

**The Providence of God (9)**  
**God's Special Acts of Providence toward His Elect (part 1)**

Let us turn to read a portion of Scripture that embodies the theme that we desire to emphasize in our hearing. In Jeremiah 31:1ff we read God's Word respecting a remnant of Jewish people that God had purposed to preserve through His judgment upon Judah and ultimately restore unto Himself. It is a promise of future salvation of a remnant of people, whom God had chosen. He had set His love upon them, therefore, He would deal with them mercifully and graciously, bestowing freely His salvation upon them. This remnant of Judah are identified here by various terms. They are identified as a restored "Zion", which is not only a reference to Jerusalem, but it is a term that describes God's covenant people, who are the objects of His loving act of redemption.

"At the same time," says the LORD, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people."

<sup>2</sup>Thus says the LORD:

"The people who survived the sword  
Found grace in the wilderness—  
Israel, when I went to give him rest."

<sup>3</sup>The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying:

"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

<sup>4</sup>Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt,  
O virgin of Israel!

You shall again be adorned with your tambourines,  
And shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice.

<sup>5</sup>You shall yet plant vines on the mountains of Samaria;  
The planters shall plant and eat them as ordinary food.

<sup>6</sup>For there shall be a day  
When the watchmen will cry on Mount Ephraim,  
'Arise, and let us go up to Zion,  
To the LORD our God.'"

<sup>7</sup>For thus says the LORD:

"Sing with gladness for Jacob,  
And shout among the chief of the nations;  
Proclaim, give praise, and say,  
'O LORD, save Your people,  
The remnant of Israel!'

<sup>8</sup>Behold, I will bring them from the north country,  
And gather them from the ends of the earth,  
Among them the blind and the lame,  
The woman with child  
And the one who labors with child, together;  
A great throng shall return there.

<sup>9</sup>They shall come with weeping,

And with supplications I will lead them.  
I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters,  
In a straight way in which they shall not stumble;  
For I am a Father to Israel,  
And Ephraim is My firstborn. (Jer. 31:1-9)

Jeremiah was prophet who spoke on behalf of God to Judah during a period of great difficulty for the nation and the people. God had destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel over century before for having broken the Mosaic covenant upon which it had related with God. Judah did not learn the lesson of her rebellious “sister”, but also rebelled against God, also having broken its covenant relationship with God. As a result God had also brought His judgment upon Judah, having brought His instrument, the king and armies of Babylon to ravage the land, destroy the city of Jerusalem, and destroy and dismantle the temple that Solomon had built 400 years before. The Lord had removed this people, who were the objects of His wrath, from the land that He had given to them long before. The land was empty and void, the survivors were taken in bondage to far off Babylon. But here in Jeremiah 31 we read that God had not purposed to extinguish entirely the people of Judah. There were some, whom God refers to as “a remnant”, whom He purposed to restore to their land and to them bring salvation through a Savior who would initiate a new covenant between them and their God. Here in Jeremiah 31:1-9 we read of the special affection, attention, and work of God that He intended to do on behalf of this chosen remnant. Because He loved them with an everlasting love, He would spare them, restore them to the land, and bring them into a saving relationship with Himself.

The New Testament writers argue that this promised remnant was a reference to those Jews who would later experience the saving work of Jesus Christ, ones who embraced Him as their Lord and Savior (cf. Rom. 11:1-6). The writer to the Hebrews applied this promise of salvation to a remnant of Jews to the new covenant that God had established with His people through Jesus Christ, who had initiated the new covenant the night He was betrayed and arrested, which He brought into realization through His death on Calvary the following day (Cf Jer. 31:31ff with Hebrews 8:8ff).

But the point that we desire to stress this morning, is the special providence of God that God would bring to pass in order to accomplish His purpose of saving His people. Because He loved His elect with an everlasting love, He had purposed to save them unto Himself. This involved God sparing them through His judgments upon the nation for its broken covenant. This involved preserving them through the exile and through their bondage in Babylon. This involved God eventually raising up a king of Persia, King Cyrus, to cause them to return to their land. This involved inclining their hearts and lives to repent of their sins and believe in God’s promise and later fulfilment of promise to bring forth Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. This involved drawing them unto Jesus Christ in faith. All of these works of God’s providence were prior to them coming to salvation. These were special, loving acts of providence extended only to those whom God had in His sovereign pleasure, His eternal love, purposed to save from their sins unto Himself.

