

Trends

"Christians divorce at roughly the same rate as the world!" This is an often-quoted stat but it has been proved to be inaccurate. People who seriously practice a traditional religious faith have a divorce rate markedly lower than the general population. *The factor making the most difference is religious commitment and practice.* W. Bradford Wilcox, a leading sociologist at the University of Virginia and director of the *National Marriage Project*, finds from his own analysis that "active conservative Protestants" who regularly attend church are 35% less likely to divorce compared to those who have no affiliation. However, nominally attending conservative Protestants are 20% more likely to divorce, compared to secular Americans.

— via The Christian Coalition

Malachi 2:15-16: (NASV) "...let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. 'For I hate divorce,' says the Lord, the God of Israel..."

Sentence Sermons

"Divorce is the psychological equivalent of a triple coronary bypass surgery."
—Mary Kay Blakely

News & Notes

Pray for one another: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (Jas. 5:16)

Please consider donating funds to Zach & Taya Martin. Zach is a medical student and he and his wife Taya are planning to assist Ron Halbrook on one of his preaching trips to the Philippines. The Martins are worthy of our support. You can contact Zach at: zcmartin30@gmail.com.

Please pray for one another! "comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Please pray for Ryan & Jennifer and the brethren of the Northern Michigan church of Christ. They are now meeting in their newly purchased building in Roscommon, Michigan.

Please keep sisters Virginia Brown and Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. Their faithfulness sets a great example and gives encouragement to all! Ditto for Al (our Barnabas!).

Pray for all the lost souls, especially those in the greater Bloomington area. Pray that Westside might be an influence for good in this community.

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people face many trials and temptations at school.

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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68

Luck Fortune Fate or Blessing?

Bill H. Reeves

Many people constantly refer to happenings in their lives as being the result of "luck," "fortune," or "fate." A fewer number refer to "blessings" happening in their lives and thank God for them. Which is the correct course? Even some Christians are heard too often use the word "luck" to refer to what occurs in their lives, good luck or bad. I assume that in most cases, with Christians, one is not thinking of the significance of what he is saying, in saying "I was lucky," or, "bad luck hit me." This lesson is designed to awake them to actually what their remarks imply, and to see that we need to eliminate the word "luck" from our vocabulary!

What is "luck?" It is the chance happening of so-called fortune, or of adverse events (bad luck). Winning a prize, surviving an otherwise fatal accident, or being hit by a stray bullet (or not being hit by it), are all instances of so-called "luck." This is a mundane phenomenon, an exceptional, unusual or abnormal occurrence in one's life. The unbeliever, since he denies the existence of God, considers "luck" to be an actual, powerful force, although the chance happening of fortune, might be for him adverse events (bad luck). He has to have a source for the happening, and he calls it luck. Believers do the same thing, although perhaps often they are not aware of what their words signify.

Winning a prize, being hit by a stray bullet, or surviving a plane crash, all are instances of a mundane phenomenon (a happening in the world) called by many "luck." Phenomenon = appears, comes to light, be manifest, seems to be (from the Greek word, *phainomenon*), an observable event, something that happens. Obviously, something happens if an event occurs, but the issue is: who or what made it happen? What was the source of it? Luck? God? Some "force?" To what are we going to attribute the happening, if to someone or thing?

Joseph was sold by his brethren into Egypt (Gen. 37:18-28). Was it his unlucky day (he had a lot of suffering before him beginning that day), or was it all in the plan of God as a blessing for many souls (Gen. 50:20; Acts 7:9)?

Naaman was healed of leprosy. Was it his lucky day (2 Kgs. 5:14)? No, God blessed him with the cure and Naaman praised him for it (5:15-17).

The apostle James "had a bad day;" was he unlucky and got killed with a sword

(Acts 12:2)? James had been an apostle for just so short a time! But, Peter was “lucky;” he got seized and imprisoned, but an angel freed him from prison (12:7-11). Was it just luck? Well, Peter didn’t think so (ver. 17)! We are not told why God permitted James to be killed, so we don’t know the reason that God had. Jesus had told them that persecutions would come (Matt. 5:11,12) and later Paul told the same thing (2 Tim. 3:12). Stephen revealed it in Acts 7:52 and Luke revealed it in Acts 14:22. Paul suffered a serious malady laid on him by Satan (2 Cor. 12:7). Satan persecuted Paul with a malady, and God permitted it, but in his great wisdom (Rom. 12:2) God’s grace was sufficient for Paul to do his work with the power of Christ resting on him, and so Paul could take pleasure in the adversities experienced in life (2 Cor. 12:10). God is in control, not luck!

Sarah passed the age to have children (Gen. 17:19-21; 18:9-14), and was childless, and Hannah, whose womb God had shut up, was childless (1 Sam. 1:2,6). They could thank their lucky stars because one day they both had a child, right? Or, was it because God gave them children (Gen. 21:1,2; 1 Sam. 1:19,20)? Compare Gen. 48:8,11,15,21. God rules in his universe, not fate!

