**LEANING INTO THE FATHER’S LOVE**

**WEEK 5: GOD PROTECTS AND DEFENDS**

“For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.” (Ps. 62:5-8)

“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. 2I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” 3Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. 4He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart… Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.”

(Ps. 91:1-4, 14)

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? 2My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. 3He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; 4indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. 5The Lord watches over you— the Lord is your shade at your right hand; 6the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. 7The Lord will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; 8the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.” (Psalm 121)

“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life. You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes; with your right hand you save me.” (Ps. 138:7)

“‘If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. **18**But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.’” (Dan. 3:17-18)

“See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. 11He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.” (Is. 40:10-11)

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. 11“All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish. 12Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all. 13For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.” (Is. 41:10-13)

“But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.” (2 Thess. 3:3)

“But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth. 18The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (2 Tim. 4:17-18)

“My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:29)

“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” (Col. 2:15)

**God’s Protection**

As a good, strong, and loving Father, God protects his children. There are many verses, stories, and images throughout the Bible that relay to us how God will protect, preserve, and deliver us if we are his. Here’s a small sampling of images in the Bible that convey God’s protection.

* + - Protector: Ps. 91:14
		- Refuge: Ps. 5:11; 46:1; 71:1; 91:2, 4, 9;
		- Tower: Ps. 91:2
		- Fortress: Ps. 59:1;
		- Shepherd: Ps. 23:1;
		- Shield: Ps. 3:3; 28:7; 84:9; 119:14;
		- Rock: 2 Sam. 22:3-4; Dt. 32:4; Ps. 62:5-7;
		- Helper: Ps. 121:1-2;
		- Shelter: Ps. 91:1; Is. 4:6
		- Hiding place: Ps. 32:7; 119:14
		- Deliverer or Defender: Ps. 18:2; Zech. 12:8; Ps. 34:7; Matt. 6:13;
		- My salvation: Ps. 27:1;
		- God’s hand: John 10:29; Is. 49:2; 51:16; Ps. 138:7;
		- God’s arm: Is 40:10-11;
		- God surrounds us: Ps. 32:7; 34:7; 125:2; Dt. 32:10; Zech. 2:5.
		- Wings of a Bird: Ps. 57:1; 91:4; Ex. 19:4;
		- Shade: Ps. 91:1; 121:5;

*What does it mean, and what does it not mean, that God protects, defends, fights for, and shield us?*

Here are ten things I think God’s Fatherly protection does mean:

1. Nothing (not earthly enemies, the Devil, trials, pain, or death itself) can ultimately defeat or destroy us. God’s ultimate and eternal protection was secured for us in the death of his Son, who defeated death, sin, and Satan.
2. God doesn’t promise to spare his people from all earthly trials, but he does promise to preserve them through the trials. God might not shield us from all storms and attacks, but he promises to be our shield in the midst of them.
3. God wants us to come to him as our refuge, defender, and protector when we’re fearful, under attack, overwhelmed, or enduring a storm. These images convey both the Father’s strong defense of us but also his gentle comfort of us, which means we seek rest in God as a refuge just as much as we seek relief from the storm. The Father is tough on our enemies but tender to his children.
4. God does and will protect us from many dangers, temptations, and trials. God protect us in countless ways, some we will know about and many we will not.
5. We can pray for God’s protection, including physical protection, protection from deception and lies, division, spiritual attacks, temptation, protection in our homes and churches, and protection from foolishness or error. Pray for protection and look for how God might be providing it.
6. Though it’s often the thing least on our mind, spiritual battles are where we most need God’s protection and are given God’s protection. We should pray for God’s protection from temptation (Matt. 6:13) and then take the escape he provides (1 Cor. 10:13). We should pray for God’s protection from spiritual enemies and then equip ourselves in God’s spiritual armor so our strength and protection is in him (Eph. 6:10).
7. We are never left on our own or left to our own resources when we face enemies, danger, trials, storms, or attacks. God is the Father who is a mighty defender, protector, refuge, and shield. God is a Warrior who goes before us to fight our battles, and a tower that offers security and stability when we are weak. They key to experiencing his protection is hiding in and leaning on him.
8. God is a Shepherd who leads us with an eye toward our protection. He knows where to lead us in ways to avoid unnecessary dangers and when we must go down a path and dangers are unavoidable, and yet he goes before us and with us to protect us.
9. God sometimes, though not always, protects us from ourselves. Some of the unanswered prayers, closed doors, unwanted paths, and walls or hedges set in our path keeping us from the things we desire are how God takes care of us and protects us from ourselves.
10. With God as our Father, we have earthly comfort, perfect security, and ultimate victory.