Now in our study of God’s providence we have considered how God generally governs the affairs of His world and all the creatures in His world. What we have considered thus far may be termed ***God’s ordinary works of providence***. But in our consideration of the Bible’s teaching of God’s providence, it is important for us to understand that God deals differently in His providence with those who are His people and with those who are not. We might assume that God deals with all people alike. But this is not so. God the Father has set His love upon those whom He chose in eternity to be saved, those whom He gave as gifts to His Son. They are objects of God’s electing love. He regards them and deals with them in ways that He does not regard the non-elect, those whom He has passed over, whom He determined to leave them in their sins to their just condemnation. Now, over against what God does ordinarily with respect to all people indiscriminately, when we speak of God’s providence respecting His people in particular, we are addressing ***God’s special works of providence***. This is reflected in this passage of Jeremiah 31:1ff and it is reflected throughout the Scriptures also.

Now regarding God’s special acts of providence, first let us recognize and affirm that...

## I. God distinguishes between His elect and all others.

The entire Bible records this distinction between the Lord's people and those who are not. From some of the earliest recorded words of God in Genesis, we learn that in this world there are two peoples, the people of God and the people of the devil. God had announced to the serpent in Genesis 3:

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Gen 3:15)

**The Reformation Study Bible** comments on this verse and its implications:

Humanity is now divided into two communities: the redeemed, who love God, and the reprobate, who love self (John 8:33, 44; 1 John 3:8). The division finds immediate expression in the hostility of Cain against Abel (Ch. 4). This prophecy finds ultimate fulfillment in the triumph of the Second Adam, and the community united with Him, over the forces of sin, death, and the devil (Dan. 7:13, 14; Rom. 5:12-19; 16:20; 1 Cor. 15:45-49; Heb. 2:14, 15).<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the Scriptures the distinction between the elect and the reprobate is either stated, implied, or assumed. One of the places in which the distinction between the people of God and others is clearly seen is in the event of the exodus, when God delivered Israel from bondage to the Egyptians. Let us turn to read several passages of Scripture. In these selections of God's Word, I would like us to attend to the distinction that God makes between those who are His people and those who are not His people. The three passages are all from the early portion of the Book of Exodus. Here we read of God showing forth the distinction that He has between Israel, His covenant people, and the Egyptians, who were the oppressors of His people. The first selection is **Exodus 8:20-24**.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water. Then say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. <sup>21</sup>Or else, if you will not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand. <sup>22</sup>*And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, in order that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the land.* <sup>23</sup>*I will make a difference between My people and your people.* Tomorrow this sign shall be." <sup>24</sup>And the LORD did so. Thick swarms of flies came into the house of Pharaoh, into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt. The land was corrupted because of the swarms of flies.

Let us next read **Exodus 9:1-5**.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and tell him, 'Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. <sup>2</sup>For if you refuse to let them go, and still hold them, <sup>3</sup>behold, the hand of the LORD will be on your cattle in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep-- a very severe pestilence. <sup>4</sup>*And the LORD will make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt. So nothing shall die of all that belongs to the children of Israel.*" <sup>5</sup>Then the LORD appointed a set time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land."

The last passage of Exodus that we will read is **Exodus 11:4-8**.

Then Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; <sup>5</sup>and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne,

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<sup>1</sup> *The Reformation Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 14.

even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals. <sup>6</sup>Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again. <sup>7</sup>***But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, that you may know that the LORD does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.*** <sup>8</sup>And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, and all the people who follow you!’ After that I will go out.” Then he went out from Pharaoh in great anger.

We see that God desired to show the clear distinction of peoples for whom He had regard by sparing the children of Israel from the Egyptians, who were under God’s wrath.

Now we should make an important point at this juncture. Although God clearly distinguished between the people of Egypt and His people of Israel in that He spared His terrible judgments from His people, we should not take this as the normative way in which He deals with His people. Oh yes, it is true that God spares His people from the manifestation of His wrath upon them that believe the gospel, but for the most part the people of God encounter and experience the same kinds of “terrible” experiences as do non-believers. But here in Exodus God chose to spare His people in order to illustrate and demonstrate that He has a regard for them that He does not have for those who are not His people.

