

September 17, 2023

## **SUPERNATURAL – Part 3: Supernatural Protection**

I'm curious. How many of you have ever experienced supernatural protection before? I have. Here's the thing about Supernatural Protection: It's subject to interpretation. Was it actually...supernatural?...

It was my first summer in Youth Ministry (1982). I became very ill. Because I led a youth group backpacking trip, and because I had filled up a water bottle at a natural spring. They prescribed something for Giardia.

But even with the prescription I got worse... way worse. I was rushed to E.R. It was NOT Giardia. What really happened was that my appendix had ruptured and by then peritonitis had set in. I was in such bad shape the small town Doctor did not believe I could survive the 90 minute ambulance trip to the big city hospital, so he performed surgery right there in his little clinic. It was that close.

The ambulance transported me the next morning after surgery. I was still not out of the woods. These pictures were taken on day 9 at the hospital, the turning point when there were signs that things were moving correctly inside of me, and the NG tube was removed.

**Here's why I tell you that story.**

### **I. Long before you face a PROBLEM, God already has a PLAN**

What I thought was a tragedy, was not a tragedy but a change of trajectory!

My plans were adjusted because of a combination of reasons:

- insurance coverage as a dependent no longer in school... (I just graduated)
- I needed to maintain "dependency" status (different laws WAY back then)
- I still needed aftercare at a Kaiser hospital.

**Answer:** I enrolled at San Jose Bible College where my dad was a professor. Free tuition for family member of faculty was a perk back then!

**One school year later:**

- Gina Graduated, and I Graduated AGAIN, with a second degree (In church ministry).
- We got Married, had a job interview on our honeymoon, and Church ministry began!
- And here we are 41 years after that change of trajectory.

**That's my story. My supernatural protection story. What does this have to do with you?**

- Long before you discovered the bad news about your health God already has a PLAN,
- Long before you lost the job God already has a PLAN,
- Long before that girl broke your heart, God already has a PLAN,
- Long before you \_\_\_\_\_ [fill in the blank] God has a plan

**Knowing that makes a huge difference in the way you face a problem.**

**Knowing that can make a huge difference in the way you face a problem.**

*Psalm 18:2 (NLT) The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety.*

- YES, The Lord is our protection
- YES, The Lord is our shield
- YES, the Lord is my rock, my fortress, my savior
- YES, the LORD is the power that saves me
- YES, the LORD not only leads me to SAFETY, HE IS MY SAFETY

Although all of this is all TRUE.

## II. God does not **ALWAYS PROTECT** us the way we **EXPECT**

Here's an example from the Life of Paul as described in Acts 16.

*Acts 16:16 (NIV) Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.*

*Acts 16:17 (NIV) She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."*

*Acts 16:18 (NIV) She kept this up for many days....*

**During those many days, I can imagine a conversation between Paul and Silas going something like this...**

*"Paul, if she is demon possessed as you say, why would the demon be telling the truth about us? We **are** servants of the Most High God, and we **are** telling the way to be saved. I don't get it?"*

*"Silas, make no mistake, the demon's main objective is always to blind people and bind people in a deeper bondage. When they utter truth, it is either involuntary and defensive before the power and purity of Jesus' greater authority, or it is an attempt to undermine that power and purity of its effectiveness by associating God's goodness with their evil. This kind of thing happened frequently to Jesus himself. I heard Peter describing it this way."*

*Mark 1:23–26 (NIV) Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, <sup>24</sup> "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" <sup>25</sup> "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" <sup>26</sup> The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.*

Perhaps a conversation like this, caused Paul to throw his caution to the wind. Or maybe he had just had enough, as the text implies.

*Acts 16:18 (NIV) ...Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.*

If you missed PART 1; 2 weeks ago, I talked about the reality of the devil, and demons. I refer you to part 1 “Supernatural Deliverance” for some helpful background.

*Acts 16:19 (NIV) When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.*

*Acts 16:20–21 (NIV) They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar <sup>21</sup> by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”*

The real reason they were angry at Paul was that their “human trafficking” scheme with their “female slave” was now a bust!

