

A Remarkable Story of God's Providence

by Jay Wegter

God is in no way obligated to do so, but in His infinite mercy, love, and wisdom toward His own, sometimes He pulls back an edge of the curtain and reveals a small portion of His purposes in providence. Just one month after I was saved, I sat in the front row of Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto for the evening service. Little did I know that the speaker would be Corrie Ten Boom, speaking on God's providence in her life under Nazi persecution. I will never forget her illustration. She held up the back side of a needle point stitching through much of her talk. Colored threads went every direction with no discernable pattern. Only at the end of her message did she show us the front, it was the image of a beautifully sown crown of blue and gold and maroon.

What I have learned personally through the events of providence recorded in this written testimony is reminiscent of a line from William Cowper's hymn, *God moves in a mysterious way*, "Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face."

Our story begins during the Japanese colonial occupation of Korea (1910-1945). Toward the end of that period 'Mama Kim', the matriarch in our story, was a young teenager, not yet 15 years old. Japanese rule in the Korean peninsula was harsh and often cruel. As a young teen Mama Kim was pursued by Japanese soldiers who wanted to force themselves upon her.

But, the grandmother who was raising her courageously hid Mama Kim in a loft. When she refused to reveal her location, a Japanese soldier stabbed the grandmother. She later died of her wounds. The orphaned Mama Kim was taken in by her aunt. Soon after reaching adulthood, Mama Kim became the young wife of an alcoholic Korean man. But, he died of alcoholism in the early years of their marriage.

As a widow in war-torn Korea, it was a constant battle to survive the crush of poverty. In search of food and stability Mama Kim and her aunt moved to Pyongyang, capital of North Korea. A Korean man who already had a wife and family wanted Mama Kim as his concubine or mistress (a common practice at that time). Mama Kim, in order to make ends meet consented to be a prostitute to him. She became pregnant with Pete and gave birth to him in 1954.

The illegitimate birth was a shame to the family. Her aunt wanted to take Pete away and give him up for adoption, but Mama Kim hid him in a back room and ultimately in a tree in order to keep him. Out of disgust, her aunt sent her away. The disgraced Mama Kim left in haste, she couldn't face family members because of Pete. Mama Kim traveled south with Pete, crossing the DMZ to Seoul to look for some form of income. But, at that time in Korea it was uncommon for women to work as employees.

In Seoul, Mama Kim lived in what we would regard as a shack, it was a meager accommodation with dirt for floors in some rooms. She found a way to make some income by renting a room to American soldiers stationed in South Korea. She also became a prostitute to some of these soldiers. One U.S. army soldier paid Mama Kim for her services of lodging and prostitution. She eventually became pregnant by this man with daughter, Kim. But, in the providence of God, this American army soldier would prove to be somewhat more responsible than many men in his situation.

Not long after the news of Mama Kim's pregnancy, this American soldier temporarily returned stateside, but was sent again by transfer to South Korea. When he arrived again, he searched for, and found Mama Kim.

When he finished his duty in South Korea, he brought the very pregnant Mama Kim back with him to Fort Benning, Georgia. He took care of the paperwork to marry her just two days before daughter Kim was born in 1965 at the army hospital.

The family moved frequently during Pete and Kim's upbringing, from Georgia to Chicago to Iowa to Missouri. After high school graduation, Pete began attending Columbia College in Missouri. After a loud argument with his mother, he decided to move to Oregon to finish attending college there.

He majored in electrical engineering and recruiters from the Bay Area were impressed enough with his skills to secure a very good job for him in Sunnyvale, California. At that time, this region of the Bay Area had earned the nickname, 'Silicon Valley' due to the many manufacturers of semiconductors.

This important background information above paves the way for my initial meeting with Pete. Late in 1979, my Bible college buddy, Gary Johnson and myself had completed a little over two years of ministry service at a church in Attleboro, MA. My good friend and I said our goodbyes to each other and to our church brethren and left for different states. Gary headed to seminary in Philadelphia and I made plans to move all the way to Silicon Valley, California to start a business in graphic design and illustration.

During my solo move West, with most of my belongings in my Volkswagen van, I had journeyed safely to central Arizona when a mild disaster struck. Late one night after logging over 500 miles of driving in one day, I was rear-ended by a pick-up truck. My speed was 70 mph, and his was estimated at probably 75. To my horror after hitting me, he sped up. I felt my car accelerating. My heart was racing. We finally both pulled over. I had no idea whom I would be talking to as we both exited our vehicles to meet in the dark of that remote stretch of highway.

As it turned out, he was an army soldier on leave, a Navajo who had become intoxicated and fallen asleep at the wheel. We filed a full accident report with an Arizona state trooper in Winslow and the next day after backtracking to Holbrook to contact the insurance adjustor, I continued west with a very bruised VW van. But, a thought was circulating in my head, "Lord, can any good come from this collision? I know that you are able to bring something positive from it. Perhaps the army fella' who hit me will be permanently sobered by this incident."

