

Understanding the Covering of God

Terrorists, weather disasters and financial uncertainty have many people worried today. Are you living in the security of God's protection?

We live in a world that seems ready to burst under the rising pressures of natural and spiritual threats. The strains of terrorism and natural disasters are merely part of the dark forces our ages-old adversary is relentlessly leveraging against us during the short time he has (see Rev. 12:12). Make no mistake: In these last days, the devil is targeting your family, your health and your spiritual life as never before.

Despite the dangers, God's people can live with an unshakable confidence in the safety of His protection. Psalm 91:4 reassures us, "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge" (NKJV). And Deuteronomy 33:12 declares: "'The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him, who shelters him all the day long.'" When we connect with His covering, we don't have to fear the turmoil of our times.

Unfortunately, making sense of the spiritual covering issue isn't easy. After studying the Scriptures on the subject, I spent some time searching the Internet. My head is still spinning from the mixed input I received!

What does the Christian world have to say about this topic? Prepare to be disturbed, and perhaps a little embarrassed.

"Covering for Cash" approach. There is a growing trend in many ministries toward paying for spiritual protection. One well-known ministry offers your choice of "three levels of covering" in exchange for monthly tithes and offerings. Imagine: You can become a "spiritual son or daughter" if you just send in a check!

“He’s All I Need” camp. Some decry “the myth of spiritual covering” as unbiblical. Citing examples of past abuses of authority, they contend there is no need for any additional protection if Christ is in your life. I’m hoping that means I won’t have to pay my health insurance premiums much longer.

“Keep the Women in Their Place” club. A few seem alarmed by the epidemic of error-prone women running around “uncovered.” I hadn’t noticed the problem but was relieved when I learned how simple the solution is: Make them wear veils, keep silent in church and obey their husbands. My true response? Lord, help us!

“Safety in Numbers” networks. Others seem sincere in their desire to bring leaders together for fellowship, mentoring and outreach. In essence, these ministries propose to be a relational safe harbor in stormy times. And judging by the number of people seeking covering through them, many people have a need for what they offer.

In general, the muddled message out there seems to be, If you believe the right revelations, join the right group and do the right things (especially with money), you’ll be spiritually covered. But is this idea biblical? How does God define “spiritual covering”?

Christ Is Our Covering

The Bible tells us that the moment we receive Christ, a canopy of protection is stretched out over our lives. We see this truth pictured in the description of the Passover (see Ex. 12:21-27).

While the children of Israel were preparing to flee Egypt, a spirit of death was being released against the firstborn of the land. The only protection for Israel was the shed blood of a spotless lamb on the doorposts of their dwellings. If the blood was in place, they were spared.

Today, Christ is our Passover Lamb (see 1 Cor. 5:7). His blood keeps us safe and secure. This is the glorious work of the cross in our lives and the inheritance of every believer.

We get another glimpse of the covering power of the blood in the amazing story of a harlot from Jericho (see Josh. 2). Rahab knew it was inevitable that Israel would prevail against her own lost city. So with legendary faith, she requested and received protection during the invasion.

The key to her protection was a red cord hanging from her window, which represents the blood of Christ. Though Jericho was destroyed, her family was spared through the provision of the crimson cord.

There's a common thread of truth we cannot overlook in these examples of Christ's provision: Spiritual protection for God's people depends completely upon proper positioning. Even though a promise of safety was given, no one was safe unless he was in place.

Had the Israelites left their homes during Passover and had Rahab been anywhere but behind the crimson cord, they would not have been covered. The same is true of Noah and his family during the flood.

Position is important. The psalmist wrote, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1). The best umbrella is useless in a rainstorm unless you are under it!

Today, it's essential for us to know how and where to come under the full protection of Christ's sacrifice. Our faith in Christ saves us, but our cooperation with His provision is the key to everything else. God is under no obligation to protect us when we resist His direction, but He will guard those who are surrendered and in place.

God's Covering Systems

My wife and I recently took a drive in a nice convertible. The top was down, the sun was shining and we were heading for the coast. As we stopped to get a couple of coffees to go, rain clouds gathered and it started to sprinkle. We were disappointed but not concerned for our comfort because the car had a built-in system to move the top into place.

