of controlling the universe. My ways of controlling the nations, the wicked, the righteous, you, your loved ones.

[13:17] How much higher are your ways than my way of governing these things? Well, as high as the heavens are above the earth.

We still haven't reached the limit. We haven't been able to figure out the boundary line of the heavens, where it stops. There's no measurement.

It's infinite distance between the heavens and the earth. And that's the distance, God says, between my ways and yours and my thoughts and your thoughts. And that simply means that in dealing with the providence of God, we must not only accept mystery, we must expect it.

We must expect mystery in God's providence. Don't be surprised if you don't understand everything he's doing. Be amazed that you understand anything of his thoughts that he's revealed to us in his word.

What a stoop for him to tell us anything, to explain anything, to enlighten us on anything. So we must expect to not understand all that he's doing with us in his world.

[14:29] After all, he's the infinite God. We are finite men. And his knowledge is past finding out. So if you haven't been able to figure out what God's doing in your life, don't think something's wrong with you.

That's what it means to be a man, a human being, and not God. It's to be expected because of who you are and who you're dealing with.

The Bible tells us God has secrets, some things that he keeps to himself and doesn't tell others. Deuteronomy 29, 29, the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and our children forever that we may follow all the words of this law.

Many things about God's providence are kept secret. He's just chosen to not tell us. It's part of the prerogative of being king of kings. A king, his honor is to have secrets and our God has many.

We find people in the Bible wrestling with these things, don't we? And this mystery is to be explained perhaps by the hiddenness of God.

[15:46] The hiddenness of God. Maybe that's not an attribute that you naturally think about when you think of God, his attributes. The hiddenness of God. Here, if you've got your Bibles open to Isaiah 45, what a mind-stretching chapter on the providence of God.

What he does, what he was going to do in the world in Isaiah's day. And Isaiah's response to this vast panoramic view of God's providence is found in verse 15.

Truly, you are a God who hides himself. Oh, God and Savior of Israel. A God who hides himself.

What do you mean, Isaiah? What I mean is that all men will be able to see is that ruthless, conquering enemy, Babylon.

And seeing them roughshod across the nations, coming into our nation, killing our men and women, boys and girls, destroying Jerusalem, the temple, making our cities desolate, carrying our people away as captives to Babylon.

[17:02] And then, seeing after 70 years in exile that the Medes and the Persians would arise and would conquer Babylon. And then King Cyrus, the new king, for reasons of his own, would decide to resettle all the dispersed people in his empire back to their homelands to rebuild their temples and desolate cities.

And so Cyrus would send back the Jews to Jerusalem to rebuild and resettle the land. God was not seen in any of that. He did not appear riding on the clouds.

and showing himself to the nations in an obvious way. The Persian Gazette made no mention of Jehovah at all. It was just what was going on and the carnage that was being wreaked.

Truly, you are a God who hides yourself. He was hiding himself behind the second causes.

It had been revealed long ago, long before it happened, that this was exactly what God was going to do. I will do this. I will summon Cyrus, that king of the Medes and the Persians.

[18:19] I'll call him. I'll help him. I'll strengthen him. And he will, therefore, conquer and destroy and achieve the purpose for which I've sent him.

verse 1 of chapter 45. This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus. This is years before Cyrus arrives on the scene, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him, to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut.

Nobody saw God opening doors to nations and kingdoms for Cyrus' army to march through. But that's what God claims is happening. He's opening.

He's stripping kings of their armor. I will go before you. I will level the mountains. I will break down gates of bronze. I will cut through bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name.

Now that, folks, was the news, but the news behind the evening news. You didn't hear God's name mentioned in all of that that was happening from a human perspective.

[19:40] Though this pagan King Cyrus did not even acknowledge the Lord Jehovah, Jehovah was working through him.

Truly, he is a God who hides himself behind Cyrus's, behind kings and parliaments and congresses and plagues and viruses and all the things that are happening, the accidents, as we call them.

A God who hides himself. So how many of you read in the paper how God removed Great Britain's prime minister and how he raised up another in her place?

