

Ten Things God Is Doing in Your Life

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Romans 1:16-28 RSV

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.”

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.

So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct.

I think we're all familiar with the old joke that goes something like this: A young man complains to his Dad that he hasn't done enough to help him get started in life. “What do you mean?” asks his father. “Didn't you mother and I support you, feed and clothe you while you were growing up, take care of you whenever you got sick, drive you to school events, buy your first car, and pay for your college?” “Yeah,” answers the son. “But what have you done for me lately?”

That might be the way we sometimes feel about God. “Yeah, you sent your Son to die on the cross to save me from sin, and you gave me the promise of eternal life — but what have you done for me lately?”

God can sometimes appear remote, indifferent to our concerns and uninvolved in our lives. Placing our needs before him in prayer, we may wonder whether he hears us at all — or, if he hears us, whether he cares to answer. Of course we understand that “his ways are not our ways” (Isaiah 55:8), and God may have an outcome in mind that differs from the one we envision in our pleading with him. Nevertheless, it's frustrating to have to deal — day after day, month after month, or year after year — with issues in which we would like to see God acting on our behalf. Or acting at all, period.

Perhaps our problem can be traced to an incomplete idea of who God is. We may have been taught, over the years, that he's like a gigantic angel hovering in the sky above us, just waiting to respond to our plea. If that's our understanding of God, we're bound to be disappointed. When we consider the vast extent of the universe God has created — 100 billion galaxies and counting — that old picture of God greatly reduces him in scope and power. It's hard to get that sort of mental picture out of our head, but understanding how God works in our lives might depend on replacing that image with a concept of God that's more “true to life.” So I thought it would be a good idea just to review *ten things God is doing in your life and mine, right now*. The number ten isn't important; it could be more than ten things, I just picked a round number.

Upholding His Universe

Let's start with the basics. Where are we? We're on a planet in the midst of an immense universe. Philosophers have often asked the question, Why is there something, rather than nothing? But *there is something*, and that's a mystery. Scientists used to think the universe was eternal, but since the discovery

of the expanding universe and the echo of its creation in the background radiation, scientists now understand that the universe had a beginning, just like the Bible says: “In the beginning God created.” That’s fine, but according to some theories that could have been fourteen billion years ago. What has God done about it lately?

When you stop to think about it, it’s not enough just to “get the ball rolling.” Something has to *keep it going*, or it stops. When you think about the universe, something has to be holding it up, so to speak, or it would collapse into chaos. Scientists don’t really know what that is; they speak of “dark matter” and “dark energy” — that is, “stuff” that can’t be detected electromagnetically. They only know it’s there because of its gravitational effects on other things. That invisible stuff makes up 95% of the mass of the universe; what holds that up?

We’re reminded of Hebrews 1:2-3: “In these last days [God] has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, *upholding the universe* by his word of power.” So that’s the first thing, the basic thing, God has been doing lately. He’s upholding his universe.

Managing His Universe

So we have a universe because of what God is doing right now. But, secondly, the universe has to be managed and organized. There are four universal forces: electromagnetism, the “strong nuclear force, the “weak nuclear force,” and gravity which is the weakest of all. Nobody understands what any of these things are — for instance, what’s gravity? We see it working, but we don’t know what it is. And the amazing thing is that all these forces have to be perfectly balanced with each other. There are actually more than thirty such physical properties, including the speed of light. If these factors weren’t precisely balanced the universe couldn’t exist as we know it. Scientists call this the “anthropic principle,” or the “fine tuning” of the universe.

If you turn that dial on your radio just a little bit, you lose the station you’re listening to; imagine if you have to turn thirty different dials each to a precise point to get the station to come in. The universe is like that; if any of these dials had been turned a hair to the left or the right, we wouldn’t exist. God is maintaining that balance, managing his creation. That’s the second thing he’s been doing for us, lately.

