4. We are privileged to live in a period of history in which the ultimate blessings of God have been made available—something the prophets and even angels longed to observe (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

5. If we live faithfully, God will help us overcome our hardships, though perhaps not in ways we would plan or predict.

6. We must learn to look beyond the immediate and momentary to the broader picture.

7. We must not confuse the physical blessings received by Abraham, Joseph, Esther, and others with the spiritual blessings that are available today in Christ.

8. While we observe that Abraham and others involved in God’s providential plans often disappoint us as examples of holiness, we must at the same time note that God’s providence allows imperfect people to repent and mature in His service.

9. God sometimes overrules in the lives of people, using even their sins show His providence (Gen. 27:26-30; Rom. 8:28).

10. In light of God’s great providence, our attitude should be, “not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22:42; James 4:15).

11. When we recognize the outworking of God’s providence in our lives, we must not 1) disregard or neglect the opportunity to glorify God; 2) allow fear to rob us of our blessing; or 3) distrust God’s ability to provide.

12. God’s purpose and providence are often evident in the lives of Christians, yet it is dangerous to assume that all events are caused or influenced by divine providence. For example, ”God led me here;” “God helped me find this job;” “God helped me pass this test.”

13. Remember that Satan also appears as an angel of light and would deceive the very elect (2 Cor. 11:14; Mark 13:22).

14. We must learn to distinguish between God’s providence and the temptations of Satan (Matt. 4:1-11).

15. We must avoid the temptation to “help God out” by doing things our way instead of God’s way (Gen. 16:1-5).

28

The Church in Perfection

The Church of Christ was established at the time and place that God had announced through prophecy. When the *fullness of time* came (Gal 4:4), God established the Church according to the plan He made before the foundation of the world (Eph. 3:9-11). Those who obeyed the conditions of God’s plan on Pentecost were added to the Church (Acts 2:39, 47). God continues to save those who are subjects of His eternal plan (Acts 2:39).

The Church in Perpetuity (Acts 2:39; Luke 8:11)

When proper seed is sown, God brings forth fruit according to His Eternal Purpose (Luke 8:11-15). The Church is to last forever (Dan. 2:44). God is to be glorified in the Church “throughout all ages” (Eph. 3:20-21). Christ will be with His Church until the end of the world (Matt. 28:20). Christ will deliver the Kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). Paul summarizes God’s eternal purpose for the Church of Christ: “[God, the Father] has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:9-10).

17