Spiritual covering works much the same way. Scripture reveals that though God's protection is present and available in Christ, it is carried to us through two delivery systems He has set up.

Prayer. We're encouraged to use constant intercession with the shield of faith to quench the attacks of Satan (see Eph. 6:16,18). There is nothing like a prayer shield to provide covering over the life of a believer.

All of us should continually pray for one another, our nation and our leaders. Prayer activates the heavenly host (see Ps. 34:7), erects a hedge of protection around us (see Job 1:5,9-11) and seals the gaps through which our spiritual enemy tries to gain access to our lives (see Ezek. 22:30).

With the covering system of prayer in place, we can move forward in our lives without being continually knocked back by the devil.

Divinely appointed relationships. Isaiah prophesied of our day: "The Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering ... for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain" (Is. 4:5-6).

The covering over every home speaks of family relationships. The covering over every assembly speaks of the local church.

Don't miss this: God's covering is released to us when we are

rightly connected in our families and churches. Those relationships are the joints that supply us (see Eph. 4:16). Right relationships have always been vital to our safety (see 1 Cor. 11:11-12; Eph. 5:21-25; Heb. 10:24-25; 13:17).

Still, whenever the word “covering” comes up, a lot of us want to run and hide under a pew. We’ve seen the tragic abuses of authority and control that can surface when we fail to view all this correctly. Here’s some advice:

- Don’t allow anyone to control you or make you fearful by twisting Scriptures that relate to covering.
- Beware of top-heavy leadership structures that overemphasize tithing, authority and headship.
- Think twice when you hear legalistic messages about submission that rob you of your freedom in Christ.
- Be cautious when you see an overuse of titles and holy hierarchies that keep you dependent on spiritual “big shots.”
- Don’t play into the unhealthy control of those who desperately seek importance in your life. These imbalanced arrangements grieve the Holy Spirit and hurt people.

For sure, legalism, ignorance and abuses of authority have attached themselves to the subject of covering. But does that mean we should banish it as revelation altogether? I don’t believe it does.

The accountability and care I’ve enjoyed by being part of a believing family, praying local church, and dedicated network of friends and ministries has been an indispensable part of my growth and success. So in my view, it’s far better to stay covered and connected, if we can keep it balanced.

Allow the Lord to guide you into the blessing of

divinely appointed relationships at home and in the local church. Whenever Satan seeks to divide, strive to stay united in love and order, knowing that Christ has shed His blood for us all.

Position yourself to both offer and receive continual prayer. Let His precious blood anoint the doorposts of your life and the crimson cords of His love protect you in the day of battle.

There really is a safe place for each of us in God. The natural and spiritual threats out there are real, but we should never be afraid of what they can do to us. When we're positioned in Him and connected to His provision, the canopy of His protection rises high and strong over us.

The next time you're caught in a storm or you sense the attack of your spiritual adversary, settle it in your heart that things will be OK. Just stand strong in your faith and remember: God's got you covered!

5 Signs of a Solid Spiritual Covering

You need the added protection that a solid spiritual covering can bring to your life. Here are a few benchmarks to look for whenever you consider connecting with a local church, denomination or ministerial fellowship.

1. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST Look for morality, integrity and the fruit of the Spirit in the life of any leader you connect with. Though no one is perfect, the quality of a corporate covering is linked with solid character, not sensational gifts that can mask an unyielded and ungracious heart.

2. PURE TEACHING Connecting with those who peddle flaky doctrines, push spiritual fads or tout pet truths is

always risky. Look for fellowship where the message is balanced and scriptural. Be wary when you sense an overemphasis on giving money. Church leaders with genuine character never exploit their flocks.

3. THE WITNESS OF THE BODY Reputations are usually earned. When ministries are approved by the wider body of Christ, it's an indication you can connect with confidence.

4. MATURITY AND A GOOD TRACK RECORD Spiritual authority becomes more credible with time and experience. Value the tested maturity and proven longevity of a corporate covering above any self-certifying claims of special anointing or truth.

5. THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT Since God sets us into our place in the body (see 1 Cor. 12:8), we should seek the coverings He's assigned to us by the Spirit. Let the anointing in you guide you in the discovery of true protection and fellowship.

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