**God as Warrior**

“The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name.” (Ex. 15:3) “The LORD is a warrior.” (NASB)

“The Lord goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his zeal; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.” (Is. 42:13)

“The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.” (Zeph. 3:17; NASB)

“You shall not fear them, for it is the Lord your God who fights for you.” (Dt. 3:22)

“The Lord is called a ‘man of war’—a warrior who fights for the good of His people. It is in the Almighty’s nature to wage war against those who would rise up against His name and against His children. We can rejoice in that our covenant-keeping God will never leave us or forsake us, as His outstretched arm is ever present to defeat the enemies of His kingdom ([Deut. 5:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut.%205.15); [Heb. 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.%2013.5)).

God’s weapons are indeed powerful. For example, with His right hand He is able to turn the raging sea to His advantage ([Ex. 15:4-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod.%2015.4-10)). He is sovereign over the elements and bends them as He wishes to destroy those who would oppose Him. The displays of this power also amount to a form of psychological warfare. Edom, Moab, Philistia, and Canaan all trembled with fear when they heard of the Lord’s salvation of Israel (vv. 13-16). In this new covenant era, Satan and his minions fear the power of Christ that manifests itself among Christians through the Holy Spirit ([Mark 5:1-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%205.1-10); [2 Tim. 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.%201.7)); thus, we should not be surprised that the Enemy will do everything in his power to silence the witness of the church. But Jesus fights for us, wielding the sword of the gospel to convert the nations, turn foe into friend, and make the impenitent ripe for the outpouring of His wrath ([Acts 9:1-31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%209.1-31); [Rev. 19:11-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.%2019.11-21)).” <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/divine-warrior/>

**Example: God Will Fight for Us (Ex. 14-15)**

As Exodus 14 begins, God has just redeemed them out of Egypt and to himself (Ex. 12-13). He defeats Pharaoh and the Egyptian gods and leads his people into freedom. The Passover and Exodus are proof God will fight for them, but they will soon be tested as to whether they will trust him next time.

“And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘*By a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt*, from the house of slavery… *for by a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt*.” (Ex. 13:14, 16)

God tells them to camp near the waters of the sea (14:1-2). Pharaoh regrets his decision to let them go, so he takes his army of chariots to pursue Israel (14:5-9). As Pharaoh’s army becomes visible in the distance, the sight of them caused great fear and panic among the people (14:10). They cry out to God. They complain to Moses. They say it would have been better to serve the Egyptians than die in the wilderness (14:12). They’re backed up against a wall and defeat seems imminent. They fear the worst. They panic as they look at Egypt’s army coming with nowhere for them to turn. They have no boats to get across and no place to escape.

* + 1. **Fight fear by looking to God rather than looking at circumstances.**

In Exodus 14:13-14, Moses stands up and calls them to see their circumstances with the vantage of faith.

“Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

* + 1. **Fight fear by trusting in God to fight for us.**

Rather than running around in a fearful panic, Moses tells them to stand firm and watch. Don’t look to the right or the left. Don’t shrink back. In verse 14, it tells them they won’t even have to fight. God fights our battles. Fear assumes God’s away somewhere and I’m here alone on the battlefield against this giant. But God tells us he’s not only there, he’s fighting for us. He has things covered, whether we feel like he does or not.

“The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.” (Ex. 14:14)

“The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him. **3**The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name.” (Ex. 15:2-3)

* + 1. **Fight fear by believing God is with you and walking with him.**

God not only fights for us but he is also with us. He goes before us but he also walks next to us.

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. **2**When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.” (Is. 43:1-2)

“And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.” (Ex. 13:21)

**God as a Refuge**

Part of what I love about these images related to God as protector is both his strength and gentleness are implicit. A shepherd fights off predators but also carries the wounded sheep or nurses them back to health. A strong tower, a fortress, a shield, and a refuge can both convey a position of strength in battle but also a place of security, rest, comfort, and even refreshment. Fathers fight to protect and defend their children, but they also offer a place of retreat, rest, security, and comfort.

God is fierce against our enemies and yet gentle to us in our fears and weakness. He is a strong defense that can protect us from the enemy’s weapons or the storms waves, but he’s also a shade that provides the rest, relief, and refreshment we need. Or as the language of a mother bird’s wings suggest, the wings not only protect from rain or potential threats, but it also warmly offers love, security, safety, and the comfort of presence. God is all these things to us. He’s not just a warrior who fights our enemies, but he’s also the gentle father who tells us to run to him when we’re afraid, when we’ve overwhelmed, when we’re in danger, or when we’re under attack. God is tough on our enemies but tender to his children. He is as soft as the wings of a bird caring for its young (Ps. 91:4) and yet as firm and unflinching as armor (Ps. 91:4).

