

Sometimes it's a bit hard to figure out if an event in your life is ultimately good or bad. I'm reminded of two women who were having a conversation. The first lady said to her friend, "I've gotten married since we last met." Her friend replied, "Oh, that's good." The first lady responded, "Well, I don't know about that. My husband is twice as old as I am." The second lady replied, "Oh, that's bad." The first lady said, "Well, I don't know about that. He's worth a million dollars." The second lady replied, "Oh, that's good." Her friend said, "Well, I don't know about that. He won't give me a cent." The second lady responded, "Oh, that's bad." The first lady said, "Well, I don't know about that. He did build me a \$500,000 house." The second lady replied, "Oh, that's good." The first said, "Well, I don't know about that. It burned down last week." The second said, "Oh, that's bad." The first lady, "Well, I don't know about that. He was in it!"

You can't say that a thing is good or bad until God is finished with it. Because He works in your life progressively, gradually, and continuously, you just can't always accurately evaluate a thing as good or bad by isolated events. What we're talking about is the providence of God – the idea that God guides, leads and directs in every area of your life. The name of God that we're considering this morning – Yahweh Yir'eh – deals with the providence of God. We've been answering the question, "What's in a name?" When it comes to God's names, it's a lot. God's names reveal His character. God's names reveal our needs. God's names give us a reason to worship and praise Him.

Yahweh Yir'eh is found in only one place in the Bible. Let's read it just now. This name for God is found in one of the most dramatic stories in the entire Bible. God tests Abraham by commanding him to kill his son, Isaac. He wants Abraham to offer Isaac up as a human sacrifice. The Bible tells us nothing of the emotional and spiritual torment that Abraham must have endured to obey this incredible – seemingly contradictory – command. But after it's all over and God Himself spares Isaac's life and provides a sheep as a substitute, we read in v. 14, "Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means "the LORD will provide")...." (Genesis 22:14 NLT) There are three aspects of this name for God that are very meaningful for me. Here's the first one:

YAHWEH YIR'EH SEES TO YOUR ENTIRE LIFE

Last week we looked closely at the first part of this name for God – Yahweh. Its literal meaning is something like, "I am who I am" or "I am being who I am being" or "I am the One who always is." We were reminded that Yahweh is the One who is always present in your life. Yahweh is the One who never changes. Yahweh meets every need in your life. The rest of this message series is going to consider names of God that are "Yahweh plus something." Call them "combination names." Each name is a further revelation of some important, wonderful truth about God. The first "combination name" comes from the lips of Abraham after his incredible encounter with God on Mt. Moriah.

What does the word "yir'eh" mean? It's derived from the Hebrew verb "to see." Why, then, do we get the word "provide" or "provision" when it's translated into English – "the

Lord will provide”? Our word “provide” is a compound of two Latin words meaning “to see beforehand.” “Pro” means “before” and “vide” means “to see.” Therefore, “provide” literally means “to see before.” When you apply that word to the Lord, you discover a wonderful truth about Him. Yahweh sees everything beforehand. He doesn’t live in time like you do. He sees the beginning and the end of your life all at the same time. But there’s a deeper significance than God simply being able to see everything beforehand. This word implies that because God sees everything beforehand, He sees TO your entire life. He’s already provided – whatever you will need tomorrow, next year, ten years from now, and for all eternity. Abraham realized that Yahweh already knew he’d obey and what would happen on Mt. Moriah. As a result, Yahweh had already provided this ram in advance that became the substitute sacrifice for Isaac.

God isn’t content just to see and know everything that will occur. Precisely because Yahweh sees before, He sees to everything in your entire life before you live it. He provides for every need that you have had in the past, every need you have today in the present and every need you’ll have in the future. This is part of God’s amazing providence. He’s constantly acting and orchestrating all events to work out according to His purpose and plans. I realize that much of what happens in your life and mine appears to be random. Moreover, many things happen in life – and sometimes to us – that are evil, sinful and even terrible. Believing in God’s providence doesn’t somehow deny the reality of those events. It simply means you hold to the truth that what is evil, sinful and terrible never ultimately defeats God, frustrates God, or thwarts His plans for you. Yahweh Yir’eh is the One who sees your entire life and sees TO your entire life.

