

The Providence of God

BY PASTOR BRIAN BRODERSEN



So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace. ... The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight ... so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Esther 2:16–17

The theme of the book of Esther is the providence of God. In God's providence, He placed Esther in a position of tremendous influence. Through that influence, she was able ultimately to save her people from destruction. Esther was the right person in the right place at the right time.

I believe that God has providentially raised up the ministry of Calvary Chapel "for such a time as this." Historically, God has always brought His work about at strategic times, and His timing is always perfect. We read in Galatians, "*But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law*" (4:4). There's more to that statement than we might realize. As we consider the world at the time the Lord Jesus Christ entered into it, we discover that it had been prepared for His coming.

During that period, because of Alexander the Great's influence a few centuries earlier, Greek was the universal language. At the same time, because of the influence of the Roman Empire, there was more or less a worldwide peace known historically as the *Pax Romana*. The Romans also had a well-developed system of roads throughout the Empire, which consequently made the spreading of the Gospel all over the world possible. God had providentially brought about these factors in preparation for the coming of the Gospel. I believe God has done something like that today.

Think about it for a moment. Around 40 years ago, the Lord used Pastor Chuck Smith, in effect, to begin a new movement within the church—a movement not unlike the great movements of the Spirit in the past. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones who was, among other things, an expert on the subject of revival in the church, heard about Chuck Smith and the ministry that was taking place. He commissioned a colleague to visit Calvary Chapel and to bring back a report on what he believed was a moving of the Spirit like some of the revivals that had occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries. As we survey the past years, we see that this movement of the Spirit through Calvary Chapel has had a tremendous impact, one far greater than anyone would have imag-

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ined. After all, Pastor Chuck was asking the Lord for a church of 300, not a movement with over 1,500 churches!

Through Pastor Chuck's ministry, God brought His Word to a new generation of young people. He restored a love for and a confidence in the Scriptures and a simplicity regarding the ministry. In many denominations, ministry had become stagnant and bogged down in bureaucratic "red tape," and liberalism had overtaken most of the mainline denominations. Training had become overly academic in many circles, and unless you had gone through seminary, it was highly unlikely that you would end up in the ministry. This atmosphere existed within the church throughout the '50s and into the '60s. Then, in the late '60s, the Lord did a fresh new thing and brought

His Word in all of its power and simplicity to a new generation. From that generation of young men, God raised up a new movement of apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to carry His Gospel around the world.

But not only did He bring His Word back to a new generation, He also brought a fresh new experience of the power of the Holy Spirit, not in the old Pentecostal sense that was generally marked by excess and legalism, but balanced—full of power, love, and grace.

In many ways, a restoration of faith also occurred. People began to take God at His Word. They began to reason that if it happened in the Bible, then it should be happening today. Jesus said to preach the Gospel to every creature; believers preached to anyone who would listen. Jesus said to lay hands on the sick and they would recover; they laid hands on the sick, and many were healed. Jesus said don't worry about your life, so they didn't worry; instead they just trusted the Lord to provide, and He did!

Although many years have passed since the initial outpouring of the Spirit, God is still at work in and through the ministry of Calvary Chapel; and in some ways, I think we are in a position to see an even greater work in the future. With Calvary Chapel fellowships planted on almost every continent, with thousands of young people enrolled in Bible colleges around the globe, with satellite communications and the Internet, the world has opened before us. God in His providence has brought all of this about and has placed us here "for such a time as this." Pastor Chuck and others have laid the foundation; so let's keep building on it—not with the wood, hay, and stubble of human wisdom, but with the gold, silver, and precious stones of the Word and the Spirit of God. 📖