

God's Providence in Marriage

Song of Solomon 8

Marriage is a living parable of the Gospel - The husband laying his life down for the bride he loves.

So God wants your marriage not only to survive but to thrive. Tonight I want to show you the most powerful principle that you need to think on if your marriage is to be all God intended.

There is nothing that can strengthen your marriage to face the difficult times like a solid understanding of the **Sovereignty of God**.

The Bible teaches that God works in a couple of different ways.

- His **seen** hand of **Miracle**. This is when God lifts the curtain and lets you get a glimpse of his power, his glory.
- His **unseen** hand of **Providence**. This is where God causes **all things** to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

There are three understandings of Providence:

- **Islam's** view of providence is one of **fatalism**. That is to say that your choices, plans, decisions amount to nothing. God will do what God will do. So eat drink and be merry.
- The **Liberal** view of providence is that of a God who refuses to involve Himself directly in any of man's decisions or plans and God can only say what will happen based upon his ability to peer into the future. So **man** is ultimately Sovereign. Man is the decision maker.
- **The Biblical View is neither**. The Bible teaches - Man makes decisions that are incredibly important, he is accountable to God for the decisions that he makes. However God is bigger than the decisions of man and able to cause all things to work together to accomplish His ultimate purpose.
- If you believe that your choices do not matter you will be **passive**
- If you believe that your choices ultimately determine everything you will be **paralyzed**.

ILLUSTRATION: Ray Bradbury told a short story called, "The Sound of Thunder". You've probably never read the story, but you have seen the storyline depicted in dozens of shows and movies throughout the years. It's the story of an illegal time machine. A man named **Travis** for a lot of money will take people back in time. A man named Echols comes to pay the money to go back in time. Travis tells him, now when you get into the past I want you to realize there is going to be an antigravity medal path. He tells him, no matter what you do, don't get off the path. Well Echols asks, "why?". Travis says, "Well say we accidentally kill a mouse, one mouse by stepping on it. That means all of the future families of the families of that one mouse you have eliminated... a billion possible mice with the stomp of your foot. And what about all the foxes

*that need those mice to survive. For want of 10 mice a fox dies, for want of 10 foxes a lion starves and eventually, some cave man goes out to hunt for food but there is no food because you stepped on it. So the cave man starves for having no food and from his loins would have sprung ten sons from their loins 100 sons and thus onward, ultimately a billion people unborn are throttled in the womb. Rome never rises on it's 7 hills. Step on a mouse and you crush the pyramids. Washington never crosses the Delaware. There's never a United States. **SO STAY ON THE PATH.***

Point? Every single thing in history is interlocked and interlaced. Kind of stresses you out don't you? Can you possibly anticipate all the changes?

What if you marry the wrong person - do you see what that does... 1000's of other people must also marry the wrong person because of your decision.

The Bible teaches – God carries that weight, not you.

In practically every book of the bible you will see that the Author turns our attention to the Providential rule of God.

Solomon does so at the beginning and end of the story.

TEXT: Song of Solomon 1:5–6 (ESV)

⁵ I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. ⁶ Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept!

So notice that the wife says she was punished by her brothers and made to work in the vineyard. Because she had to work hard she was not able to take care of herself and make herself meet the cultural standard of beauty.

REMEMBER THAT - it will become important at the end of the story.

Now turn to Song of Solomon 8:4

⁴ I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases. ⁵ Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?

So she paints a portraits of the two of them riding together, she leaning against him. Then notice the next verse...

5b. Under the apple tree I awakened you.

Remember that throughout the book she said, "Don't awaken love until it's time" Now Solomon says under the apple tree I awakened you.

In Jewish literature trees were always significant.

- The **fig** tree was the place of meditation
- The **olive** tree was symbolic of the nation of Israel
- Well, the **apple** tree was the symbol of love

5c. There your mother was in labor with you; there she who bore you was in labor.

Now what is that all about? The **best commentaries** say this is a cryptic verse that is saying, ***“I feel that when you were born... you were born for me”***. You were born to be my wife.

Solomon is viewing his marriage through the lens of Providence.

There is a reason that **God is called El Shaddai 31 times in the book of Job**. El Shaddai means the Almighty Sovereign God. That name was the preferred name to call God in the midst of immense, intense suffering. It’s during the hard times that you need to know that **someone is driving this ship**.

When it seems like you can’t go on in marriage you need to realize that God is in control, he has you in this marriage and He has you here for a reason.

There are really only THREE other Love Stories given to us in detail in the pages of scripture - Isaac and Rebecca, Ruth and Boaz, and Joseph and Mary. Interestingly, **each of those love stories highlights the Providential hand of God in their relationship**. They are aware of it, they are watching for it....

1. Isaac and Rebecca - Gen. 24

Genesis 24:1–9 (ESV)

¹ Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years. And the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. ² And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he had, “Put your hand under my thigh, ³ that I may make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, ⁴ but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.” ⁵ The servant said to him, “Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?” ⁶ Abraham said to him, “See to it that you do not take my son back there. ⁷ The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and swore to me, ‘To your offspring I will give this land,’ **he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.**

You know the story... he went to the proper place at the proper time to meet a young lady. Guys that ought to tell you something... trusting the Sovereignty of God doesn’t mean you hide in a cave and ask God to send her to you... he was doing his part...