Casting out the demon was a small victory over darkness, but the battle was not over... Here’s what happened next.

*Acts 16:22–24 (NIV) The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be **stripped and beaten with rods.** <sup>23</sup> After they had been **severely flogged,** they were **thrown into prison,** and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. <sup>24</sup> When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and **fastened their feet in the stocks.***

- They were beaten with rods until their poor backs were a mass of cuts, welts, and bruises.
- We might ask, “Where was God’s protection during all of this? Why didn’t God ‘shield’ them?”
  - Paul and Silas were serving God, doing all the right things! So why didn’t God protect them?
  - While Most people would be thinking “God, that’s not fair! Why didn’t you protect us?” . . .

**Paul and Silas did not react the way I reacted in the hospital bed...**

*Acts 16:25 (NIV) About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.*

Is this the way you respond when things are not going as you expected them to go?

- **I was in no mood to sing when I was really down in that hospital !**
- But let’s think about this for just a moment: When is it that our need to pray and worship is our greatest need? Is it not when we DON’T feel like it?
- Even so, how can anyone pray and worship and sing songs when they don’t feel like it?

*Hebrews 13:15 (NIV) Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.*

**When do we worship our God?**

- Let us **CONTINUALLY** offer to God a sacrifice of praise!!
  - When we see and experience him working and when we don’t.

- “Through Jesus” WE CAN PRAISE God before we see the answers to our prayers.
- Let’s worship God for who he is even before we can see what he will do.
- Let’s worship God in the brightest highlights,
- Let’s also worship God in the darkest of places in the darkest hours.
- He is worthy of our worship!!!

*Acts 16:26 (NIV) Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose.*

- Don’t you just love the word SUDDENLY... God is the God who can do things SUDDENLY.
- It may have seemed like nothing would change...they were in this for the long haul....but then...SUDDENLY!!!
- Everything changes! Remember this when everything seems dark!

*Acts 16:27–30 (NIV) The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup> But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” <sup>29</sup> The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup> He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*

**What A GREAT MOVIE this is ... but the book is better!** Read the rest of Acts 16 to see what happens... It explains a lot about the “WHY questions we were looking at today.” We could stop here, but there is one more important point.

### III. Sometimes God’s eternal PURPOSES don’t align with our temporary PLANS

God protected Paul in this prison, BUT Paul would be imprisoned again. And again. And again. The last time he was executed.

*Sometimes God’s eternal PURPOSES don’t align with our temporary PLANS.*

**SO, What do we do?**

- We align with God’s eternal purposes.
- We praise him ahead of time (as a sacrifice of praise).
- We praise him CONTINUALLY, in the good times and the hard times.
- We FOLLOW JESUS.
- Sometimes we hurt. Sometimes we grieve. Sometimes we don’t understand...BUT WE FOLLOW JESUS.
- WHY?! Because Jesus hurt. Jesus’ grieved. Jesus trusted. Jesus obeyed **according to God’s eternal purposes.**
- SO THAT we could have ETERNAL LIFE.
- **Because Jesus gave his life for us, we live our lives for him.**

**We worship God continually for who he is and what he has done for us!**

# Talk It Over

## Supernatural

(Part 3)

Supernatural Protection

### SMALL TALK

1. How has God been challenging your faith lately?
2. Have you ever experienced a miracle of protection? What happened?

### VIEWPOINT

3. **Read Psalm 18:2.** When is it harder for you to believe God supernaturally protects you? What do you think some of our common misconceptions might be about God's supernatural protection?
4. **Read Acts 16:16-40.** What lessons about divine protection can we learn from this account?
5. In Acts 16:25-26, what surprising thing did Paul and Silas do? In view of what they just experienced, how do you explain this? What can we learn from this?
6. From the bigger picture, beyond the immediate injustices and suffering, knowing the whole story, what do we learn about God?

### GETTING PERSONAL

7. What problems and pain are you currently experiencing? What are some ways God could be working them together for your good?
8. How might being more intentional about worship and prayer change your perspective and experience of divine protection?

### MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

1. Write down the miracle you're asking God for on a piece of paper and exchange it with someone, then commit to pray for each other.