When I arrived in Silicon Valley, my goal had been to rent a condo in the same complex where I had lived before. It had an expansive recreation area perfect for singles, with pool, gym, tennis courts, ping pong, and bistro. But, when I pulled into their parking lot, I looked at the crumpled rear end of my van and thought, "this collision may be God's way of indicating it would better for me to stay in a less lavish apartment complex." "Brilliant!"

I found a reasonably priced apartment in Sunnyvale instead, and in the providence of God, it was the same complex where Pete lived! We quickly became friends and would often relax over tea a couple evenings a week, read the newspaper, and chat about our work days.

Pete and I were both into fitness. We would often jog, hike, or ride bikes. After about one year, I announced to Pete that I was leaving my art director job in Palo Alto in order to travel through our nation's national parks. I shared with him that I wasn't sure where I would settle down after my trip.

At the end of my travel adventures, I moved to San Diego, met my wife Michele in 1982 and we were married in 1983. To my surprise several years later, Pete moved to San Diego for work. He had been hired by General Dynamics. That company had a lucrative contract with NASA's ill-fated Challenger Space Shuttle project.

As a married couple Michele and I befriended Pete and we invited him to participate in certain functions together; boating, hiking, picnicking. And, he reciprocated, also inviting us to activities. I wanted the friendship bridge with him to be strong enough to carry the weight of the gospel. But, when I would share the Bible with him, he expressed little interest in the gospel. I did give him a Bible and urged him to read it, telling him the best places to begin.

In our final gathering with Pete before his untimely death, he cooked a dinner for us and then had us watch a couple hours of his Motown videos. Ten minutes of that kind of music is enough for me, but we watched all two hours of his videos in the interest of friendship.

On June 4, 1987 I received a phone call from Scripps Hospital. The male nurse indicated that my phone number was the only West Coast contact that was found in Pete's wallet. The hospital staff member asked my relation to Pete, I shared with him that I was Pete's close friend. Then they broke the news to me. Pete had been hit on his bicycle and was on life support, but, was brain dead.

I burst into tears and immediately shared the sad news with Michele who was sitting across from me at the kitchen table. Pete, who was a very fine athlete, and a member of the Sierra Club had been on a bike ride in Pacific Beach, San Diego when two young women, one with a flat tire on her bike, waved to him for help with their tire. Pete hastily swung a U-turn to assist them, but he hadn't looked carefully enough for oncoming traffic.

An off-duty police detective in an unmarked car driving 55 mph in a 45 mph zone hit Pete from behind. His body flipped from his bike so that his head hit the curb violently. Though he received serious head trauma, he was still able to speak during the ambulance ride to the hospital. He called his mother and told her that he loved her. When he arrived at the hospital, they quickly put him into an induced coma.

It was in this comatose state that I saw him in the hospital. He was connected to a breathing tube and I V's, and his head was swollen to nearly twice the normal size from the immense hematoma. His mother and sister flew in from the East Coast and joined us a few hours later. They were pierced with grief and weeping loudly.

The nurse tactfully pulled Michele and me aside from the waiting room to let us know that though Pete had an organ donation card in his wallet, his oxygen levels were too low for any of his organs to be donated. They then disconnected him from life support.

What heartbreak it was to see his mother and sister working through Pete's personal belongings as the three of us went through his apartment together. I quickly reached for the Bible from his desk to see if there were any evidence of his reading it, an underline, a

bookmark, anything? But I found nothing discernable.

His sister Kim stayed in California for a full month helping settle what remained of Pete's effects. During that month, I met with Kim a number of times. My goal was to take her through the entire Gospel of John over that period. During our studies, she was so distracted by grief, I sometimes wondered if our marathon Bible study meetings would have any value whatsoever. But, I kept on insisting that she must come to know God's redeeming love in Christ if she is to be comforted by Him. I admit that my inner thought was Pete's death must not go to waste; this tragedy must be seized as an opportunity for the gospel of Christ.

Only 30 years later, in a 2017 phone call would I find out what had happened in her family after Kim had returned home. Pete had passed away in 1987 and that was the last time I saw his mother and sister and had spoken with them. But, here it was 2017, the phone rang, it was Kim on the line—she was filling me in on what had taken place in her family. I marveled at what the Lord had done over those 30 years.

Choking back tears of joy, I managed to converse with her despite the lump in my throat. In 1987 when daughter Kim returned home from California to her husband Shannon, something amazing happened. She got off the plane and ran into his arms saying "I got saved, I got saved." Her husband, a Southern Baptist believer was thrilled to hear this news from her. For, prior to her coming to California to bury her brother, she had insisted that if she were to visit her husband's Baptist church, he must attend her Roman Catholic church every other Sunday.

On a mildly humorous note, as a 12 year old child, Kim had been a somewhat uncompliant Roman Catholic. A priest had told her that she could not receive confirmation unless she went to confession. But she had previously asked the priest, "Does Jesus hear my prayers?" He had told her most certainly, and her response was, "Then why do I have to go to confession and talk to a man down here?" She never gave up that end of the argument, and finally her priest gave in and was willing to grant her confirmation in spite of her resistance.

