Does God Promise to Protect Us?
By Steve Cornell

The day after Easter, I had the first opportunity to fly since the tragic events of 9-11. As I traveled from New York to London and London to Belfast, I was drawn to reflect on God’s protection. Perhaps being in a one hundred fifty foot airplane that weighs almost half a million pounds, traveling at five hundred miles an hour, forty thousand feet in the air, intensified my thoughts. In the post 9-11 world, protection from danger has become a serious concern for most people.

Prayers for protection are also common. “Lord,” we pray, “watch over us, put a hedge around us, keep our children safe, protect them from…” We can assume that such prayers were offered for those in the World Trade Towers on the horrific day of their destruction. But does God make any guarantees regarding the protection of our physical wellbeing in this world?

Before answering this question, several affirmations should be made. First, prayers for protection assume that we live in a world where there are dangers and threats to our security. These dangers affect every area of life: physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, and even ecological—nature itself can be a threat to our safety. We live in a world full of unsafe people, places and things. We have real concerns for personal, local, national, and international security.

Secondly, it is right to be concerned about the safety of others. Jesus prayed for the protection of his followers and taught them to pray, “…deliver us from evil” (John 17:15; Matthew 6:13). Most parents pray regularly for the safety of their children.

Finally, there are many promises in Scripture of God’s love and care (Romans 8:35-39; I Peter 5:7). Scripture teaches God’s provision of guardian angels (Matthew 18:10). The psalmist reminded us that, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). There are also great examples of God’s intervention for his people recorded in the Bible. God’s absolute power and sacrificial love are prominently emphasized. Yet there are examples of times when God did not deliver people from physical dangers (Hebrews 11:35-38). So what should we expect from God’s protection? Does God make guarantees concerning physical safety in this world?

While preparing to leave for my trip to Ireland, my eleven year old son expressed deep concern about the safety of my flight. “I know your plane is going to crash,” he pessimistically declared. Children who witnessed the events of 9-11 have these kinds of fears. Would it have been right to tell my son that he shouldn’t worry because God will keep his Dad safe? If I told him this, and my flight crashed, he could have become bitter toward God for not protecting me.

We must not give children or anyone else the impression that God guarantees safety from harm in this life. He does not make such promises. He clearly promises to be with us in all our trials and to give grace and comfort when we turn to him in our suffering. More importantly, he promises eternal life to all who trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. In this sense, God does ultimately deliver us from all evil. The security of his love is not conditioned on or threatened by physical circumstances (see: Romans 8:35-39). The assurance I can offer my son is that, “… God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).