What good luck that young David, confronting the Philistine giant, Goliath, could kill him with just a sling and a smooth stone when the giant came out to destroy him and to feed his body to the birds and beasts (1 Sam. 17:43,44). No, luck had no part in the phenomenon. David credited Jehovah God with the killing of the giant and the removal of his head (verses 46,47). God needed no sword or spear for victory over the Philistine. “*The battle is Jehovah’s.*” God is omnipotent!

Acts 4:1-3, Peter and John were put in ward and brought before the Sanhedrin. Did bad luck hit them? They did not deserve such treatment for simply healing a man born lame. But they did not take credit for the miracle of healing (4:12) but declared that it was by faith in the name of Jesus (ver. 16) that the miracle occurred. The two glorified God for the great miracle (ver. 24ff). God was in control, not fortune.

Moses was born at a time when Pharaoh ordered the Israelites’ male children to be killed (Acts 7:19-21). He had the good fortune, or so it seemed, to be taken out of the ark in the river by Pharaoh’s daughter and reared by her in a king’s household. He received an excellent education of the time (ver. 22). The phenomena of his early life could not have been better. But God had plans for him and revealed them to him, to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage and on a road to a promised land (verses 34-36). God was in the plan from the beginning, ordering the events according to his purposes. Fortune had no part in the matter!

Stephen continued his sermon, telling of the part that Joshua, and others, played in the wisdom and plan of God for the Israelites (Acts 7:45-50). Luck had nothing to do with the matter. None of them involved in God’s plans said, “as fortune would have it.” They knew better!

Of course, not all events in life are directly God’s doings (hitting a foul ball in a game, dropping a valuable coin in a crevice, or hitting a golf ball into the pond, etc.). Time and chance happen to all (Eccl. 9:11). All phenomena (happenings) are not attributable directly to God, nor can they ever be

attributable to luck, for luck doesn’t exist as an actual force or cause of events. They are situations that simply appear in one’s life (phenomena).

But Ruth 2:3 illustrates how from a human’s perspective a decision can be based on happenstance (some might say, “as luck would have it”). She chose a particular field in which to look for work based solely on chance. The text literally says: “her chance chanced to hit upon a field,” or, “hap happened.” From her perspective it was a coincidence. But with God it was Providence; he chose her steps to Boaz’s field. How else could she have chosen a field that belonged to the man who soon was to become her husband, and with him to become ancestors of Christ in the flesh (Matt. 1:5)? God was in control. He uses us as we prepare our lives to serve him (2 Tim. 2:20). Little turns in our life, when engaged in events that seek to do God’s will (Esther 2:12), although they seem fortuitous, or by chance, to us can be directed by God’s Providence with designs of that which he has for us (ver. 12). His Providence can order our chances.

See the word “hap” in 1 Sam. 6:9. Another Greek word (*sugkuria*), chance, occurs in Lk. 10:31, and in the New Testament, only here. The word means, literally, a coincidence of circumstances. In attributing God’s blessings to luck, we rob God of the praise that is due him for his works of grace in our favor. How can this be pleasing to him? Think about it, seriously! Only good and perfect gifts come down from God (Jas. 1:17). So, when he blesses us with them, and we “thank goodness” (which is not God), or luck, fortune, our lucky stars, or fate, we attribute to nothing that which rightly belongs to him who blesses us. Why, then, should he continue to bless us? Note Esther 4:14.

It is a blessing from God that we are even permitted to suffer for him. After being unjustly imprisoned, and beaten by the religious authorities, the apostles rejoiced that were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name (Acts 5:40,41; compare 1 Pet. 4:16). What a blessing to have that honor; thank God for that blessing! Suffering for the Cause of Christ is not bad luck, but rather a blessing from God for which to be grateful!

God’s blessings, and they are many, call for thanks from the recipient, and words of praise for so gracious a heavenly Father, not attributions of so-called luck. Forget about luck; as a force it is a non-entity. Phenomena exist, yes; things happen, but luck doesn’t control anything.

Think about it: what do we do when we thank God? We acknowledge that he is the source of our blessings. To acknowledge is to disclose, recognize one’s authority, express gratitude for, concede, admit, avow, openly and boldly declare, make known the receipt of, and confess an omission or commission of an error, and we are commanded to acknowledge God! Prov. 3:6, “*In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths.*” God’s directing our paths is contingent upon our acknowledgement of him in all of our ways. So, thank God as the source of the blessings. It wasn’t good fortune that sent them! It is no wonder why we are to pray without ceasing (2 Thess. 5:17).

Jer. 14:20: “*We acknowledge, O Jehovah, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against thee.*” We know it and acknowledge it! Tell God what you know is true; forget about luck!