



WEEK 10  
05.07.17

# DIVINE PROVISION AND PROTECTION

## FOCUS VERSES

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### Hebrews 13:5–6

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

## LESSON TEXT

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### Deuteronomy 33:26–29

26 There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.

27 The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.

28 Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.

29 Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

### Philippians 4:18–19

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.



## FOCUS THOUGHT

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We can count on the support and strength of the Lord as we face the everyday battles of Christian life.



# CULTURE CONNECTION

## This Home Is Protected by Jesus Christ

“According to Alarm System Report, over 2 million home burglaries are reported in the United States each year and, on average, a burglary of a home in the U.S. occurs every 13 seconds—or about four burglaries a minute, 240 an hour, and nearly 6,000 a day” (<http://www.safewise.com/home-security-faq/do-i-need-a-security-system>, accessed November 30, 2015).

Though all homeowners are faced with the real possibility of a home invasion, according to *safewise.com* only 14 percent of homes in the United States have an alarm system protecting their homes. Even though one of the most basic needs humans have is the need to feel protected, oftentimes we will deny the reality of certain threats and feel protected when we really are not.

Man-made institutions can help protect our physical belongings, but for those things that are eternal, we need the Lord to be our Protector. “The FBI burglary rates of homes states that 1 in 3 homes without a security system will fall victim to a burglary as compared to 1 in 250 homes that do have a security system” (*safewise.com*).

The statistics for physical home burglaries may be disturbing, but the statistics involving the burglaries of the heart and soul are much more disconcerting. Without the Lord protecting our families, our homes, and our lives, we are living on the edge of destruction without hope. It is time to put up a sign in the front yard of our lives declaring, “Protected by Jesus Christ.”

## OUTLINE

### I. THE LORD FIGHTS OUR BATTLES

- A. The Lord Fights for His People
- B. The Lord Fought for Moses and Israel
- C. The Lord Desires for Us to Trust in His Name

### II. THE LORD GIVES US COURAGE

- A. Courage to Be Strong
- B. Courage to Stand against False Doctrine

### III. THE LORD PROVIDES PROTECTION

- A. Our Responsibility
- B. The Lord’s Protection

### IV. THE LORD IS OUR PROVIDER

- A. Provider in the Wilderness
- B. Provider on Our Journey
- C. Provider for Eternity

## CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

David declared, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits” (Psalm 103:2). When remembering all the benefits

that come from serving God, our minds are often drawn to the overt, supernatural experiences we may personally encounter: the feeling during and after our baptism, being filled with the Holy Ghost, physical and emotional healings, peace through grief, or even the calm assurance He provides in the midst of a storm in our lives. Often our recollection of these experiences with God forms the basis of personal testimonies we share with others and with which we remind ourselves when we once again face adversity in our lives. We think, “If God did this for me before, He can do it again.”

David’s admonition, however, to “forget not all his benefits” calls us to dig a little deeper and consider the more covert benefits God provides. For example, when have you experienced encouragement from God? When might a last-minute inconvenience have made you late and caused you to miss a tragic accident?

In this lesson, we will explore ways God provides for and protects His people. May our hearts rejoice as we increase our awareness of His provision and protection in our lives.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### I. THE LORD FIGHTS OUR BATTLES

#### A. The Lord Fights for His People

One of the greatest challenges to our faith as Christians is facing adversity that seems impossible to overcome. Whether we are facing coworkers who are hostile to us, family members who reject or despise us, or even criminals who threaten us, we can easily succumb to the human-centered view of our situation as hopeless. Yet if we were to adopt a God-centered view of our situation, we would know that nothing is impossible with Him (Mark 10:27). We can trust God to fight for us and deliver us when we put our trust in Him.

In II Chronicles 32 Judah was faced with what would seem a hopeless situation. The Assyrian armies had conquered much of the surrounding land and were marching toward Jerusalem to besiege the city. King Hezekiah of Judah called the people of Jerusalem together and told them: "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles" (II Chronicles 32:7-8). The arm of flesh, or human strength, is no match for the power of God! The people of Jerusalem received comfort from Hezekiah's faith and gained confidence that the Lord would be victorious.