If God is not Yahweh Yir’eh, you live life without hope. Any legitimate hope for this life and for eternity is based on God and His faithfulness. That’s the only basis for a rock solid peace and security. The Bible underlines this truth over and over again. I’m thinking of two passages that teach the same message. “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him’.... And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.” (1 Corinthians 2:9; Philipppians 4:19 NLT). People in the Bible - and people since the Bible was written who’ve trusted in Jesus - will tell you that God is the One who sees TO your entire life from start to finish and then for all eternity. In the most comprehensive sense of that word, He provides. Now, here’s a second and derivative truth:

YAHWEH YIR’EH SEES TO YOUR EVERY NEED

Let me mention just two kinds of needs today that all of us share. First, Yahweh Yir’eh sees to your need for direction in life. Every one of us faces decisions in life – about jobs, about finances, about personal relationships, about our kids, about every conceivable area of life. How do you really know if you’re going to get it right? What a comfort it is to know that God is lovingly guiding and leading you in the direction He wants you to go because God not only sees everything but He loves you and wants the best for you! Late one evening a professor sat at his desk working on his lectures for the next day. He shuffled through the mail and papers his housekeeper had placed on

his desk. He was about to throw most of it away when a magazine – not even one addressed to him but delivered to his office by mistake – fell open to an article titled, “The Needs of the Congo Mission.” He happened to read a statement in that article that was like God’s laser to his heart: “The need is great here. We have no one to work in the northern province of Gabon in the central Congo. And it is my prayer as I write this article that God will lay His hand on one – one on whom, already, the Master’s eyes have been cast – that he or she shall be called to this place to help us.” That professor closed the magazine and wrote in his diary, “My search is over.” He gave himself to go to the Congo. That professor was Albert Schweitzer, one of the greatest Christian missionary statesmen of all time. That article hidden away in a magazine intended for someone else was placed by accident in Schweitzer’s mailbox. By chance, his housekeeper put the magazine on Schweitzer’s desk. By chance, he noticed the title and read the article. Was it really chance? No, it was God’s providence.

Now, God’s providential direction may not be that dramatic in your life, but it’s there nonetheless. How does God meet that need for direction in your life? John Huffman took a 1300 mile trip from Chicago to Louisiana down the Illinois, Missouri and Mississippi Rivers when he was a young man. Those rivers can become treacherous at night and it’s easy to wreck your boat. The Army Corp of Engineers has set up channel lights and if you move in the direction of a channel light until you see the next one, you can navigate past any and every trouble spot. Huffman suggests that God gives you channel lights, so to speak, to guide you down life’s river, to give you direction and to keep you from running aground. Here’s six that Yahweh Yir’eh provides. The first channel light is the Bible. It provides both explicit and implicit guidance for every life situation through its stories and its principles. Do you read the Bible? Do you study the Bible? It’s God’s most important source of direction. Channel light two is prayer. The Bible itself says, “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.” (Philippians 4:6 NLT) Channel light three is life’s circumstances. Do a reality check. If you can’t carry a tune in a bucket, God probably hasn’t called you to a career in music. If you’re highly people-oriented, God probably hasn’t called you to a career that’s primarily task driven. It’s no accident you are who you are. Yahweh Yir’eh designed you. He wants you to become everything He’s given you the potential to become – nothing more and nothing less.

Channel light four is the counsel of godly friends. The Bible says, “...there is safety in having many advisers.” (Proverbs 11:4 NLT) The advice of people who love Jesus and who love you is priceless. Channel light five is godly motivation. Why do you want to do what you want to do? Will it truly bring honor to the name of Jesus? Will it truly encourage and build up other people? The last light is your own inner feelings. God can and will guide you through your feelings if you’ve lined up those first five lights first. Get those lights lined up – the Bible, prayer, life’s circumstances, godly advice, godly motivation, your inner feelings – and then trust Yahweh Yir’eh for the rest. God wants your best. God wants to give you direction. Launch out with confidence knowing that Yahweh Yir’eh has already seen to it and He is going to meet that need for direction.

Second, Yahweh Yir'eh sees to your need when facing difficulties in life. That's when you need Him the most. He's not content that you have an academic, head knowledge of Him. He wants you to know that He is Yahweh Yir'eh – your provider. You can only ever learn that through life's experiences and particularly the difficult ones. If Abraham hadn't been so severely tested in this matter of Isaac, he never would have known God as Yahweh Yir'eh. It's only when you're put to the test – when you have no one and nothing but God Himself to rely upon – that you discover that's its only in God that you can trust and hope. When you come to the end of yourself, that's when God often reveals more fully the amazing and comprehensive provider that He is.