“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.” (Psalm 34:8, 19-22)

“Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by.” (Psalm 57:1)

“For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. **6**He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. **7**On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.” (Psalm 62:6-7)

“See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. 11He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.” (Is. 40:10-11)

“Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings.” (Ps. 17:8)

**Example: Psalm 91**

“The Lord can keep you, and he will keep you. What will he keep you from? Anything that might ultimately harm you. People were harmed on the way to Jerusalem, and you will be harmed following in the footsteps of Christ ([John 16:33](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2016.33)). But if you are God’s, nothing can ultimately harm you anymore, because nothing — neither death, nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor anything that threatens you — can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus ([Romans 8:38–39](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.38%E2%80%9339)).” Marshall Segal, “[The Lord Can and Will Keep You](https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-lord-can-and-will-keep-you)”

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. When you read language about God being a Warrior or one who fights for us, what comes to mind? Why can these images be encouraging and give us strength as his people?
2. What do some of these images or descriptions of God convey to you about his loving protection?

Which speak to you the most, and why?

* + - Protector: Ps. 91:14
		- Refuge: Ps. 5:11; 46:1; 71:1; 91:2,
		- Tower: Ps. 91:2
		- Fortress: Ps. 59:1;
		- Shepherd: Ps. 23:1;
		- Shield: Ps. 3:3; 28:7; 84:9; 119:14;
		- Rock: Dt. 32:4; Ps. 62:5-7;
		- Helper: Ps. 121:1-2;
		- Shelter: Ps. 91:1
		- Hiding place: Ps. 32:7; 119:14
		- Deliverer or Defender: Ps. 18:2; Zech. 12:8; Ps. 34:7; Matt. 6:13;
		- My salvation: Ps. 27:1;
		- God’s hand: John 10:29; Is. 49:2; 51:16; Ps. 138:7;
		- God’s arm: Is 40:10-11;
		- Shade: Ps. 91:1; 121:5;
1. Many of the images or metaphors of God above not only suggest his strength and power—his ability to defend—but also his comfort, gentleness, and the safety and security in him. Why are both aspects of God as our protector and refuge important?
2. Beyond physical or financial protection, what are some of the ways or when might we need God’s protection in our world today?
3. How do we respond to and receive God’s promise to protect, defend, and shield us?
4. When trials come your way and it might feel like God has not protected you from hardship or pain, what do you need to rehearse or remember?
5. Can you think of stories or examples where God protected his people in the Old or New Testament? What do you learn from those stories?
6. How can we know that nothing will ultimately defeat or destroy us, which means no matter what happens on this Earth, God protects and keeps us?
7. We should pray for spiritual protection by God but then we also use or employ the means he gives us to fight in his strength, live under his protection, and be on guard against attacks. What are some of those means or provisions by God? How do we use or walk in them?

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**

* “[The Lord Can and Will Keep You](https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-lord-can-and-will-keep-you)” by Marshall Segal at desiringgod.org
* “[Psalm 91: Eternal Safety in A World of Danger](https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/article/psalm-91-eternal-safety-in-a-world-of-danger/)” by Kyle Johnston at africa.thegospelcoalition.org
* “[Finding Refreshment in God Our Refuge](https://indycrowe.com/2020/08/11/finding-refreshment-in-god-our-refuge/)” by Dustin Crowe at indycrowe.com
* “[God is Our Shield](https://adoringgod.org/2019/05/03/god-is-our-shield/)” by adoringgod.org
* “[Safe Shelter](https://adoringgod.org/2019/05/03/god-is-our-shield/)” sermon by Charles Spurgeon at spurgeon.org and commentary on [Psalm 91 in The Treasury of David](https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=spur&b=19&c=91).
* “[The Divine Warrior](https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/divine-warrior/)” at Ligonier.org

**“A Mighty Fortress” by Martin Luther (1529), Translated by** [**Frederick H. Hedge (1852)**](https://hymnary.org/text/a_mighty_fortress_is_our_god_a_bulwark#Translator)

1 A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper he, amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
does seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.

2 Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right Man on our side,
the Man of God's own choosing.
You ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth his name,
from age to age the same;
and he must win the battle.

3 And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed
his truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! his doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.

4 That Word above all earthly powers
no thanks to them abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours
through him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever!

**“Always” by Kristian Stanfill**

My foes are many, they rise against me
But I will hold my ground
I will not fear the war, I will not fear the storm
My help is on the way, my help is on the way

Oh, my God, He will not delay
My refuge and strength always
I will not fear, His promise is true
My God will come through always, always

Troubles surround me, chaos abounding
My soul will rest in You
I will not fear the war, I will not fear the storm
My help is on the way, my help is on the way

Oh, my God, He will not delay
My refuge and strength always
I will not fear, His promise is true
My God will come through always, always

I lift my eyes up, my help comes from the Lord