Taunting Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem to surrender, the king of Assyria spoke against their God, saying he would destroy them just as he had destroyed other nations, and their gods were unable to save them. King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah cried out to God, and He sent an angel to destroy the fighting men and officers of the Assyrian army, causing them to retreat. The Lord had fought the battle for His people alone, without Hezekiah or the people of Jerusalem ever striking one blow.

Whenever we face what appears to be an impossible situation that seems it will defeat us, let us remember the benefit of God as our protector. Human strength is no match for God's strength, and He can overcome any obstacle and bring us victory. Even when the

situation seems impossible, God can fight for us, changing the hearts and minds of those who stand against us, and removing obstacles for His glory.

#### B. The Lord Fought for Moses and Israel

Sometimes we celebrate God's victory for us only to quickly find ourselves once again in a situation that seems impossible. One faulty assumption of recognizing the victory of God in our lives is that everything going forward will be easy and prosperous. After all, God is with us. We assume we will not experience future tragedies, disappointments, setbacks, or impossible situations. Instead of trusting God through every challenge we face and allowing Him to see us through, the temptation is to question God and think, *Why did God fight for me before only to abandon me here?*

This was the case when God delivered the people of Israel from Egyptian slavery through miraculous signs and wonders. After God sent a plague on Egypt that took the life of the firstborn of every family and animal in the land, Pharaoh relented and told the Israelites to leave his land at once. God had changed an impossible situation and brought His people victory!

Unfortunately, no sooner had the people of Israel left Egypt than Pharaoh once again changed his mind and decided to retrieve his slaves. He sent his armies, and the people of Israel found themselves trapped by the Red Sea, the mountains, and the advancing Egyptian army. One victory had led to another crisis. The people questioned Moses: "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (Exodus 14:12).

Moses replied, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD. . . the LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:13-14). Moses then stretched out his rod over the Red Sea, the waters receded, and the people crossed to the other side on dry ground. When the Egyptian army attempted to cross in the same manner, God released the waters and destroyed Pharaoh and his army.

When God brings one victory in our lives, we can expect more opportunities for Him to fight for us. Adversity and challenges will continue to come, and our testimony of deliverance that demonstrates our trust in God will bring us more victory (Revelation 12:11). The promise Jesus Christ gave to His disciples remains for us: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20). God is not with us for just one victory, but He is present throughout our lives, fighting for us.

### **C. The Lord Desires for Us to Trust in His Name**

Who can we trust to fight for us? We live in a modern world where a deficit of trust in institutions and people is high. Whether it be the government, the news, the justice system, the church, or even friends and neighbors, people sometimes find placing trust in others increasingly difficult. In an attempt to fill the trust gap, our culture has sought to lift up heroes, whether politicians, military personnel, and first responders or fictional superheroes once confined to children’s comic books. Our world cries out in vain for a hero who can be trusted, but all such “heroes” inevitably let us down.

However, God said that we can trust Him to be our hero. He will fight for us! This truth is captured in David’s proclamation: “For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved” (Psalm 21:7). Today the name of the Lord has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ, the name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9). Through His name we can expect the miraculous (Mark 16:17–18) and trust that He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). When we trust in the name of the Lord, He empowers us and strengthens our faith by His mercy, enabling us to stand strong in the face of adversity.

## **II. THE LORD GIVES US COURAGE**

### **A. Courage to Be Strong**

We often think of courage in terms of being willing to do something difficult or dangerous. Sometimes we face challenges that God trusts we can handle, but we do

not trust ourselves. In those moments He gives us courage, instilling hope that He has equipped us for the task.

Joshua was an example of a person to whom God gave courage in the face of the enormous task of leading the people of Israel. In Joshua 1, Moses had died and the leadership and mission of the nation to conquer the land of Canaan fell to Moses’ trusted aide, Joshua. The Lord knew how great the task was, but He also knew that Joshua was the man He had gifted to accomplish this task.

While calling Joshua to his new leadership role, the Lord told him, “Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them” (Joshua 1:6). God encouraged Joshua that he could lead the people of Israel just as Moses had. Then the Lord told Joshua a second time, “Be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee” (Joshua 1:7), encouraging him in his holiness to God and obedience to His commands given through Moses that he would be successful. Finally, a third time the Lord told Joshua, “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:9). The Lord encouraged Joshua by assuring him that His presence would be with Joshua just as it was with Moses.