God made a universe, and according to the Bible he called it *good*, and he continues to manage it. So the very existence of all things is a cause for rejoicing in God. Maltbie D. Babcock expressed our attitude in his famous hymn:

*This is my Father’s world, and to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres. . . .
This is my Father’s world: He shines in all that’s fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass;
He speaks to me everywhere.* (Maltbie D. Babcock, 1901)

Giving Life

That brings us to the third point: God is giving us life. Evolutionists claim that life just came about by accident; the earth was just a rock, and somehow life just emerged from rocks. But there’s a big difference between a rock and a living creature; what is that difference, and where does it come from? We’ve all heard of the DNA code, the information hidden in the cells of even the simplest living organisms. That information controls how living beings develop and reproduce; it has to be incredibly complex information, and also information specifically sequenced, like computer code, to produce a certain result.

Biological science has no natural explanation for where this information came from. There aren’t enough elementary particles in the universe to interact with each other, and there hasn’t been enough time since the universe began, for enough events to have taken place to produce it just by accident. Or, as scientists would put it, the “probability resources” of the entire universe aren’t great enough to explain even a fraction of what they call this “specified complexity.” But we know from experience that information is produced by *intelligence*. The life-giving information hidden in all creatures is the work of the mind of God, just as Paul says in Acts 17:25: “He himself gives to all men life and breath and everything.”

Providing for Our Needs

So we're alive, because of what God is doing for us now, and that's great. But since we're alive we need things to live on; we need what theologians call *the providence of God*, and it's at work today. That's our fourth point: God is providing for our needs on an ongoing basis. As Jesus pointed out, the nourishing rain and the warming sunlight fall upon everyone, whether or not a person seems to deserve them (Matthew 5:45). The seasons come and go, seeds spring to life and produce crops, farm animals are born to give milk or meat, natural resources come forth from the earth to provide raw materials for human industry.

If the Creator wasn't upholding his creation to make these things happen, and if he hadn't fine-tuned it in exactly the way he has, our life wouldn't be possible. Not only that, but the fact that we've been placed on this earth with the opportunity to make something of our lives is evidence that God is at work, continuing to sustain and undergird the support structure for human life.

Working Through People

I guess you've all heard the story of the man marooned on the roof of his house by a rising flood. He prayed that God would rescue him. Then someone swam to him with an extra life jacket. "No," said the man, "I don't need that. God's going to help me." Then somebody came by in a rowboat and told him to get in, but he refused. "I don't need your help; God will rescue me." The waters were still rising when a helicopter flew over him and dropped a ladder, but he waved it off, shouting, "I'm waiting for God to save me." Finally the water swept over the top of the house, and the man drowned. As he entered heaven, he complained to God. "I prayed; why didn't you rescue me?" "What do you mean?" God replied. "I sent you someone with a life jacket, then I sent a rowboat, then I sent a helicopter!"

This is our fifth point: God provides for our needs — but usually he does that *through other people*. Other human beings brought us to birth; other people took care of us as we grew up; someone else provided for our education and employment; other men and women took care of us when we were ill; and it was another person who led each of us to faith in Christ. That's an obvious way God is working, every day, in your life and mine. More often than not his answer to prayer comes through people who care for us and help us along life's way. His answer to your health needs, for example, might come through your physician. And we can be the answer to another's prayer; as Paul puts it, "God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

Working Miracles

Now consider a sixth thing God has been doing for us, lately. When we talk about what we'd like him to do for us there are certainly times when we'd like him to work a miracle. We're facing a serious illness, for example, for which medical professionals don't offer much help. Or we hit a major financial reversal, and don't see how we can recover because our resources are limited. So sometimes we pray for miracles, and then we might lose faith when no miracle takes place. For more than two centuries our European and North American culture, influenced by the philosophy of "scientific materialism," has disbelieved in miracles. They just don't happen, people feel, because God — if he even exists — never suspends the laws of physics.

But that's only the case in our culture. In the "majority world" of Asia, Africa and Latin America people still believe in miracles, and *depend on them* because they have no other resource. In a massive two-volume work published a few years ago, Craig Keener documents thousands of testimonies, world-wide, to things God had done in answer to prayer. These are events that can't be explained except through God's direct intervention, in ways no one understands — things like sudden recovery from illness where modern medical care isn't available, or where physicians are available but haven't given any hope of recovery. Miracles are no substitute for seeking medical care when we can get it; for that matter, financial miracles are no substitute for wise management of our money. Divine intervention doesn't come automatically in response to a particular prayer formula; it always comes at God's initiative. Nevertheless, *miracles do happen*.