You didn't read that in your papers, did you? You just read the human side of it, all about Theresa May's political troubles and how Boris Johnson was chosen to replace her. Not a word about God. No appearance in the sky of his mighty arm coming and doing something. And so we say, truly, you are a God who hides himself. It was surely you who brought down one and raised up another.

[20:52] Psalm 75, 7. God's invisible hand of providence at work in his world, at work in the nations. Did you hear on the evening news about God sending Hurricane Dorian on his errand and how he directed it, just exactly where to hit and how much rain to drop her?

No, you heard about Mother Nature and just how she just decided to go here and to go there. And we say, truly, you are a God who hides yourself.

You hide yourself behind the temperatures and barometric pressures and winds and rains. And people don't see you, but you're there. People don't see your providence and control.

Oh, but you're controlling, directing, governing. All your creatures, all their actions, all the time. So, sometimes God's hiddenness is due to the second causes that he hides behind.

Let's not miss him this week in our lives. Don't let him be missed by you because of the second causes.

[22:08] Look right past them. Look under them. Look above them. Look behind them to the first cause of our God and see him working out everything according to the counsel of his will.

That's what the most righteous man on earth in his time did. Job. He lost all his children, his possessions. Well, it was the wicked Sabaeans that made off with all of his oxen and donkeys and it was those raiding bands from the Chaldeans that took his camels and lightning, probably, fire from God that burned up his sheep and that was wealth in those days and a whirlwind that knocked down the house and took all of his ten children and Job heard these reports as they came in one

after another on that one day.

But he didn't forget the first cause. He looked right past all the second causes of wicked men, thieves, marauders, winds, fire and he fell down and he worshipped and he said, the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. He's as much to be praised for taking as he is forgiving. This is his hand and we worship him and in all this Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. One of the unique features was speaking with someone even just this week about one of the unique features of the book of Esther is the fact that God is not mentioned anywhere in the entire book and I'm not using much from Esther because I hope to preach through it when we're done with this introduction to the providence of God.

[23 : 58] He's not mentioned. but few books of the Bible show us so plainly the acts of God in providence working in small things big things and seeing how even small things have huge consequences.

He's the God of providence and yet he's hidden. He's hidden. A God who hides himself. Asaph confessed the hiddenness of God in Psalm 77, 19.

He said, your path led through the sea your way through the mighty waters through your footprint though your footprints were not seen. You were the one leading your flock he says by the hand of Moses and Aaron but we didn't see your footprints in the sea.

Maybe you've seen an old western movie and there's the cowboys and their dogs and they're tracking the fugitive and they're doing just fine until they come to the river and then they can't see his tracks anymore.

What if God is a God who plants his footsteps in the sea and you can't see him anywhere and you can't follow him and find him.

[25 : 12] One of the best hymns on the mystery of God's providence was written by William Cooper. God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

he plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. The truth is God's got the whole world in his hands and he's controlling it all to accomplish exactly what he made it for and yet we don't see those mighty hands of providence.

That's the hiddenness of God and his ways. Now that's true of all of his providence but I believe it's especially true in his hard providences.

You know what I mean by hard providences. Hard to understand. Hard to accept. Those dark providences when all is darkened in the veil of tears.

When you can't see any light on your path and you don't see where God is in any of this. Where's he leading me? I'm in the dark about why this is happening and there are times when God's hiddenness is due to his hiding of his face.

[26 : 24] A phrase that's found several dozen times in our Bibles. The hiding of his face. Psalm 13 1 David cries how long oh Lord will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me? You see when God's ordering the events of our lives in such a way that we can't see his smiling face.

We don't see his love in the circumstances of our lives. We don't see his goodness in what's happening. It appears as if he's treating us as his enemy rather than his friend and his goodness and justice is hidden by the injustice of the events.

But as Cooper reminds us, behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face. His favor, his loving kindness, it's there but it's hidden you see.

This is the hiddenness of God behind these frowning providences. Consider Job. His losses were great but what made them most severe was the fact that he didn't know why God had afflicted him.

[27 : 34] He couldn't understand what God was doing, where he could get answers, where he could find God to get answers and make any sense of it all. His miserable friends or counselors said they knew why.

It's obvious Job, you've sinned greatly against God and he's punishing you just like he always does in his world of providence. And Job knew better than that. But he concluded that God was angry with him without cause and neither answer was correct, was it?