These three encouragements—in leadership, in obedience, and in having the Lord’s presence—enabled Joshua to be successful in leading the people to conquer Canaan with the Lord’s help, fulfilling His promise to Moses that He would bring His people to a great land “flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8).

A few decades ago, Nike Incorporated introduced the slogan “Just Do It” that sought to combine a message of encouragement with their products. Creating an impression that a pair of Nike shoes could help a person achieve athletic or fitness goals, Nike successfully built its brand into a competitive powerhouse. In a similar way, God provides encouragement through His Spirit, serving as our Comforter (John 14:16) and leading us

into the truth of His Word (John 16:13). Combining encouragement by the Spirit and the Word of God tears down the lies of self-doubt and instills courage and hope that God's purpose in us can be fulfilled. God essentially tells us, "Just do it, and I will be with you every step of the way."

## **B. Courage to Stand against False Doctrine**

In a culture that seems increasingly to reject the teachings of Scripture, some churches unfortunately choose to adopt the commands and philosophy of the world instead of the commands of God. The temptation to permit or even pursue false doctrine is as strong as it ever has been in the history of the church. Yet God gives us the courage to stand against the idols of greed, self, and sexual immorality that could bring us to destruction. He encourages us to trust in Him even if we must suffer persecution in standing for righteousness.

While the people of Judah were in Babylonian captivity, King Nebuchadnezzar built a statue and required all of his subjects to bow down and worship it. Three Hebrew men named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down and were brought before the king. The king threatened them with death in a fiery furnace if they refused to bow down to his idol. In defiance to the king's commands, the Hebrew men boldly stated, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:17–18). These men courageously vowed they would not bow down before an idol, even if the consequence of their defiance meant a painful death.

Jesus promised His disciples they would suffer for their faith and ministry in His name: "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Mark 13:13). For those who adhere to the truth of God's Word, every indication of our culture is that the overt persecution of Christians is growing for the North American church. Do we trust in the Lord's salvation, regardless of the outcome? Will we endure to the end?

## **III. THE LORD PROVIDES PROTECTION**

### **A. Our Responsibility**

There is a temptation among God's people to treat the Lord as if He were a genie in a bottle whom they can summon to grant their wishes. However, the Word of God is clear that the Lord expects us to take responsibility for our own protection. In Ephesians 6:10, Paul admonished us to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." How does one do this? Paul answered using a metaphor of a Roman soldier's armor, familiar to everyone in his churches: "Put on the whole armour of God . . . having your loins girt about with truth . . . the breastplate of righteousness . . . feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace . . . the shield of faith . . . the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:11–17). Just as a soldier must prepare for battle by putting on his armor and taking up his weaponry, we as Christians must put on truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and the Holy Spirit if we are to be successful against the spiritual forces of evil at work in our world.

When we consider the task of putting on the armor of God, we may feel overwhelmed or weak or feel we are missing pieces that leave us vulnerable to attack. Perhaps we have truth but lack faith. Paul instructed us to take the initiative for strengthening our armor through prayer: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18). Praying requires us to take responsibility for our weaknesses, a discipline that communicates to God an attitude of "I cannot do this on my own, and I need You."

### **B. The Lord's Protection**

Metaphors are words or descriptors used to illustrate the attributes of another person, place, or thing. In the case of describing the Lord's protection, the Word of God often uses metaphors to help illustrate ways in which He protects us, releasing our anxiety and giving us peace.

In Deuteronomy 33, before his death, Moses blessed the people of Israel and promised

the protection of the Lord: “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33:27). The “everlasting arms” of God paint a picture of strength that never fails, which helps us grasp what it means to find refuge in Him. The hymn “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms,” written by Elisha A. Hoffman and Anthony J. Showalter, expresses the wonderful joy and peace we experience when we trust in His protection: “What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms.”

Using the imagery of a hen that provides protection for her chicks, the psalmist declared, “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust” (Psalm 91:4). The metaphorical image of God covering us “with his feathers” reminds us we can hide in His protection. As we trust in the shelter He provides, His wings serve as a shield and fortification against terror by night and arrows by day, as well as pestilence and plague. (See Psalm 91:5–6.)

