**The Hidden Providence of God – By Thailer Jimerson**

Sometimes when someone spouts a quotable line, you don’t just remember who said it but also weird details like what they were wearing or how the room was arranged. It was 2010 and J.R. Bronger (former evangelist for the Danville church) was sitting at my table for lunch. He was preaching our meeting and Amber decided to host his family for a meal. Naturally, the conversation digressed into spiritual matters and when I asked him about a topic that was baffling me, and continues to stroke my interest to this day, namely, God’s providence – he said in a wonderfully memorable way: “Providence is where God remains anonymous.”

There’s a load of theology in that single sentence.

Many people have different ideas about just how active God is in today’s world. I would even say most Christians seem to think that God is generally distant, that he stands aloof from the inner workings and happenings of our society. But the God if the Bible is anything but distant and distracted. Instead, he’s intimately at work to accomplish his purpose in the cosmos from the greatest scheme to the smallest detail.

Enter Judges 14. The God of Israel has been at work to chasten and save his people despite their evil and apathy. Samson has been raised to become the last great deliverer of the book. His mission? To begin Israel’s emancipation from the heavy chains of the pagan nation Philistia. But the Bible focuses on how God accomplishes this through Samson’s hands (and lusts) in **Judges 14.4**: “His father and mother did not know that this was from Yahweh; he was seeking for an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling in Israel.” All Samson could see was this beautiful woman from the Philistines that he desperately wanted to marry. But God saw this as an opportunity to begin Israel’s deliverance. Samson is orchestrating a marriage. God is orchestrating a deliverance.

Now, even though we, the readers, can see this, the emphasis throughout the chapter is on secrets, the hidden, what isn’t told or known. This is made clear through the literary organization in the original language: (1) they didn’t know it was of God, Jdg.14.4; (2) he didn’t tell his parents, Jdg.14.6, 9; (3) he didn’t tell his wife, Jdg.14.16. However, this greater context reveals more than it hides. Even though they, in real time, couldn’t see God’s work, the veil is lifted for us. It teaches us something about God’s providence and sovereign work, primarily, and that’s this: though we usually think in terms of the “revealed will of God” and what is apparent in Scripture, the Bible actually teaches that there are two wills of God in scripture – the revealed and the hidden.

This concept is summarized in Moses’ words in **Deuteronomy 29.29**: “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” First, there is the revealed will of God which teaches us what is right and what is wrong. This concept is found in passages like **2 Timothy 3.16-17**: “All scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete thoroughly equipped for every good work.” That is, God tells us in scripture what he loves and what he hates. But, second, there is also the hidden will of God encapsulated in the great exclamation of **Isaiah in 46.8-10**, about how God knows the end from the beginning, making all his counsel stand and come to pass.

This is what **Judges 14.4** is teaching us. Though lust, impulsiveness, disrespect for parents, and marrying outside one’s faith (all things Samson is guilty of in 14.1-3) is clearly revealed in scripture as against God’s will – yet, according to the hidden counsel of God, he allows it to accomplish the greater plan of deliverance for Israel and victory against the Philistines. Now, this doesn’t mean what Samson did was morally correct – but it does teach us that nothing will be a barrier to God’s counsel standing. He will accomplish his plan *in spite of* and often even *through* our brokenness. Case in point? The crucifixion of Jesus Christ. God will allow what he hates in order to accomplish what he loves.

Behold the God who remains anonymous.