Even in those times when the road in life ahead of you seems hopeless and dark, you can be sure Yahweh Yir'eh has a good purpose and an ultimately kind intent. Now, it takes a lot of living and a lot of walking with the Lord to discover that fact, but it's true. Whenever God brings a test into your life, you can be certain of two things. One, Yahweh Yir'eh will never test you beyond your ability. The Bible says, "The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure." (1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT). Two, Yahweh Yir'eh has already made preparation for your spiritual victory over whatever difficulty is occurring and however it turns out. "No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8: 37-39 NLT)

This is the truth about God that you must hold on to in the darkest moments of life: the loving providence of Yahweh Yir'eh. You lock down on this God who says He has an eternal purpose for your life. He has chosen you to be in His Son, Jesus, and He is going to make you like Jesus in your character. He loves you with an everlasting love. He is Yahweh Yir'eh. That difficulty in your life today is no evidence that God loves you less; it is evidence only that He wants you to discover that He is Yahweh Yir'eh – the One who sees to your every need. I love that old story about a man who had endured more than his share of life's heartaches. He'd lost his job, his wife and his home. The only thing left was his faith and it felt like he was about to lose that as well. One day he stopped to watch some men doing stone work on a church. One craftsman was chiseling an unusually shaped piece of rock. The man asked the worker, "What are you going to do with that?" The craftsman replied, "Do you see that little opening up there near the steeple? Well, I'm shaping this down here so that it will fit up there." It's funny how God speaks to you at times. As he walked away from the building site, that discouraged man's eyes filled with tears. He realized God has just spoken to Him through the words of that craftsman. God was shaping him down here so that he would fit up there. Here's a third and final thought about this name for God.

YAHWEH YIR-EH SEES TO YOUR ETERNAL SALVATION.

There's something eerily reminiscent about this scene in Genesis 22. Here we have a son, Isaac, walking up a mountain in perfect obedience to his father, Abraham. Moreover, Isaac is carrying the wood upon which he is to be sacrificed. It's a picture of Jesus. Two thousand years later, the Son of God walked up a mountain called Golgotha in perfect obedience to His Father. He also carried on his back the wood upon which He was to be sacrificed. Do you remember the question Isaac asked Abraham? "Isaac turned to Abraham and said, 'Father?' 'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied. 'We have the fire and the wood,' the boy said, 'but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?'" (Genesis 22:7 NLT) Isaac didn't yet realize that he was to be the sacrifice. This is how Abraham answered his son, "'God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son,'..." (Genesis 22:8 NLT) It was a statement of great faith. Abraham didn't know what was going to happen or how Yahweh was going to bring a good result out of a very bad situation.

But it was also a prophetic statement. Two thousands years later, Jesus fulfilled Abraham's statement. God did indeed provide a Lamb – His one and only Son – Jesus. There's one very telling difference, however, between those two scenes – on the one hand, Abraham and his son, Isaac; on the other, God Himself and His Son, Jesus. In the first scene, an angel spoke to Abraham as he held a knife over his son and told him it wasn't necessary to kill Isaac. But in the second scene, no one said to God the Father, "Wait! Stop! It's not necessary to really let Jesus, Your Son, die. We can see now how much you love human beings. You don't have to go through with this." Why? Because the death of Jesus was absolutely necessary in order to pay the penalty of your sin and mine. He took your place and mine at the cross of Calvary.

Lt. Commander Edward Henry "Butch" O'Hare became the Navy's number one ace in World War 2 and the first naval aviator ever to win the Congressional Medal of Honor. Chicago's O'Hare International Airport is named after him. What Butch O'Hare became, however, was made possible because someone else paid a very high price. That someone else was his dad, Edward J. O'Hare, a slick lawyer for the gangster, Al Capone. He was known as "Artful Eddie" and he had lots of money and power. But one day he sold out Capone. Why the sudden change of heart? He said that he wanted to give his son, Butch, a break. Before long, however, the mob forever silenced Artful Eddie with two shotgun blasts. But because of Eddie's courageous change of heart, his son, Butch, was accepted at the Naval Academy. Eddie's confession and subsequent death satisfied admissions people that the O'Hare family's mob connections were severed. Artful Eddie paid with his own life for his son's chance to make good.

In a far more wonderful way, that's what Jesus did for you and me on the cross. You can't save yourself. The same God who sees to your entire life and sees to your every need has also seen to your eternal salvation. The name of that God is Yahweh Yir'eh. This is what the Bible says about Him: "Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?" (Romans 8:32 NLT)