American Decency Association PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org

Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts November 2017

In Praise of Heavy **Providences**

By: Mike Pohlman



the right path to choose.

of ease.

We get a powerful picture you say in your heart, "My of why God orchestrates things this way when we remember Moses' words this wealth." You shall of merciful warning to Israel in Deuteronomy 8:11-19:

the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and LORD your God and go his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are Today, I'm struck anew full and have built good with how contrary to the houses and live in them, ish. world is the Christian life. and when your herds and I'm thinking specifically flocks multiply and your about how the world will silver and gold is multialmost without fail define plied and all that you have the best way forward in is multiplied, then your life as the way of ease. heart be lifted up, and That is, the path of least you forget the LORD your resistance is, by definition, God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who This is not so in God's led you through the great economy. The Bible is full and terrifying wilderness, of reminders about how, with its fiery serpents in the call of God, things and scorpions and thirsty will be difficult rather than ground where there was easy, complex rather than no water, who brought you simple, strenuous rather water out of the flinty rock, than leisurely. Indeed, it's who fed you in the wilderfor good reasons that the ness with manna that your Bible often calls us to en- fathers did not know, that dure and persevere—con- he might humble you and ditions irrelevant for times test you, to do you good in the end. Beware lest them "heavy" because.

power and the might of mv hand have gotten me remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his Take care lest you forget covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. And if you forget the after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely per-

> Beware times of ease, Moses warns, for it is uniquely then that we are tempted to forget God (notice how Moses savs nothing of the Israelites forgetting God in the "great and terrifying wilderness"). And the result of forgetting God is to "surely perish." Indeed, the stakes could not be higher.

> So it is that God brings into our lives "heavy providences" as a means of nurturing in us "God remembrance." I call these circumstances "providences" because it's God who brings them. I call

American Decency Association PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org

Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts November 2017

In Praise of Heavy **Providences**

By: Mike Pohlman



world is the Christian life. the right path to choose.

economy. The Bible is full of reminders about how, in the call of God, things will be difficult rather than simple, strenuous rather than leisurely. Indeed, it's of ease.

We get a powerful picture you say in your heart, "My Israel in Deuteronomy 8:11-19:

the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and LORD your God and go his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when them and worship them, I you have eaten and are solemnly warn you today Today, I'm struck anew full and have built good with how contrary to the houses and live in them, ish. and when your herds and I'm thinking specifically flocks multiply and your Beware times of ease, Moabout how the world will silver and gold is multialmost without fail define plied and all that you have the best way forward in is multiplied, then your life as the way of ease. heart be lifted up, and Moses says nothing of the That is, the path of least you forget the LORD your resistance is, by definition, God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who This is not so in God's led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was easy, complex rather than no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilder- of nurturing in us "God refor good reasons that the ness with manna that your Bible often calls us to en- fathers did not know, that dure and persevere—con- he might humble you and ditions irrelevant for times test you, to do you good who brings them. I call in the end. Beware lest them "heavy" because,

of why God orchestrates power and the might of things this way when we my hand have gotten me remember Moses' words this wealth." You shall of merciful warning to remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his Take care lest you forget covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. And if you forget the after other gods and serve that you shall surely per-

> ses warns, for it is uniquely then that we are tempted to forget God (notice how Israelites forgetting God in the "great and terrifying wilderness"). And the result of forgetting God is to "surely perish." Indeed, the stakes could not be higher.

So it is that God brings into our lives "heavy providences" as a means membrance." I call these circumstances "providences" because it's God

well, that's what they stood at the graveside of are—circumstances are not easy and call for a deep dependence on God for His strength to endure. operate this way. Knowing that this most exalts His holy character and results in our eternal good, God will have His people glory Him.

