

From The Daily Bread

Look Out!

Dean Murphy

Hubris! That is the only way I can describe it in retrospect. The idea that my presence could somehow control the chaos that comes with living in this world. But I am getting ahead of myself. Let's back up a bit. For many years, my job has required a significant amount of travel. Sometimes I might be on the road for parts of many weeks in a row. In doing so, my thoughts are often distracted by care and concern for my family, who remain 1000 miles away. As many of us do, my habit has been to pause and pray to God for the safety and protection of my family. Interestingly, the phraseology of those prayers went something like this; "God, please take care of my family while I am away from them". Think about that. That approach is basically saying that when I am home, "I got this", but while I am away, please take over. As if God and I are tag-teaming the protection detail. Therein the hubris.

As we look around us at the seemingly random nature of threats in our lives, it is ever more comforting to simply turn over the protection detail to God in its entirety. We should be encouraged by the sheer number of ways that God promises His protection throughout scripture. He has any number of tools that offer us comfort and peace. Here are examples of just a few of those tools:

Protection derived from His impenetrable strength **Psalm 46**

Protection as a result of His salvation **John 10:28-30**

Protection of His love that is constant **Romans 8:38**

Protection from sin and Satan **1 Corinthians 10:13** and **2 Thessalonians 3:3**

Protection derived from wisdom He provides **Proverbs 4:6**

Protection from disaster/destruction **Psalm 57:1**

Protection from our enemies **Psalm 59:1-4**

Protection from fear **Deuteronomy 31:6**

A couple of weeks ago, our family went on a trip to southwest Colorado and southeast Utah. We stayed overnight in Ouray, in lodging that backed up to the Uncompahgre River. My son and I went for an extended hike along the river and along the way, passed a rather inconspicuous trail marker that led straight up the side of the mountain. Of course, we took it. The trail and the mountain were steep and along the way, we walked across several slide areas that had required obvious trail reconstruction over time (my clumsy use of the literary device of foreshadowing). We arrived at a dramatic overlook a mile or two into the hike, enjoyed the view and started back toward the trailhead. Roughly 50' after passing the first slide area, a number of boulders (one being half the size of a VW Bug) cut loose from above and tumbled across the trail we had JUST WALKED, less than 10 seconds prior. The large boulders caused the ground to shudder under our feet as they gained air then crashed back down to earth while traveling at a high rate of speed down the slide. The trail crossing the slide was obliterated, and we listened wide-eyed, as large trees snapped along the path of the boulders careening down the mountainside.

This event confirmed several things in my mind. First, that we have no real chance to provide protection to ourselves and our families from events like the one above. We are frankly helpless without God's help. Second, it causes one to consider how many times God protects us in less obvious ways, when we might not even know it. Consider the flow of traffic that

places us at a certain place at a certain time, but not at another place, therefore avoiding potential tragedy. Third, God answers prayer. I pray for God's protection for my family every day, but I don't always see the result of those prayers. In this case, the result was obvious.

Later that evening (after we started breathing again and had scrambled down the mountain rather quickly) I remembered Psalm 121. "The Lord will guard your going out and going in (everything that you do) from this time forth and forever." Be comforted that God is always vigilant is His promised protection of us. Nothing is random with God and He always delivers on His promises.