## **IV. THE LORD IS OUR PROVIDER**

### **A. Provider in the Wilderness**

The Lord provides for His people, and thankfully, His provision is not conditional. In other words, the Lord provides for us because of His unfailing love, regardless of whether we have failed Him. Sometimes people believe they cannot ask God for help because of past sins, or they do not ask for God’s help because of their personal pride in their ability to “take care of things,” regardless of their ability to do so. Yet the provision of God is not restricted by our assessment of our own morality or ability, but by our willingness to ask God for help (Matthew 7:7–12).

In the Old Testament, God delivered the people of Israel from Egypt and along their journey fed them with manna that came as “bread from heaven” (Exodus 16:4). The manna was available in the morning, and quail came in the evening. When they needed water, God provided water by instructing Moses to strike the rock (Exodus 17:1–7). These provisions came because Moses asked God on behalf of the people. Sadly, sometime later God punished these same people of Israel for their faithlessness and rebellion. He sentenced

them to wander in the wilderness for forty years until the rebellious generation had died. This punishment prolonged their journey to the promised land of Canaan, a prosperous land that could provide their needs for sustenance. God still provided manna and water for them, ensuring that His people were cared for until the punishment was completed and they entered Canaan under Joshua’s leadership (Joshua 5:12).

### **B. Provider on Our Journey**

We often conceptualize life as a journey, and even Scripture is full of similar metaphors for life, including wide and narrow roads, a race, and even a good fight. For some of us, life certainly can seem like a journey as jobs, ministry, or other opportunities take us to other cities, states, or countries. Along the way, God assures us of His provision as we pray and He provides for our daily bread and other physical needs.

The Lord knows what we need before we ask (Matthew 6:8) and is certainly aware of our need for food, water, and clothing (Matthew 6:31–32). In fact, God supplies all our needs “according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). Quoting the words of the Lord, the writer of Hebrews declared, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper” (Hebrews 13:5–6). This promise is also captured as a blessing of provision to those who faithfully serve God, as David proclaimed in Psalm 37:25: “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” Wherever our journey of life leads us, the Lord is our helper and faithfully provides for us.

### **C. Provider for Eternity**

When this journey of our life ends, God’s provision continues into the eternal life He has in store for us. He has already prepared a place in Heaven for our arrival: “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). Heaven is described as having gates of pearl, streets of gold, and walls of jasper (Revelation 21:18, 21). But most importantly, Heaven is where we

will enjoy the presence of Jesus Christ face to face (John 14:3; Revelation 22:4).

Heaven is prepared for those who have experienced the resurrection power of Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:10). The power of Christ's resurrection, which also raises us to new life, is encountered through baptism in Jesus' name (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:4–5) and being filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38; Romans 8:11). This provision of eternal life is for everyone (Acts 2:39).

## INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

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*“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Romans 8:11).*

The greatest provision of God is the gift of Jesus Christ, who as God also was a man,

understanding the challenges we face every day (John 3:16; Hebrews 2:17–18). Jesus knows what it means to receive God's provision through the miraculous feeding of five thousand people (Matthew 14:13–21), as well as to receive God's protection in the face of death by stoning (Luke 4:28–30; John 10:39). He even knows what it feels like to be hungry (Luke 4:2), to be homeless (Matthew 8:20), and to feel overwhelming sorrow in facing God's will for His death (Matthew 26:37–38).

God still provides for us today. Because of His bodily resurrection, we have the assurance of our own bodily resurrection through His Spirit dwelling within us. His hope is our hope, and His victory is our victory. As we consider all the blessings of God, may our personal testimonies grow, and may our worship increase as we remember His benefits and encourage our souls to bless the Lord. (See Psalm 103:2.) ■

## REFLECTIONS

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- What have been the most significant protections and provisions of God in your life?
- Can you think of a time when you felt God delivered you only to abandon you in the face of another trial? How could you use your testimony of God's protection or provision to face your new trial?
- Can you recall a time when you experienced the encouragement of God through either His Spirit or His Word? How did that experience change your appraisal of the situation you were facing, and what was the outcome?
- What metaphor would you use to describe a significant protection of God in your life?
- Where are the weaknesses in your spiritual armor? How and when will you pray?