

# Divine Witness Protection #1

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[ 0 : 00 ] God forbid, but if you're a witness to a crime in the state of Tennessee, you may qualify for witness protection.

Substantial danger of intimidation or retaliatory violence. Protection is usually initiated by local and state prosecutors when there is a high risk of harm.

So if you see something bad, this is usually pretty bad, there is a possibility for witness protection. It could even include something serious like relocation.

Sadly, it doesn't always work. In May of 2016, a young African-American woman named Bianca Horton was murdered by the gang-affiliated shooter, whom she identified as shooting her daughter and paralyzing her.

A horrible crime. But she was bold and brave enough to seek justice for her daughter. And she spoke up. She did not receive witness protection.

[ 1 : 28 ] It took 10 years, but it seems new laws because of her death are in place to protect witnesses since last year, 2025. Sometimes our justice system fails to protect as it should.

There are many reasons for that. But the good news is that God has initiated a divine witness protection plan, and it's flawless. All his people receive his protection always.

Always spiritually. Many times physically. God's protection plan does not guarantee that you and I will be kept from physical harm.

Just look at our brothers and sisters in China. The pastors there, they've talked, they've written books and things online I've read. And the way the church in China is being persecuted by the government is striking.

People disappear. But yet, many times, they are protected by the Lord. And they continue, the pastors continue to proclaim the good news of Jesus, sometimes even in secret.

[ 2 : 46 ] But no one slips through the cracks of God's divine protection plan. Anything that happens to us must come through his sovereign, loving hand.

But like all protection, witness protection plans, you've got to use wisdom. Have you ever watched those TV shows where a family mob, a mob family, the guy wants to turn evidence against the mob, and they put them in witness protection plan, witness protection, and they relocate them somewhere, and they change their names?

It's always the same thing. The teenager goes online. Gotta go on, gotta talk to Twitter or X or whatever.

And that's how the mob finds them. You see, you gotta use wisdom if you're in a protection plan.

The same is true with God. We are called to use wisdom even under his divine protection.

So my question to you this morning, are you living under the terms of God's protection plan? Are you walking wisely?

[ 4 : 08 ] Paul said it best. Be not unwise, but wise. Are you walking in wisdom? Now look at where we are.

We are in the second section of our Lord's glorious prayer. Verses 1 through 5, Jesus, our Lord, prayed for himself. He prayed for a return to glory.

And now in this next section, verses 6 to 19, he begins praying for his disciples. In this particular section, he's focused really on his immediate disciples, those first disciples.

But because this is for us, we also have application to our own lives. It speaks to us as well. So Jesus now is praying for his disciples.

And the big idea in this section, verses 6 through 19, is that Jesus prays for his disciples' protection because they are God's people whom he has sent into the world to bear witness to him.

[ 5 : 13 ] Now what are the marks of such people? They know they belong to God. They rely on his protection. They experience the Lord's joy.

They're hated because they're not of the world. And they know that they are ambassadors for Christ. We're not going to cover all of that today, but we'll start.

Give it a good start. Jesus instituted this plan of divine protection himself. And in this prayer, he's calling upon the Father to continue what he started, to protect his disciples.

Now here's the first stipulation for divine protection. The Lord's disciples must know that they belong to God. And that's an important thing.

You know, you just really think about, whose are you? Jesus, first of all, in verse 6 says, he reveals God's name to God's people.

[ 6 : 20 ] Name represents God's character, God's authority, and God's reputation. Jesus manifests or reveals God to certain people in his own person.

In other words, in Jesus, we see what God is like. And experience through his spirit, his very presence. As I said last Sunday, the revelation of God that we experience is to see the glory of Jesus.

Jesus, the majesty of Jesus. Do you see a Jesus that makes you stop and gape and fall on your face and submit?

Is that the Jesus you see? A Jesus that is so beautiful, he can make you cry just by gazing upon who he is and what he's done.

This is clear about Jesus throughout John's gospel. In the very beginning of the gospel, John writes, no one has ever seen God, verses 118, the only God who's at the Father's side, he has made him known.

[ 7 : 35 ] The word became flesh and the word being one with God reveals him. You want to see what God is like? Of course, the best place to go is to look at Jesus.