During that revealing phone conversation in 2017 Kim also shared some of the challenges she faced as a new believer. When she had returned from California after Pete's death, her father had mocked her faith as nothing more than temporary fanaticism. And, her mother, a nominal Roman Catholic showed no understanding whatsoever of what had happened to Kim. But, God's sovereign grace was going to win out in Kim's family.

Several years after Kim's conversion, Mama Kim came to saving faith in Christ. And, a few months before Kim's father died, he shouted out one day, "Kim, every god is the same!" Kim took the opportunity to explain to her father the uniqueness of Christ and the gospel. Kim's dad, this American Army veteran, came to saving faith two months before He died. In addition, Kim's lovely daughter Jeannie has become a strong believer as well.

Kim admitted that she was not 'plaster Saint'—like most of us, the beginnings of her newfound faith were characterized by spiritual immaturity and timidity. She related to me, "Jay I never told you this. But, during that month I was in California, you led me to the Lord. When I returned to Georgia, I was a different person."

"That first day in California at Pete's bedside I had been on my knees in his hospital

room, sobbing, ‘Lord, couldn’t you have taken me instead of Pete. He’s a better person than I!’” “I was not yet a believer at that point in time.”

“I have had many struggles in my Christian walk. When my mother died, years of unforgiveness came to the surface; I resented the shameful reality that I was a product of my mother’s prostitution. I couldn’t process it. But, in coming to know God’s forgiveness at a greater depth, I was able to forgive at a greater depth.”

“God has used this crisis mightily in my life to increase my usefulness in His service. I now speak much more openly about the Lord. I have found my voice, I’m exercising far more boldness in my witness than I used to. I’ve been on mission’s trips and I teach a women’s Bible Study in which I give my testimony.” “I’ve titled this teaching in my study, ‘Where was God when I cried?’”

“The Lord has made something beautiful of my life despite our shameful family history. ‘Where was God when I cried?’ has become my ministry. There are countless broken people who need this message.”

And, in our last phone conversation with Kim, she reflected upon the fact that she would have been very close to delivery of her baby and unable to come to California for Pete’s accident in 1987 if she had not had a miscarriage at the end of 1986. How sobered I was to hear this, without that miscarriage I would have never met Kim. (More tears in hearing this. Oh, how the Lord loves His elect.)

God commonly does not let us see His infinite wisdom in many of the most pain-filled threads that He weaves into the tapestry of our lives. And, admittedly, in the face of any one of these tragedies, there can be the temptation to blurt out, ‘why Lord?’ can any good can come from this?’ But, in the case of Kim’s testimony, for His own glory and for our encouragement, He shed light upon His all-wise connection between several tragedies.

For, we have discovered in our conversations 30 years after Pete’s passing that this string of seemingly unrelated negatives each played a significant role in the unfolding of God’s providence. My bashed-in VW van, Pete’s death, and Kim’s miscarriage all converged in the triumph of the gospel. Even the most fertile of imaginations could have never conceived how God would link together these three ‘frowning providences’ for the greater good.

We did not know the history of Pete’s conception and birth and Kim’s conception and birth until 30 years after Pete’s passing. But, now the details of the story have become a marvelous testimony of God’s ability to redeem great loss and make it into eternal gain.

“When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don’t throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer” (Corrie Ten Boom).

1689 Baptist Confession Chapter 5: Of Divine Providence

1. God the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most

wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will; to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy. (Hebrews 1:3; Job 38:11; Isaiah 46:10, 11; Psalms 135:6; Matthew 10:29-31; Ephesians 1:11)

2. Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; so that there is not anything befalls any by chance, or without his providence; yet by the same providence he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently. (Acts 2:23; Proverbs 16:33; Genesis 8:22)

3. God, in his ordinary providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at his pleasure. (Acts 27:31, 44; Isaiah 55:10, 11; Hosea 1:7; Romans 4:19-21; Daniel 3:27)

4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that his determinate counsel extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sinful actions both of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, which also he most wisely and powerfully boundeth, and otherwise ordereth and governeth, in a manifold dispensation to his most holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness of their acts proceedeth only from the creatures, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin. (Romans 11:32-34; 2 Samuel 24:1, 1 Chronicles 21:1; 2 Kings 19:28; Psalms 76:10; Genesis 1:20; Isaiah 10:6, 7, 12; Psalms 1:21; 1 John 2:16)

5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends. So that whatsoever befalls any of his elect is by his appointment, for his glory, and their good. (2 Chronicles 32:25, 26, 31; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Romans 8:28)

6. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as the righteous judge, for former sin doth blind and harden; from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understanding, and wrought upon their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, under

those means which God useth for the softening of others. (Romans 1:24-26, 28; Romans 11:7, 8; Deuteronomy 29:4; Matthew 13:12; Deuteronomy 2:30; 2 Kings 8:12, 13; Psalms 81:11, 12; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Exodus 8:15, 32; Isaiah 6:9, 10; 1 Peter 2:7, 8)

7. As the providence of God doth in general reach to all creatures, so after a more special manner it taketh care of his church, and disposeth of all things to the good thereof. (1 Timothy 4:10; Amos 9:8, 9; Isaiah 43:3-5)