

IMPACT

I **M**ust **P**ersonally **A**cknowledge **C**hrist **T**oday
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 path.
Proverbs 3:5-6

Passage: Isaiah “46:9-11 “Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,' Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.” [The bird of prey was Cyrus, king of Persia.]

Quote: “God of our life, there are days when the burdens we carry chafe our shoulders and weigh us down; when the road seems dreary and endless, the skies grey and threatening; when our lives have no music in them, and our hearts are lonely, and our souls have lost their courage. Flood the path with light, run our eyes to where the skies are full of promise; tune our hearts to brave music; give us the sense of comradeship with heroes and saints of every age; and so quicken our spirits that we may be able to encourage the souls of all who journey with us on the road of life, to Your honor and glory.” Augustine

God's Providence Among the Nations

Joseph's life is an encouraging illustration of God's providence in the lives of nations in general and His children in particular. God “governs and rules all things in such a way that they all cooperate and all converge upon the purpose He has established. Behind all secondary causes¹ there lurks and works the almighty will of an almighty God and a faithful Father.”² The overall purpose of (the books of) Ezra and Nehemiah is to affirm that God works sovereignly through responsible human agents to accomplish His redemptive objective. Cyrus issued his decree (to allow captive Jews to return to Jerusalem) because *the Lord* had moved his spirit.³ Those who returned came back because *the Lord* had moved their spirits.⁴ Ezra succeeded because the good hand of *God* was upon him.⁵ Artaxerxes supported the work of rebuilding because *the Lord* had put it in his spirit.⁶ Human beings acted freely and responsibly under the providence of the sovereign God to bring His plans to fruition.”⁷ Another striking example of this

truth is found in Isaiah 10 where God says, “Woe to Assyria, *the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Yet he does not mean so, Nor does his heart think so; But it is in his heart to destroy, And cut off not a few nations.*” The king of Assyria did exactly what he wanted to do and boasted of his accomplishments. God's response was, “Therefore *it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, 'I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks....' For the Lord GOD of hosts Will make a determined end in the midst of all the land. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: 'O My people, who dwell in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrian. He shall strike you with a rod and lift up his staff against you, in the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while and the indignation will cease, as will My anger in their destruction.'”⁸*

The book of Daniel reminds us that “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.”⁹ “All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. *He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: What have you done?*”⁹ North Korea, Syria, Iraq, Russia, China, Israel, the United States.... All of these are major actors in an unfolding drama that has the world's attention, and that threatens death and destruction. And yet, they all have something in common with each other and with the tiniest nations on earth. God is the Sovereign Who will have the final say. No current event is a surprise to Him! When we do not understand what God is doing in world affairs, we must trust Who He is—*The Almighty Author of His Story!*

¹ Secondary causes like Pharaoh in the O.T. and Pilate in the N.T. In doing their will, they fulfilled God's providence. ² Herman Bavinck ³ Ezra 1:1 ⁴ Ezra 1:5 ⁵ Ezra 7:9 ⁶ Ezra 7:27; A later King of Persia ⁷ Reformed Study Bible ⁸ Also see Ezra 99:6-9 ⁹ Daniel 4:25, 35