They were both wrong. We, the reader, are told in chapters 1 and 2 why this happened to Job. There's a challenge going on in heaven between God and Satan.

And Satan says, sure, Job worships and serves you because you do all this good stuff for him and nothing bad. Stretch out your hand now against him and he'll curse you to his face. God says, all that Job has is now in your hands, but don't take his life, don't touch him. There was a challenge in him, unknown to Job.

[28 : 38] And that's what made the trial so difficult. God was hidden from him and he expresses that hiddenness. Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?

Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy? When he passes me, I cannot see him. When he goes by, I cannot perceive him. I despise my life.

My days have no meaning. If only I knew where to find him. I would state my case and fill my mouth with arguments. But if I go to the east, he's not there.

If I go to the west, I don't find him. When he's at work in the north, I don't see him. And when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him. Where is God?

He's hidden. He's hidden. Nowhere to be found. And that's the reality of God's providence. He sometimes hides him so well. Frederick Faber says that he hides himself so wondrously as if there were no God.

[29 : 50] His footsteps may be in the sea, but we can't get a trace of them. Oh, but he is there. He is there. Nonetheless, God is with us, always acting for his people, even if we can't trace out his footsteps.

David Kingdon says, a hidden God is not to be mistaken for an absent God. And blessed is the man who's given faith to know the difference.

I can't see him, but he is here. Because God's word says God is our refuge and strength and ever-present help in trouble.

trouble. All I can see is trouble. I don't see anything of God. I just see trouble. But he is here. He is here, even when I can't find him.

The Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob, our fortress. So I ask you, will you see him this week in your life circumstances as the one guiding and directing, even when you can't see him with your physique?

[30 : 58] Will you see him with the eyes of faith as the one who's with you, to help you, always and only bringing about his perfect plan? Well, let's apply.

What is your response to the mystery of God's providence then? We bump into mystery. I trust that we understand something of the hiddenness of God in his providence.

What is your response then to the mystery? mother was trying to explain to her three-year-old daughter about how God had taken away the life of the baby that had been growing in her tummy. And after doing her mother best, the three-year-old said rather matter-of-factly and with a note of blame, well, that wasn't very nice.

That wasn't very nice. Well, bless her heart. She's three. But learn the lesson that charging God foolishly is part of our fallen nature.

[32 : 11] It's natural to us as sinners to charge God foolishly, to lay the blame at his feet as if he's not good. And that's something only grace gives.

And sadly, I think we do this far more than we even realize. We bring a three-year-old mind to a God-sized providence. And we charge him with injustice.

You've not been fair, God. You've not been good. You've mistreated me. You haven't been loving. You know, that's what we do every time we complain and grumble and murmur.

ultimately, all of our grumbling, A-L-L, all our grumbling is against the God of providence. If God rules over all, then all of our complaining is against him.

We don't like the way he's ordering and directing our lives and everything in them. We think, I don't have time for that. And God says, oh, yes, you do have time for that.

[33 : 23] And that's why I've interrupted your schedule and invaded your ease with this. Oh, I could sure do without that trial in my life.

Oh, no, you can't. That is precisely what you need, God says to us in his providence. eight times we hear the children of Israel grumbling in the wilderness.

And you know that every time God takes it as personal against him. Every time. They're grumbling about their food, their diet, their water. They're grumbling about their leaders.

They're grumbling about the difficulties along the journey. They've got to go the long way around.

And every time, God takes it as grumbling against him. And I'm struck both with God's patience and

with his severity in dealing with grumbling.

Here's why it's no laughing matter. It strikes at his government of the world, doesn't it? It's charging him with being unfair, unjust, unwise, unkind, ungood. It matters to God what we think of him and what we say about him when we gripe about the way that he's ordering things in our lives.

[34 : 43] And so I wonder, will you realize this week that all of your complaining and griping and murmuring is leveled against an all-wise and good all the way through God of providence?

That's how God takes it. Woe to him who quarrels with his maker, we read from Isaiah 45, 9. Does the clay say to the potter, what are you making? Do you question me about my children and give me orders about the work of my hands?

