

The Mighty Hand of God

By Jim Davis

Columbia pictures debuted the cartoon Mr. MaGoo in 1960. Mr. MaGoo is legally blind with bad hearing and a quick temper. He always seems oblivious to where he is and where he is going. He may carry on a conversation with a coat-rack or walk onto a busy thoroughfare during rush hour. His exaggerated walk through many dangerous predicaments in life without harm strikes a chord with the public and makes an unattractive personality very popular. We identify Mr. MaGoo's daily ventures through danger with our own lives. We recognize that there appears to be an unseen hand that protects us from harm as we meander through the days of our lives. A time will come however, when every person will face his or her appointment with death. Perhaps it is to our advantage that the unknown factors of how and when that appointment takes place are known only to God. But it is true that our view of destiny will effect how we live.

Our destiny will be impacted by two things, they are: **how we view life** and **how we respond to life**. The Bible tells us that we are to "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God"(1 Peter 5:6). It is the unseen mighty hand of God that determines the scope and span of our lives.

How do we view life?

Some people define life as chance. To them everything is random and there is no thought or plan to be completed. If there is any design at all it is only as it is exerted through human will. If this view were the correct view then there logically should be no Mr. MaGoos. Yet there are a multitude of us. And how could one live without fearfulness knowing that their life could be taken by chance at any moment. On the opposite extreme is life defined as fate. In this view impersonal forces determine everything in life. There is no Person orchestrating the ultimate plan but only people hopelessly crushed, molded, and moved by an unseen and unknown fate. The Biblical view of God's mighty hand is that God sovereignly exerts His will in all things that come to pass in life. God created all things and He sustains all things and He is directing all things to an appointed end. This would explain how Mr. MaGoo survives. It would also explain why Peter slept peacefully when he was imprisoned by Herod and facing execution (Acts 12:6). And it would also explain why 1 Peter was written to Christians who were being persecuted for doing what is right and it encourages them to persevere in faith.

The Bible says that God's mighty hand is over the trivial things in life as well as the major events. In Matthew 10:29-30 Jesus said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." God's knowledge is complete and His rule extends beyond the decisions and actions of others. According to Acts 3:23 Jesus was "delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God," and yet He was "nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put to death." Here is an example of men doing just the opposite of Peter's command to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. Humility is to lower oneself and place yourself under while pride is the direct opposite and it means that one rises up or against. Yet God's plan is not thwarted by the sinful actions of men. His sovereign control encompasses our good decisions and actions as well as our bad

decisions and actions. His purposes will be accomplished.

God's power is exerted over all things. We see His power over death in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The miracles of Christ and the prophets display God's power over nature. Biblical prophecy and the predictions recorded in Scripture tell us that God is in control of history and of future events. We find many places in the Bible where seeming accidents from human viewpoint describe a tapestry of events woven into God's purposes for His people (see the book of Esther, Life of Joseph, David etc...).

Luke Short immigrated to the United States from England long before our independence. He was a farmer in New England and one day meditating about his appointment with death. He recalled a sermon that he had heard John Flavel preach in Dartmouth when he was fifteen years old. The sermon was preached eighty-five years earlier. Luke Short was one hundred years old when he received the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. Although I do not know the events that led to his attending that particular church meeting so many years before, I do not believe that it was simply by chance.

How do we respond to life?

Peter commanded us to "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God,"(1 Peter 5:6). The idea is that we are to yield to God's plan for our lives. When we humble ourselves we bow or make ourselves low. Under God's hand means that we are yielding to God's will as it is expressed through His word. And we are also acknowledging that God is in control over all events, the good and bad things and even the minute details of life.

In the New Testament book of 1 Peter, Jewish believers dispersed from their homes find themselves in various predicaments that causes them distress. Peter identified these predicaments as trials and taught that they were being distressed for a little while if necessary that the proving of their faith may result in praise and honor and glory when Jesus Christ comes again (1 Peter 1:6-7). They are exhorted not to be surprised when trials come for their testing as though some strange and unusual thing is happening to them (1 Peter 4:12-13).

Our troubles are not chance but God's providence at work. Providence is God's divine direction in our life. Our response to His direction should be humility, humility to the commands of His word and humility to His plan for our life. Good and bad things will unfold, yet God asks us to humble ourselves and believe that His plan for us is good. It is the proper course. It will ultimately prevail over bad. It will lead to glory. Our faith is more precious to God than gold (1 Peter 1:7). It is for all of these reasons and more that our response should be one of trust.

Conclusion

Trust in God's providence quickens our faith. Trust in God's providence impassions our hope for the future. It is more than believing there is a God that will one day come and make things right. It believes that God is intimately involved in the details of our lives. We will not always understand what He is doing but we can always trust that it will turn out for good. He loves us and His plan for us is the best plan.

God's mighty hand may keep us away from "the valley of the shadow of death." Sometimes His mighty hand may take us into and then deliver us out of "the valley of the shadow of death." One day his mighty hand will take us through "the valley of the shadow of death" and into life everlasting.

When we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God we will not be anxious about

life. We will not speed in our cars thinking we will miss something. We will not buy things on impulse fearing we will not get something we need. We will not wring our hands over decisions we have made wondering that we may have messed up. We will not always strive to possess things believing that there is some thing that will provide for us the ultimate satisfaction.

Meditation on the unseen hand of God creates boldness in our actions. It banishes fearfulness in regard to what wicked people can do to us. It produces confidence in our destiny and no fear of our appointment with death.