Calling All Pilgrims

dence came into my life revealed. approximately two years ago when my four schoolage children and I said goodbye to their mother I share this story because and my wife of sixteen I believe the American years as her nearly fiveyear battle with breast this perspective on life cancer came to an end. Just after 7 p.m. on February 2, 2014, Julia Pohlman hymn that sings, "This great pursuit. Knowing received the "outcome of world is not my home, I'm [her] faith, the salvation of just a passing through." [her soul]" (1 Peter 1:9).

ments of Julia's earthly life home and here I'm putting but throughout her cancer down roots!" The words fight, we were reminded of the prophet Amos are of how fleeting is our life a solemn warning to us on earth. Through surger- today: ies, CT scans, PET scans, MRIs, blood draws, and Woe to those who are at near-weekly chemother- ease in Zion. . . . Woe to apy treatments, we were those who lie on beds of reminded that this world is ivory and stretch them-

that my beloved, pleading with the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort to help our grieving family, It is fitting that God would never has heaven felt so

anything else, has a way of focusing your attention (that is, depend) only on on eternal realities. And this, of course, is good. We need to be mercifully weaned from this world so that we can see some-One such heavy provi- thing of the glory to be

At Ease In America

church desperately needs the perspective captured in the profoundly simple But by and large, the evangelical church in America Not only in the final mo- sings, "This world is my

not our home. And when I selves out on their couch-

es, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall, who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp . . . who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved Cancer, perhaps unlike over the ruin of Joseph! (Amos 6:1, 4-6)

> What the church needs and, therefore, what the world needs are Christians who identify as pilgrims, feel like sojourners, and exist as exiles. When people look at us, do they see a people gloriously uneasy in this world because we're longing for another?

The Pursuit Of God

Of course, we long for the city of God because we long for God. He is our this helps this sojourner rejoice in heavy providences, for God is using them to nurture in me a worshipful remembrance of Him—the One in whose presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore (Ps. 16:11).

[Used with permission: Tabletalk Magazine, October are—circumstances that are not easy and call for a deep dependence on God for His strength to endure. It is fitting that God would operate this way. Knowing that this most exalts His holy character and results in our eternal good, God will have His people glory (that is, depend) only on Him.

Calling All Pilgrims

One such heavy provi-

dence came into my life approximately two years ago when my four schoolage children and I said goodbye to their mother and my wife of sixteen years as her nearly fiveyear battle with breast cancer came to an end. Just after 7 p.m. on February 2, 2014, Julia Pohlman received the "outcome of [her] faith, the salvation of [her soul]" (1 Peter 1:9).

Not only in the final moments of Julia's earthly life but throughout her cancer of how fleeting is our life on earth. Through surgeries, CT scans, PET scans, MRIs, blood draws, and near-weekly chemotherapy treatments, we were those who lie on beds of reminded that this world is ivory and stretch them-

my beloved, pleading with the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort to help our grieving family, never has heaven felt so

anything else, has a way of focusing your attention on eternal realities. And What the church needs this, of course, is good. We need to be mercifully so that we can see something of the glory to be revealed.

At Ease In America

I share this story because I believe the American church desperately needs this perspective on life the perspective captured in the profoundly simple hymn that sings, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through." But by and large, the evangelical church in America sings, "This world is my home and here I'm putting down roots!" The words presence is fullness of joy fight, we were reminded of the prophet Amos are a solemn warning to us (Ps. 16:11). today:

ease in Zion. . . . Woe to not our home. And when I selves out on their couch-

well, that's what they stood at the graveside of es, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall, who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp . . . who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved Cancer, perhaps unlike over the ruin of Joseph! (Amos 6:1, 4–6)

> and, therefore, what the world needs are Christians weaned from this world who identify as pilgrims, feel like sojourners, and exist as exiles. When people look at us, do they see a people gloriously uneasy in this world because we're longing for another?

The Pursuit Of God

Of course, we long for the city of God because we long for God. He is our great pursuit. Knowing this helps this sojourner rejoice in heavy providences, for God is using them to nurture in me a worshipful remembrance of Him—the One in whose and pleasures forevermore

with permission: [Used Woe to those who are at Tabletalk Magazine, October