



# RIVER DEVOTIONAL

ISAIAH 33:21

“But there the LORD in majesty will be for us a place of broad rivers . . .”

## EXPERIENCE

After about 10 miles of whitewater rapids, the lower section of the Youghiogheny River has one last set of small rapids before it turns to flatwater for miles and miles. I love to take big yellow tubes and float the flatwater. Best lazy river tubing ever! The scenery is breathtaking, the river is broad and peaceful, and the cool water is refreshing on a warm day. My kids and I were tubing one afternoon when the river was particularly low and SLOW!! At first, we were having a great time, just enjoying floating, splashing, and laughing but then minutes turned to what seemed like hours. The current seemed so sluggish. Our impatience to get to the take-out grew in intensity. However, something changed when at one point we all flipped onto our stomachs on the tubes and started observing the bottom of the river. Watching the underwater terrain pass by underneath us was

fascinating and this vantage point on the river led us to some helpful contemplation and conclusions.

## CONTEMPLATION

Where rivers are broad, they tend to be peaceful. Certainly, the section we tubed together was a broad and peaceful portion of river, and we experienced a degree of restful peace as we floated with the gentle current. There is a comfort that derives from knowing where the current is flowing. There was no fear of getting lost, we knew that eventually the current inevitably would carry us to our destination. The same is true in our relationship with God, there is peace in knowing the Lord will be for us a place of broad rivers.

Unfortunately, patiently accepting the pace of the current is a whole different matter. My kids and I all agreed that our impatience to get to the destination robbed us of much peace during our tubing. Our anxious and unsettled hearts looked ahead rather than enjoying what God had for us in the moment. Attending to the river bottom, the view which God was providing right in front of us, was helpful to re-establishing perspective and peace. Our hearts were less prone to yearn to be off the river faster when we were engaged in the moment at hand. Focusing on what God was providing right there and then helped us accept the pace of the water's current. Rather than hoping that each new riverbend would be the final turn my youngest son, Ben, said, "It helps to focus on the situation, not the destination." This statement is particularly true when we view our situation with a Christ-oriented perspective.

Application: God's providence is a purposeful control of everything that sustains the existence of all creation and directs all the actions of the elements of creation toward God's own glory.<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgment of God's providence brings peace. Jonathan Edwards saw a parallel between rivers and providence. Author Rob Boss explains it this way, "Rivers, emblems of both providence and provision, which constantly pour into the ocean without raising its level, signify the infinite goodness of God through His provision and care which, in turn, tend back to Him as unending worship. It is impossible to increase the infinite God, but it is only proper for all things to flow toward Him."<sup>2</sup> Knowing that our destination is secure in God's providence helps us keep a peaceful focus in the present. How have you experienced the peace of knowing your life's circumstances are all flowing toward Him? In what ways does your experience of providence and peace direct your gaze to the glory of God in the present moment and prompt your heart to worship the Lord?

## PRAYER

Acts 16:13 – "And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate [of the city of Phillipi] to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer."

Dear Heavenly Father, like Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Lydia, I too have sought a riverside as a place to pray. Just as your providence upholds and directs this river exactly where it should go, I ask that you uphold and direct my life. I long to be increasingly receptive to your guidance

---

<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *Providence*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 34.

<sup>2</sup> Rob Boss, *God-Haunted World: The Elemental Theology of Jonathan Edwards*. (Middletown, DE: JE Society Press, 2019), 139.

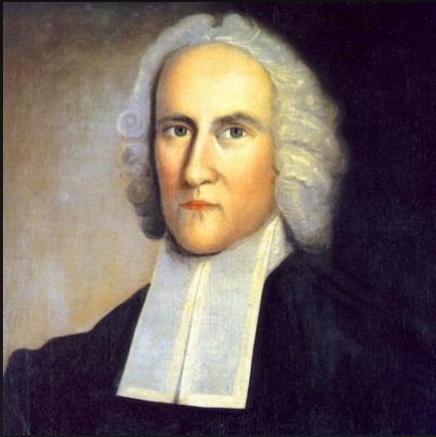
and at peace with your will. I do not want to be like a rock that stubbornly resists the current of your will. Overpower my stubborn flesh O Lord. Not my will but yours be done. Direct me eyes, my heart, my hands, and indeed, my whole self to your good purposes. I long to float contentedly in the current of your will. In Christ's name. Amen.

## CONFIRMATION

A river is always moving, and its flow is always toward an end. We are reminded by rivers of God's providentially moving his people closer and closer to Himself. Meditating on the Lord's purposeful control is a means of calming our hearts and filling us with His peace. Isaiah 33:21 says that in Jerusalem, the Lord will be for his people a place of broad rivers—a place of peace. Indeed, Jerusalem became the place of peace when Christ made peace through his shed blood. Christ Jesus is, and will be, our peace. Jonathan Edwards writes, “a great river, with its various branches, represents the course of divine providence; thus Christ, when he appeared as the Lord and Superintendent of the course of things in providence, is represented in Daniel once and again as standing in the river . . .” (see Daniel 10:4-9).<sup>3</sup> Christ is the source and end of all things. One day in the New Jerusalem, the celestial city, believers will forever enjoy this heavenly river. Revelation 22:1-2 says, “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.”

---

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Typological Writings*, [WJE 11:131](#).



## Jonathan Edwards

FROM *IMAGES OF DIVINE THINGS* #77. [[WJE 11:77-79](#)]

“77. There is a wonderful analogy between what is seen in RIVERS: their gathering from innumerable small branches beginning at a great distance one from another in different regions, some on the sides or tops of mountains, others in valleys, and all conspiring to one common issue . . . all at length discharging themselves at one mouth into the same ocean. . . . I need not run the parallel between this and the course of God's providence through all ages, from the beginning to the end of the world, when all things shall have their final issue in God, the infinite, inexhaustible fountain whence all things come at first, as all the rivers come from the sea, and whither they all shall come at last: for of him and to him are all things, and he is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. God hath provided a watercourse for the overflowing of the waters and he turns the rivers of water whithersoever it pleaseth him.”<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Typological Writings*, [WJE 11:77-79](#)