What are these works of his hands? They're the works of his providence. It's what he's doing in his world. And so with our three-year-old understanding before the infinite and eternal mind that rules the universe, we think we've got a thing or two to say to him about his government.

It's the arrogance and pride of it all. To think that we know a little better way than your way. We know better how to govern our life and world and that we're qualified judges of the Most High who does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of earth such that no one can hold back his hand or even question him.

What are you doing? Remember King Nebuchadnezzar? He had to be humbled before the God of Providence. and he had seen this vast empire become his and he's out walking on the rooftop one day and he says, is this not Babylon that my hand is made with my power for my great glory?

[36 : 22] And God says, wrong. Let me teach you something about my Providence. I am the Most High who sovereignly gives the kingdoms of this world to whoever I wish.

that's why Nebuchadnezzar your king of Babylon. And after losing his sanity and eating grass with cattle for seven seasons, he got the point.

And he comes out of that confessing, now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and exalt and glorify the king of heaven. Because everything he does is right and all his ways are just and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

words from a humbled king about the providence of God. So Cooper says, judge not the Lord by feeble sense.

Judge not the Lord with a feeble mind. And that's man, that's you, that's me at our best. Feeble, weak minds. Don't judge the infinite mind with your feeble mind.

[37 : 32] Now, you don't like it when others judge you, when they just had a tiny part of the information. And what you did just looks stupid, looks maybe unloving, unkind, unfair.

But that's because they've only got a small part of the facts that you were dealing with. And you say, it's not right for you to judge me. when you don't see all the facts.

And so, here we come with two percent or so of the information and we're ready to sit in judgment upon God and his ways with us. We don't have a clue about the other 98% of what he's doing.

How little we know ought to silence all judging of his ways. And that's what God taught Job, wasn't it? Because after he began well and worshipped the God of Providence who had taken away even as he had given, Job began to foolishly charge God with injustice and God listened.

And I'm again struck with his patience. How many chapters God listened of Job's complaining and charging him foolishly.

[38 : 47] And finally, he's had enough and he speaks to his righteous Job. Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?

You got 2%, Job. You're speaking words without knowledge of the other 98%. Would you discredit my justice?

Would you condemn me to justify yourself? Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him. You've been demanding answers from me.

Now you answer me, God says. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know.

On what were its footings set? Or who laid its cornerstone while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? Were you there, Job? Surely you must have been.

[39 : 50] You speak like you know all things. things. And then God takes Job on a tour of his providence in the natural world, doesn't he? Where God's providence rules and reigns.

Upholding all the creatures he's made. Controlling them. Governing them. And two chapters later, excuse me, and so he's then peppering Job with questions as he goes about to teach him, to make

him feel just how little he does know and understand about this providence of God.

Over the weather, the stars, the sun, death, darkness, the lions, the ravens, the goats, the bears, the wild donkeys, and wild oxen, the ostrich, the eagle, the hawk, how God provides for them all, how he knows when they're giving birth, God's knowledge and control of his world.

And when God's done, Job's done complaining. He's done judging God's providence in his life. He said, I'm unworthy. How can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth.

I spoke once, but I have no answer twice, but I will say no more. But God's got more to say to Job, so he's got two more chapters. And he again takes him and shows him his complete control over all his creatures, even his mightiest of creatures.

[41 : 12] And two chapters later, Job acknowledges God's wonderful providence. I know you can do all things. No plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?

It was me, Lord. It was me. Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, of things too wonderful for me to know.

Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes. Job, if you can't even understand how the hawk migrates to the south, then you better leave to me to order the things in your life.

And he got the point. And so when my dim reason would demand why this or that thou dust ordained, by some vast deep I seem to stand, whose secrets I must ask in vain.

I'm done judging the Lord by my feeble sense. I'm ready to start trusting him for his grace. So that's the wrong response to make to God's strangeness, his hidden providence.

[42 : 25] What's the right? And this is very quick. Number one, how do we respond to mystery in God's providence? Expect it. Know who you're dealing with, the infinite God, and who you are, finite man.

Number two, embrace the mystery and bow in humble worship. That's what Job did at the beginning. on his face, the Lord gave, the Lord take away. May his name be praised.