We also read in the New Testament of the distinction between the two peoples--those who are elect and those who are not. We read in John 17 of our Lord’s Prayer to His Father in which He prays for the people that the Father had given Him. Before us is recorded the last prayer of our Lord Jesus before He was arrested, tried, and crucified. He prayed to His heavenly Father on behalf of His people. This is the reason this is often referred to as our Lord’s high priestly prayer.

First, ***Jesus prayed that His Father would glorify Him*** (17:1-5). We read,

<sup>1</sup>Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, <sup>2</sup>as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. <sup>3</sup>And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. <sup>4</sup>I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. <sup>5</sup>And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

Our Lord Jesus asked that His Father would glorify Him. What He requested was a position and power of authority over the world. And this, of course, was granted to the Lord Jesus upon His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into heaven; He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus Christ was crowned as King over heaven and earth. His request for authority was not a selfish one, for He desired to have this authority so that He might fulfill the will of His Father in heaven. He desired that His Father would be glorified, and so He requested that He might be glorified so that He could bring to pass His Father’s purposes, thereby glorifying His Father. All legitimate authority is not to be used for one’s own self-promotion or to place oneself in a position in order to be served by others; rather, authority is to be the privilege and responsibility that God gives in order to serve others. The Lord Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth and He uses that authority in service of His Father and in service of His people.

We read that the chief desire of our Lord for authority is that He might bring about ***the salvation of God’s elect***. Clearly that is what He says to the Father in verse 2:

“Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.”

He would need to be given sovereign rule over all of humanity, the elect and non-elect alike, so that He could give eternal life to His own from among the fallen human race. He described the nature of eternal life as knowing God the Father and His Son, that is, eternal life is an existence lived out in a relationship with God among God’s people. Our Lord then announced the fact that He had all but completed the work on earth

necessary for the redemption of His people, the implication being that He was due to die on their behalf. But now He would need to be glorified so that He could apply the benefits of His life and death to them.

After having prayed for Himself, next in **verses 6** through **19** we read that our Lord prayed specifically for His people. First, Jesus described what He had done for His disciples and what their response had been to Him; this is in **verses 6** through **8**.

<sup>6</sup>“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. <sup>7</sup>Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. <sup>8</sup>For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

The Lord Jesus had revealed the Father and His Father’s word, or His Father’s will, to His elect while He had ministered among them. Their response was one of faith, obedience, and perseverance. Jesus described them as having “known”, “received”, and “kept” the Father’s Word. They had believed in Jesus as having come forth from the Father to reveal the Father unto them.

The Lord Jesus prayed that the Father would preserve His people unto their full and final salvation. We read of this in **John 17:9-12**.

<sup>9</sup>“I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. <sup>10</sup>And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. <sup>12</sup>While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Here we read that the Lord distinguished His people from all others. The Father had given them to Him. He prayed for them. He prayed for their safety and security. He prayed that the Father would preserve them unto their final glorification.

The Lord Jesus did not ask the Father to have mercy on all indiscriminately, but He prayed for His own, the ones whom the Father had given to belong to Him and His kingdom. He prayed that they would be “kept”, or preserved. The Lord does not lose one of His sheep. They are His. His Father has given them to Him. His Father has bound Himself to keep them for His Son; they are kept through the Father’s name. Jesus had not lost any of His own, except for Judas Iscariot, but that too, was in the plan of God and due to God’s decree.

Their need to be preserved was due to the fact that they are no longer of the world. Just as Jesus Himself was not of this fallen world, so His followers, who have heard and kept His Word, are not of this world. In fact, the world hates them. They no longer belong with the fallen humanity. They have been chosen and called by God out of the world. They had been instructed in God’s Word leading them further from association and fellowship with the world. They do not belong with the world any longer. They belong to and belong with their God.

But the time had not arrived for them to be removed from the world, so our Lord prayed that His own would be preserved in the world. They were to be in the world but not of the world. While they continued in the world they were to be preserved and prepared for the time when they would be taken out of the world and brought into the presence of their God to Whom they belong and in Whose presence they belong.