Genesis 24:13–15 (ESV) Abraham’s servant is praying... NOTE that believing in the Providence of God does not mean one does not pray - God who ordains the end also ordains the means.

God has ordained that you marry a certain person - but he has also ordained that you find that person by the means of prayer.

Look at what he prays...

¹³ Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ Let the young woman to whom I shall say, ‘Please let down your jar that I may drink,’ and who shall say, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels’ – let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master.” ¹⁵ **Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder.**

NOW - that was not luck, that was not good karma, the stars did not align.. that was a good God of Providence sending an angel to get these two kids together.

2. Ruth and Boaz - Ruth 2

Ruth had married a backslidden Jew named Malon. He and his family were drifting down in Boaz a place they never should have been. Ultimately, God killed the men - Malon, Killian and Ebimelech. But in the process Ruth comes to know and trust the God of Israel. So when her mother in law Naomi returns to Bethlehem she goes with her and says, “Your people will be my people, your God my God”.

Ruth 2:2–3 (ESV)

² And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor.” And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.” ³ So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, **and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz,** who was of the clan of Elimelech.

Do you see that the writer wrote that tongue in cheek... she happened to come to the field of Boaz. Listen, that was chance, what wasn’t luck, God Sovereignly brought this young Moabite woman into the lineage of the Messiah! So as you read the lineage of Jesus around Christmas you see that right there with Abraham, Issac, Jacob, David, Solomon... is this young peasant girl who happened to step into a certain field at a certain time. And I want you to know God made it happen.

3. Joseph and Mary

Matthew 1:19–20 (ESV)

¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel

of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

Do you know what I wonder? I wonder if that was the same angel that went before the servant of Abraham to make sure he found a bride for Isaac. There’s no way to know - but I can tell you. Every love story in the bible is filled with God’s unseen hand of Providence.

God getting involved providentially in the marriage for their good and his glory.

LISTEN:

Psalm 37:23, “the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD”.

Proverbs 21:1, “the Kings heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water, he turns it wheresoever he wishes”.

Eph. 1:11, “God works all things after the counsel of His will.”

Solomon says here... when your mother gave birth to you... you were born for me.

We see it even in bad marriages, “**Esther** was God’s girl married to a wicked pagan King, but remember what Mordecai said to her?, “**Perhaps you were brought here for such a time as this**”.

You HAVE to know that whatever the current state of your marriage, it is no accident that you are in that marriage. God has providentially arranged things... He has not abandoned you. He is up to something.

ALLOW GOD’S PROVIDENCE TO:

1. **Build your Faith and Ease Your Worry** - Understand you are not a ship adrift on the sea of circumstance. God is in complete control.
2. **Cause you to Watch for Evidences of God’s Hand** - One of the things that makes life exciting to me, is every time the phone rings... I wonder what God is up to.

IT’S the Glory of God to conceal a matter, it’s the glory of a king to seek it out... Do you know what that means? There is a bit of a game of hide and seek going on... God is working behind the scenes and it is YOUR GLORY to seek out how he is working.

1. **Enable you to Make the Right Decisions even when it seems impossible** -

LET ME SHOW YOU SOMETHING - Down In verse 8 the brothers are reintroduced. Remember them from **Chapter 1?** They for some reason were an authority in her life. Her dad was either not involved, or perhaps he was dead. The brothers cared for there sister and they believed it was best at this point in her life to put her to work in the vineyard. It was there that her skin became tanned deeply. She said that while tending the vineyard she hadn't kept her own vineyard.

Notice what the brothers say next...

⁸ We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for?

This verse is in the last chapter, but chronologically it is the first verse. This is a flash back to when the Shulamite was 11 or 12 years old. These brothers are talking about how they will know when she is ready to be married.

Parents have you thought about that day? When your son or daughter wants to be married. How do you know if they are ready... well this verse tells you.

⁹ If she is a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver,

A wall keeps others out. Earlier she said that she had described herself as a private garden not a public park. The brothers are saying, "If our sister learns how to properly manage her single life, to not awaken her love, to not push the limits, to not develop improper intimacy with boys.... we will know she is ready... we will build a battlement of silver... this speaks of adorning her with precious jewels on her wedding day.

9b but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.

Doors aren't made to keep people out, they are made to let people in. They open and close. This speaks of a girl that encourages her heart to go boy crazy, this is the girl that is given to infatuation and lust. This is a girl that doesn't set clear boundaries. This is a girl who treats her boyfriend like a husband.

The brothers are saying, "if she doesn't know how to live as a single, she's not ready to marry".

Well how did she live? She tells us in verse 10 -

¹⁰ I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace.

She says I wasn't a door, I was a wall. I did singleness right... and it was in that context that I found peace... By the way do you know what the Hebrew word for peace is? Shalomon. Solomon.

She says in the midst of being a WALL, guarding her heart, not awakening love it was in that context she found her Solomon. *How did God bring this young couple together?*

¹¹ Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver. ¹² My vineyard, my very own, is before me; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and the keepers of the fruit two hundred.

Do you see how this book concludes... they let the secret out. When the brothers of the shulamite put her to work in that vineyard and she thought they were mean, and her life was pitiful... what she didn't know was that a good God of Providence was working all things after the counsel of His perfect will.

That vineyard she had to work, belonged to Solomon. It was there that he fell for her.

Romans 8:28 (NASB95)

²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.