But Jesus reveals God to his people. To his people. Everybody doesn't have a clear view of God. If you do, it's because of the grace of God that he's opened your heart, opened your mind, opened your life, that you may behold him for who he is.

Now listen, the reason the disciples of Jesus need protection is because they have been given or gifted to Jesus by the Father.

We said this before, and I love the idea. It's so beautiful that believers are a love gift from the Father to the Son.

[ 8 : 37 ] And he mentions this, the gift of people to him in verse 2. Of course, he started already in verse 2. But now he says it three more times.

Two times in verse 6 and once in verse 9. What does that say to us? It tells us this is not just a small idea. It's a huge idea.

To recognize that the people who trust in Jesus have been given to him by the Father. Why is it so important in prayer?

What makes Christians, that is disciples of Jesus, unique and even dangerous to the world and the devil is that we belong to God.

That's what marks you. Our allegiance is to God over all else. We belong to him. We belong to Christ.

[ 9 : 38 ] God, the Father, gave us to the Son. When the Father chooses those he will save in eternity past, they belong to him then. And in the fullness of time, he will save them.

There's no doubt about it. There's no getting around this. When God sets his love upon a people before the world was created, they will be his.

He's not like us. There are things that I want, but I can't get it. There are things that I want that I can't afford to buy.

God doesn't have that problem. Whatever he wants, he gets. And it cannot be stopped. Even before we were born, he set his love upon us.

And no one knows who that is. You don't know. You're walking around. You have no idea what God has planned. But he will reveal it in the fullness of time.

[ 10 : 54 ] You know, when a couple wants to adopt a child, they usually have maybe several to choose from. You know, the adoption agent may give you a context, an idea.

Those of you who have adopted people, you know more about this than I do. But you may have more than one to choose. Sometimes there will be multiple children in the family, and you can't take

all of them.

You'll have to choose. Those children you will bring home to be your heirs, to be with you, to bear your name.

You will provide for them. The child has no idea if he's an infant that he needs to be chosen by anyone. He's an infant. He knows nothing.

He's just glad to be alive and experiencing new life. Like Rosemary here. She was just glad to be alive. Just glad to be here playing with Uncle Rev, Kev, Scruffy and Beard and everything.

[ 11 : 55 ] Just living life. That's how we are. When we come into the world, we have no idea that we're spiritual orphans. We have no idea that we don't have a Heavenly Father.

All we know is that we're alive. And we're going to have fun. And we're going to do things and experience things. We have no idea what's happening around us spiritually.

We have no idea about the spiritual forces of darkness in the heavenly realms that are active throughout all of our communities and countries. We have no idea. We have no idea that we are, as the Bible says, dead in our trespasses and sins.

We have no idea that if we don't turn to God, the wrath of God is real. We have no idea about these things. But then our eyes were opened.

And you recognize that we're not alone in the universe. It's because God, the Father, who set His hands upon you before the world began, has sent His Spirit now at that moment.

[ 13 : 03 ] And your eyes are opened. And you realize that God is real. That Jesus really did live and die and rise again in time, in space, in history.

You begin, you become aware. And then you come a-run into Jesus. Because you recognize He is the ark of safety. The only place where you can truly forever be safe.

The only place where you can be loved eternally with a love that will not let you go. And that will be with you every day of your life, even to the last moment when you utter your last, you breathe your last breath.

He'll be with you and He'll pull you into eternity with Him. Amen. It is His good pleasure and love alone that makes the difference.

You see, disciples of Jesus are not some random group of people. They belong to the Father whom He gave to Jesus that Jesus might save them.

[ 14 : 12 ] And He gave them to Jesus out of the world. Many to choose from. But in His own will, His own plan, His own way, we don't know the mind of God.

He decides whom He will draw. And listen, here's the thing. If He doesn't draw, if He doesn't choose, if He doesn't snatch us out, then nobody would be saved.

No one. Because in and of ourselves, we would never choose Him. He's just not fun enough. He won't do things our way.

We would never want that. And we never want Him. No one seeks God. That's what Paul says in Romans 3. No one seeks God. We seek an idea of God.

We seek what we want in life. But we never seek the one true God. Ephesians 1 says it so best, so good.