We then read that Jesus prayed that the Father would sanctify them in preparation for their entrance into His presence (17:13-19).

<sup>13</sup>But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. <sup>14</sup>I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup>I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup>Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

Here we read that our Lord Jesus prayed that His disciples would be sanctified. Sanctification involves personal responsibility. We are to be diligent to use the means that God has provided so that we might become increasingly holy before Him, that is, that we might become more sanctified unto Him in thought and behavior. But ultimately, sanctification is a work of God's grace in us, that is why our Lord prayed, "Father, *sanctify them by Your truth.*"

But God uses means. And the means mentioned here is *His Word*, that is, His Word as we have preserved for us in the Bible, the Holy Scriptures. If you are to be sanctified, the Father will have to perform it through His grace. If you are to be sanctified, you will need to become so through His Word.

As believers, we know that God has *chosen* us and has given us to His Son. God has *called* us out of the world so that we might know Him and live before Him for eternity. In *separating* us, that is, sanctifying us, from the fallen world unto Himself, He uses His Word to reveal wherein our hearts and minds were in accordance with the world that hates Him. As we learn His will and as He enables us to correct our error and our behaviour so that our thinking and actions are in accordance with His Word, we become more like Him and His Son, Who loved us and died for us to redeem us from our darkness and wickedness.

We then read that *our Lord prayed for all future believers.* (17:20-26)

<sup>20</sup>"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup>that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. <sup>22</sup>And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one. I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

<sup>24</sup>Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup>O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. <sup>26</sup>And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare *it*, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

We see from this passage that our God clearly distinguishes between His elect and all others. He has committed Himself to keep His own through all that they encounter. There are no promises of that nature given to the non-elect. God has purposed to save His people, employing all the means at His disposal, in other words, all of His acts of providence to the end that His people would be sanctified from their sin unto Himself. The non-elect have no such assurances from God.

## II. God's Covenants with People

When we consider why and how God distinguishes His people from all others, we must address the importance of the concept of covenant by which God relates to His creatures. God created the human race in covenant relationship with Him and one another. The idea of covenant is essential to a biblical understanding of how we may have a relationship with our God who created us. Because of the great gulf between an infinite God and human beings, God established the covenant as the means by which He would relate to His creatures. If we were to know God and have fellowship with God, it would be by covenant relationship, defined and delivered to us by God Himself. Our **Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689** states this fact clearly in **article 7, paragraph 1**, which reads:

The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their Creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.

What is a covenant? When we say that God relates to us based on a covenant, we are saying that *because God is so vastly different in essence and glory from His finite creatures, He must come to us of His own will and He must reveal Himself to us and set the terms or grounds by which we may approach Him, know Him, and relate to Him.*

God created us in covenant relation with Himself through the head of our race, Adam, who represented us as a race before God. God initially established a covenant relationship between Himself and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, which was *a covenant of works*. This covenant was made to the entire human race through its *federal head* or representative, Adam, the common father of mankind. When God made this covenant with Adam, God bound the entire human race through all of history to this covenant. Every child born into this world comes into the world relating to God based on a covenant of works that God made with the human race.

What is the nature of this covenant of works and what are the terms of the covenant? God established His covenant relationship with Adam and his descendants *conditioned on Adam keeping God's law, by which Adam would either earn eternal life for himself and the entire human race he represented or bring them ruin and damnation*. When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden He had said to them,

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it. <sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Gen. 2:15-17)

The requirement God placed on Adam in his covenant was *obedience*. The failure to keep this covenant, that is, to break God's law, would result in death. Adam's obedience to God's law, gained access to life from God and before God. God required complete obedience. The least infraction of God's law would result in death. Adam *earned* or *merited* God's favor toward him and because he represented all people it would have been extended to them also. *This is what distinguishes the idea of a covenant of works: by Adam's obedience, he would have earned everlasting life by keeping works before God.*

Of course we read that Adam failed his test when he sinned. And when Adam sinned, because he was our federal head, we all sinned in his sin. *"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned"* (Rom 5:12). His sin brought the sentence of death upon the entire human race. "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23a).

