

May 16, 2020

Hello Brethren,

God answered one of our prayers today. Probably not the only one, but a significant one.

Reflecting on His intervention made me consider how often we each may pray for God's protection. Is it something that is daily a part of our prayers, both for ourselves and for others?

Paul was not shy about asking for the prayers of his brethren. *"Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe..."* (Romans 15:30-31).

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith." (II Thessalonians 3:1-2).

Paul faced all kinds of perils, and he wrote about them several times in scripture. He was beaten, shipwrecked, stoned and whipped, maligned and then disgraced in front of as wide an audience as his accusers could find. I rather doubt Paul knew from day to day what challenges he would face that day, so he relied on God's protection.

I don't think any of us can say we've had to face down the same trials Paul did, but that doesn't mean we don't face perils, and that we don't need the protection of our Father. Let me give you the case in point that prompted my opening sentence.

With the coronavirus infection and the governmental reactions to it, we all know the Headquarters office was closed in March, and that meant the Foundation Institute classes could no longer be held in person. Instead the instructors transitioned to online instruction, and that's how it remained for the last two or three months of the school year.

As an FI student this year, our son Daniel then had a choice to make. He had lost his job at a pizza place due to restrictions because of the virus, which would make paying rent a challenge. He could stay there, buy his own food and figure out how to pay his bills, or he could come home where he could live much cheaper and eat mom's cooking. That decision didn't take very long to make, and while we are sad the year didn't finish the way it was planned, we've been happy to have him back.

Fast forward to this weekend and the FI graduation ceremony. No family or friends are allowed to come (sniff, sniff) because of continued restrictions – although it is going to be broadcast on cogwa.tv at 10 am Sunday morning (in case any of you want to tune in). Unfortunately, because of time, distance and expense, we know not all the students will be able to return for graduation.

But we live close enough that Daniel is able to drive back for the weekend, and be present for his graduation. If something like this is at all possible, we think it is important, so he left Friday morning for the drive down.

You know we've had a lot of storms moving through, and that meant Daniel had to drive right through a rather ominous-looking cell with lots of reds and yellows on the radar image. Sure enough, partway down he drove into some very heavy rain, and while the entire interstate had slowed down, it apparently wasn't quite slow enough. He said one moment he was in the right-hand lane, and the next he started sliding across the interstate, through the left lane and heading toward the grassy median strip! It can happen in an instant, but he was hydroplaning on a thin sheet of water – tires no longer in contact with the pavement.

When he hit the rumble strip on the far side just before he would have left the pavement, he was able to regain control once again (and no doubt drove more slowly and carefully until he was out of the rain!). How did he manage to regain control without hitting another vehicle, a railing or bridge abutment, or even sliding into the ditch and rolling the car over? Severe property damage, injury and death are often the result of such situations.

Was it the excellent mechanical condition of the car or his finely honed driving skills that saved the day for him? I'm sure those things might factor in, we all know the biggest factor was the merciful intervention and protection of Almighty God. Asking for protection is part of my prayers every day, but knowing the drive he would make and the forecasted weather, his mother and I prayed specifically for his protection on this trip. And God answered one of our prayers today.

Paul was not shy about asking the brethren to pray for his safety and protection, and as he prayed for the Church I'm sure he also asked God for protection as well. It is important that you and I continue to do the same. We never know what any particular day will bring, so asking for wisdom and protection from God is very important!

Thinking of the moment he lost control I realize a change in just one of dozens of different variables could have turned this weekend from one of happiness and celebration to one of agony, pain and horror. I've often wondered how many times that same thing be true for any of us.

God answered one of our prayers today. And it reminded me how important it is to ask for His guidance and protection for ourselves and for each other ... every day.

Tomorrow we'll have our local webcast beginning at 9:30 am CDT. We will also have a headquarters webcast beginning at 12 noon. I hope you all have a peaceful and deeply meaningful Sabbath.

Best regards,

Thomas L. Clark
Pastor