[ 15 : 17 ] 1, 4, and 5. Speaking of God the Father. Even as He chose us in Him, Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

In love, He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ. Why did He do it? According to the purpose of His will. That's all we got, y'all.

The purpose of His will. And notice the words that are being used. We are chosen. That's where the word election comes from there. We are elect. We are chosen. Notice we're predestined.

And predestined for what? Adoption. Into the royal family. In the missionary journeys of Paul and Barnabas, Luke records these words after the Jews have rejected the gospel in the ancient city of Antioch of Pisidia.

Paul and Barnabas tell the Jews that they're going to the Gentiles. They say, you guys don't want the gospel. You don't want the Christ. You don't want your Messiah.

[ 16 : 22 ] You don't want this good news. That's okay. We know people who will take it. We're going to the Gentiles, the non-Jews. Acts 13, here's what it says. And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you, Jews, people.

Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are returning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I've made you a light for the Gentiles, that

you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord. And as many as, note this word, as many as were appointed, that is determined, ordained, ordered, set, to eternal life believed.

They were appointed. They didn't just happen. Because the Father was already at work. This is good news, y'all, that if you are walking with Christ, this is not a last-minute idea.

This is not something that you, you just got, your life got so bad. Or things got so bad that you had to turn. There's none of that, none of that. But if you're walking with Christ today, if you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior today, it is because God appointed you by his grace, meaning you did nothing to earn or deserve it.

[ 17 : 53 ] He appointed you. He predestined you. He chose you. If that doesn't blow your heart apart in joy, I don't know what will.

You cannot be lost. You have, we have a reservation that God will keep for you in heaven and glory in the new heavens and the new earth.

You're chosen. You're not lucky. You're not desperate. You're chosen. This is what characterizes these disciples of Jesus and therefore makes them dangerous to the world and the devil.

They belong to God and therefore Jesus says, I mean, they keep God's word. I hope that's true of us. Meaning, Jesus means that they, we pay careful attention to the words that Jesus gives us that we may obey them fully.

We know that Jesus, the son of God, was sent by the father and so anything he says is serious and cannot be ignored. Is that you? When you pick up the book and you read the word of God, is it something you can ignore?

[ 19 : 16 ] Is it something you can put, just, okay, that was nice, and go on about your business? When God speaks to us and gives us directions for how to live, which he does.

Is it easy to ignore those things? Then you walk away, as James says, you look into the mirror of the law of the Lord, you see your face and walk away forgetting what you look like.

Because when you come to this book, it not only reveals God to us, amen to that, it's first and foremost, that's what's most important, but it reveals you. It's a mirror.

It's a mirror that sees you more clearly than anybody else you know. I don't care if you're married, I don't care if you got best friends, they know you, but they don't know you like God.

And when you pick up the word of God, he reveals who you are and will you take that seriously?

Will you keep his word? He's manifested the Father to you, he's revealed the living God to you so that you might keep his word.

[ 20 : 37 ] A disciple of the word of God listens carefully to the word of God, not to critique the preacher, not to critique the word, but to come up under it. If it's the word of the living God, then we come up under it.

I love what Isaiah says, and this is a mark of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. A mark of what it means to belong to God. He says, yes, up there.

God is speaking through the prophet, but this is the one to whom I will look. That means God will give his attention. He who is humble and contrite in spirit, he's humble, he's broken in spirit, he's not arrogant and proud and trembles at my word.

Oh, that we had people in the church of God who trembled at the word of God, who were humble and contrite.

Oh, that we had people who would take God's word so seriously that God is speaking that in their souls they would tremble. God says, these are the people that get my attention.

[ 21 : 51 ] I look towards them. I focus on them because they take my word blood seriously because they know it's the word of the creator of the heavens and the earth.

The one who cannot be contained is speaking to us. Every year, the president gives what he, more than once probably, but the state of the union address.

And every year, millions of people will go to their TV and they're glued, listening. Not everybody does it, I know. But they're glued, listening to the state of address.

And then you got those people who say, ah, who cares what you got to say. They blow it off. Are you more serious about the president's state of the union than you are about the word of God?

Or do you neglect both of them? Maybe you blow them both off. Then I want to ask you a question. Have you seen Jesus?