Adam's sin also resulted in Adam and Eve losing their righteousness. They became sinners by nature. And the entire human race that was born to them thereafter was born into this world sinners by nature, at heart alienated and in rebellion to their God. The entire world, therefore, is guilty before God on a multiple of fronts. **(1) Every human being is guilty before God for Adam's sin**, which is counted as everyman's sin. **(2) Every human being is guilty before God because he is born with a sinful nature**, a propensity and preference for sin against God. **(3) Every human being is guilty for every act of sin** that he commits throughout his life, for transgressing God's prohibitions in His law. **(4) Every human being is guilty for failing to do all that God positively commanded**; every human being is guilty and damned for he does not have the righteousness that God requires if he were to have a relationship with Him.

But thanks be to our God, beside a covenant of works, God also made *a covenant of grace* with the people He has determined to save from their sin. In the covenant of grace God does for man that what man could not do for himself; *God Himself brings His salvation to His people*. This covenant of grace was formulated, if we can use that term, in "the covenant of redemption", which had been devised and committed to by the three persons of the Holy Trinity, even before creation. In that covenant of redemption, God made

provision to save guilty sinners. Each of the persons of the Trinity was committed to work out this covenant of grace. Based on this eternal covenant of grace, God decreed creation and has ordered all the events of history. The Father had chosen a people whom He purposed to save. The Son of God committed to become one of and one with His people to save them through His life and death. The Holy Spirit was committed to apply the results and benefits of Christ to the people whom the Father had chosen to save and had given to His Son.

In **Hebrews 13:20** and **21**, we read of this covenant of grace whereby we are saved.

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through *the blood of the everlasting covenant*,<sup>21</sup> make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

The text also speaks of how the God of peace brought this state of peace between Himself and His people; that is, Hebrews 13:20 sets forth the *basis* for this state of peace between God and ourselves. The God of peace is described as One *“Who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the Sheep.”*

God’s sheep are God’s elect. They are scattered throughout the world, lost and undone, but the Good Shepherd seeks them out. He even lays down His life for them. He goes out and finds them, and then brings them to salvation, bringing them into His fold one at a time. While they are lost they hear Him calling to them in the Gospel, and they hear His voice and recognize it. Then they call out to Him. They come together, the Shepherd finding His sheep, and then He carries it on His shoulders to safety and security of the fold. And this is a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus saving His chosen people by His grace.

And so, the Lord Jesus tells us in the Scriptures,

“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.” (John 10:16)

This speaks of His elect that He calls of the Gentiles. They will hear Him and come to Him. He will do whatever it takes to save the ones that the Father has given to Him. He will leave the 99 sheep to go after the one who is lost, meaning, that He will not lose one of the ones that the Father promised to give Him in the everlasting covenant that the Blessed Holy Trinity had decreed in eternity.

God is a God of peace to us His people through the eternal covenant. **God has always dealt with human beings on the basis of covenant.** And the Triune God determined before the founding of the heaven and earth that He would relate to some sinners on the basis of this eternal covenant, this covenant of grace. He would relate to all others based on the covenant of works.

### **III. God’s loving concern and care for those in the Covenant of Grace**

Even before we had come to faith in Christ, God loved us with a love that was shown in His concern for our lost condition, His desire to save us from our sin, and His purpose to do whatever was necessary to secure our salvation.

First, even when we were lost in our sin, He had compassion upon us. God does not have compassion on all who are in their sin. We read of God as sovereign in choosing in whom He will have compassion. Romans 9:15 reads, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Our Lord Jesus taught this on the first occasion of Him preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth.

<sup>25</sup>But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, <sup>26</sup>and Elijah was sent to

none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. <sup>27</sup>And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

<sup>28</sup>When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. <sup>29</sup>And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. (Luke 4:25-29)

We also read of God’s compassion toward His people whom He regards in covenant relation with Himself when we look how He was concerned for His people Israel when they were in bondage to the Egyptians. We read in Exodus 2: these words:

<sup>23</sup>During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. ***Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.*** <sup>24</sup>***And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.*** <sup>25</sup>***God saw the people of Israel--and God knew.*** (Exod. 2:23f)

Next Lord’s Day, Lord willing, we will consider more fully God’s work of His special acts of providence in the lives of His elect.