It's what Paul did when he was surveying the providence of God in Israel and Egypt, or Israel and the Gentiles, and God working out his salvation. He comes to the end of Romans chapter 11, and he's lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out.

Who's known the mind of the Lord? Who has been his counselor? Because from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

[43 : 27] Mystery moved him to humble worship. We must come with mystery to his feet, not demanding answers of God for his strange and hard providences, promises, but instead content not to know and to worship him precisely for the mystery.

Aren't you glad you have a God that is bigger than what your brains can figure out? What a pitiful deity he would be if he was no bigger than my pea brain could comprehend.

end. Here's a God we can trust. He's smarter than I am. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows his plans.

He knows how to bring about his purposes in my life, in his world, so that we end up confessing in that day, Jesus is Lord.

He reigns over all. He is king. And because he reigns over all, he is able to work out all things for our good. What a comfort to rest in.

[44 : 41] And thirdly, we trust. Not complaining, not judging him, but trusting him. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace. Behind the frowning providence, he hides a smiling face.

We've got to leave that for next week. But as Luther said, it is the glory of faith not to know. Not to know. And we cast ourselves upon this God that we do know.

And Job did so in his better moments, didn't he? I can't find him. My way is hidden from me. I don't understand what's happening to me. But he knows the way that I take. And when he has tested me, I'll come forth as gold.

That's all that matters. He knows. This great God that's smarter than I am, as high as the heavens are above the earth, I can trust him. And this is the God who when we needed a Savior, sent his one and only Son to bear our sins and to take them to the cross and there to be damned in our place.

We can trust a God like this. And all that was seen that day was the blood and gore of it. All that was seen that day was this guilty criminal surrounded by two other guilty criminals getting what they had coming.

[46 : 07] And we say, oh God, you are surely a God who hides yourself. For here at Calvary, you were saving a people that no man can number.

And he looked like he was defeated. He looked like he was done in, like all of his purposes had come to zero. And oh, he was saving me there. He was bearing my sin, my transgressions. He was being wounded for me that I might be healed by his stripes. A God who hides himself. But oh, what a God to be trusted. Trusted with our eternity.

Trusted with our lives, our precious ones, all that we possess. Do you have that comfort that he's your God and savior?

Or are you demanding to know? I must know a few things before I come to this Jesus. I must know if I'm elect or not.

[47 : 13] I must know if in eternity past he chose me before I come. Of course you won't know if you're elect. No one knows they're elect until they come to Jesus.

Oh, I must know if I could have the strength to live the Christian life before I come to Jesus. Well, of course you don't. That's why you need Jesus.

He will enable you to live for him. He'll unite you to the most fruitful vine and you will bear fruit. but I must know if I've felt sorry enough yet for my sin.

Of course you haven't. Nobody has. The offense of one of our sins is so great that it took the Son of God to come and be damned on the cross just to forgive my sin.

I don't feel sorry enough for my sin. But it's as this sinner without strength, without anything good to say, without any preparation to say, I'm now ready to come to you.

[48 : 18] I come just as I am. Jesus, have mercy on me. And you know what? No one who comes to him will ever be turned away.

If you've come and he didn't turn you away, say amen. And if you come, my sinner friend, he will embrace you. He would have to deny himself to do anything less.

Let's pray. Lord God, it's well for us that you reign, that you rule over all.

You're a great God. That's way beyond our understanding. How do you do that? There's so many people, so many things that you've made and that you govern.

Forgive us for our unbelief. Forgive us for our complaining of the way your ways are in this world and in our worlds.

[49 : 21] And thank you for Jesus. Thank you that his blood cleanses from every sin, even our griping, even our unbelief. Wash us and cleanse us afresh and show us again at Calvary that smiling face behind that frowning providence.

help us to rest all upon our savior who has triumphed for us and to see that he will give us all that we need as sinners as we throw ourselves upon him, him who is life.

Thank you for the Lord Jesus. We pray in his name. Amen. Amen. Well, I said I believe it to be the best hymn on the mystery of God's providence.

It's our privilege to have it in our hymnal. It's number 21. Let's stand together and sing it about our great God and savior of providence. Number 21.