[ 23 : 01 ] Do you know that you know that you know that you truly belong to God? Because if you can blow off his word, that is a sign that you do not have his spirit. If you keep his word through the empowering of God's spirit, not by yourself, by the power of the spirit, then the devil loses his hold on your life.

You are able to resist him and thus render him less effective in you. That's why you're so dangerous. That's why the world hates.

The devil hates you and the world will hate you because, see, you are no longer shackled to that way of thinking. You're dangerous to the forces of darkness because the devil has lost his grip on you.

You are a traitor to him because you've been pulled out of the kingdom of darkness and you've been transferred into the kingdom of light and the devil now sees you as a traitor.

And you know how people, how countries feel about traitors. In this country, if you are a traitor, the punishment is not pretty.

[ 24 : 22 ] In any country, if you are found to be a traitor, the punishment is death. The devil sees you as a traitor and he's coming after you.

But the good news is Jesus has prayed for us. He's prayed for us. And we are thereby under his witness protection plan.

And we're not secret though. We're standing right here. We're out. We're out. We're right here. We are not hiding. We are standing right here in the name of Jesus standing against the forces of darkness and declaring that Jesus is Lord and reigning and ruling now.

That makes you dangerous. We don't do it in our own strength. You know this. It is why Jesus is praying for us because we have no strength.

this was especially important for the early disciples. Remember I said this section in particular applies to them.

[ 25 : 33 ] Why was it so important for them? Because they were the ones who walked with him and touched him and ate with him and saw him rise from the dead. It is their testimony that we stand upon.

Can you imagine if they were not unified in their testimony? Can you imagine if they started to argue and break up about what they actually heard and saw?

It would have killed the church before it even began. Jesus is protecting them that if their witness might be unified it might be one.

He says I'm praying that they will be one as we are one. The last thing we're going to look at for today is what our Lord says in verse nine.

I'm not praying for the world but for my paraphrase my disciples alone those whom you've given me.

[ 26 : 36 ] Let that sink in. Jesus doesn't pray for everybody. Right. Right. Right. let that fall for a minute.

Who's he praying for? His disciples. Christ is reigning in heaven at the right hand of the Father for his people. For you who trust in him who've been given to him by the Father.

His power over the universe is being exercised first of all for his glory and then for you his people.

You ever have somebody stand up for you? You ever been in a situation where you were weak?

You know outnumbered? You know just could you just had no hope.

you were going to get fired or get beat up or something. You just you had nobody. And somebody steps up and gets your back.

[ 27 : 50 ] Somebody steps up and says no no leave him alone. Leave her alone. Somebody steps up and says to the boss listen listen she didn't do that.

I saw what happened. She didn't do that. If you want to fire somebody fire him. Somebody stands up and gets your back. It's like all that you thought you were alone.

You thought you were doomed. You thought it was over. And somebody steps up and you are rescued. Family Jesus has stepped up.

And he began by praying for you. Praying for his people. And even now. And he will go to the cross and be between us and the wrath of God.

And now that he's risen he's in heaven and ascended he's still there looking at you. When Stephen the first martyr was murdered and killed what did he see? Do you remember what he saw?

[ 28 : 53 ] He said behold I look at the heaven and I see the son of man standing on the right hand of the father. He saw Jesus stood up. The Bible says he's seated at the right hand of God.

But when Stephen was going through when Stephen was breathing his ass when his people were hurting he stood up. He stood up and he's standing for you.

You are protected. We're not done yet but you're protected by the love of God in Christ Jesus. fear not little flock.

It is the father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom and he will not fail. Be bold. Be courageous. Be humble and contrite. Stand in the name of Jesus. father. Father thank you for your word. Thank you for this portion we've able to cover this morning.

[ 30 : 01 ] What a beautiful time with your people in baptism and new members and I'm just so grateful for how you are blessing this church.

the forces of darkness tried to destroy but you have blessed us and your will is being done and we submit to your will.

Help us to stand firm in the name of Jesus. Thank you that he prayed for us and we live under his protection. We're under your protection father.

So help us to walk in that even today throughout this week. Help us to go forward knowing that we belong to you. Help us to think more next week about what that means.

May we walk worthy of the name of Christ in his name. Amen.