Establishing Truth

Our seventh item is this: God is establishing truth. Truth seems intangible, something we can't grab hold of or actually observe at work. But truth is the same as reality; falsehood and unreality are what *don't* exist. Truth can be compared with light. Light always dispels darkness, which has no defense against it because it isn't really anything at all. As the Apostle John wrote, "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). It's God who establishes reality, because reality is grounded in his work as Creator. The laws of mathematics don't change, for example, nor do the principles of logic. Two plus two still equals four, even if some people think it equals five. Something can't be both true and not-true at the same time; that's called the "law of non-contradiction." A computer byte is either turned on or it's turned off; that's the principle of digital information, the difference between one thing and another.

And it was God who invented information in the first place, when he created the universe by dividing one thing from another — light from darkness, "waters" below from "waters" above. Two people of the same sex may claim to be married, but that's not a marriage no matter how many courts claim it is because the necessary difference isn't there. Whether people believe it or not, *reality is what it is*, and it will eventually prevail over what is not — whatever tries to come against it. As the apostle Paul wrote, "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4 KJV). We can process information, and come to the knowledge of the truth, because of the continuous work of God.

Executing Justice

If the Creator is in control of his universe, then we ought to see him at work establishing justice in our world, and that is our eighth point. In the Bible, justice and judgment are the same thing. God has structured the universe, and human life, in such a way that *actions lead to consequences*, so even harmful events will eventually reveal his action. A nation that discards values such as responsibility, perseverance, industriousness, generosity, honesty, or respect for human life will degenerate into chaos. This judgment is what the Bible knows as the wrath of God — the inevitable consequence of ignoring his pattern for human conduct. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth" (Romans 1:18).

Even when events don't seem good to us, God is still executing his justice. Eventually those who obey God will be vindicated by the success of their life style. As Paul goes on to write, "He will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life" (Romans 2:6-7). Meanwhile, we can see God at work in all types of circumstances. Even bad things that happen reveal his activity, because "God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Clarifying Your Purpose

Let's go to point nine. What's God doing today? He is *clarifying your purpose*, and mine. Did you ever wonder why God put *you* here on this earth? Perhaps you've asked this question because you've run into serious problems and become discouraged. But thinking people, whether disappointed with life or not, have always asked, "Why am I here? What's my purpose in life?" The church has had a traditional answer to this question. "What is the chief end and aim of man?" The answer is, "To glorify God and enjoy him forever." That's a good answer, but the first chapter of the Bible puts it another way:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26-28).

The Lord reaffirmed this purpose to Abraham. He said, "I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall

possess the gate of their enemies, and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.” (Genesis 22:17-18). Then, centuries later, the Apostle Paul tells us, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, ‘Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree’ — that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles [that’s us], that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:13-14).

In other words, your purpose and mine is to realize the image of God in ourselves; as Peter says, God “has granted to us . . . [to] become partakers of the divine nature” (1 Peter 1:4). And that gives each of us dominion over the circumstances of life. Our purpose is *to live in the continual blessing of the Lord*, and in this way to witness to his glory and deliverance to those about us.

Telling Your Story

Now, finally, we come to one more item in our list of ten things God is doing for us today. We often sing, “I love to tell the story of Jesus and his love.” We need to do that — but have we ever considered that God might be *telling a story about us*? Recall the vision the Apostle John has of the last judgment, in the Book of Revelation: “Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it . . . And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done” (Revelation 20:11-12).

Today God is telling your story, and mine, and it’s being written down in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Have we received with gratitude all the things our Father is constantly doing for us, or are we complaining because he “hasn’t done enough for us lately”? Are we walking in faith, in order to experience the continual blessing of God — or are we cringing in fear because we doubt his goodness, made known above all in the way he opened up new life for us through the cross and resurrection of Jesus? When we think about what God is doing for us, one declaration covers it all: “Jesus is Lord, and we belong to him!”

So let’s quickly review ten things God is going today in your life, and mine:

- Upholding his universe
- Managing his universe
- Giving life
- Providing for our needs
- Working through people
- Working miracles
- Establishing truth
- Executing justice
- Clarifying our purpose
- Telling our story.

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