

Living with the Security of God's Protection,

Psalms 91:1-8

One of the worries of many people and especially of our governments is how to live protected from the different threats and dangers that exist today in our world.

I personally believe that there are many reasons to live being worried. When we read or see the news, we realize that threats of war, terror, sickness, and economic crisis are abundant.

Our governments and very wealthy people spend a lot of money on arms and vigilance in order to have security and protection, but the question is: can arms and vigilance give us security? And how can we live in security and protected from so many threats?

Our experience and the Bible tell us that arms and vigilance do not guarantee security, but rather endanger our lives and the world.

An example is the situation of Enrique Petro, a farmer from Colombia de Uraba; one of more than 15,000 people who were forced by paramilitary groups in collaboration with the Colombian army to leave, displaced from their lands by threats and assassinations.

In the land that belonged to these displaced farmers, national and international economic groups, with the support of the Colombian government, initiated the cultivation of palms to produce fuel, or as they call it today, biodiesel.

Enrique Petro has never accepted the loss of his land. He was able to encourage a group of farmers to return, even though the government never guaranteed security and the paramilitary groups threatened them by saying that if they returned, they would kill them. They looked for help from human rights organizations and churches in Colombia, Europe, Canada and the United States.

I had the blessing of participating in the return of the displaced in which nearly 120 families and a group of companions from various organizations from Colombia and other countries reclaimed their land. During the return, which lasted several days, one morning a song awoke me that said, "without God we are nothing in the world, without God we can do nothing, not even the leaves of the trees move if not by His power."

It was Enrique Petro who was singing, and when I asked him what this song meant to him, he told me that it was God who was protecting him from the threats and gave him security to continue ahead in his purpose of regaining the land.

I also remember Saray, a displaced woman who arrived in Barranquilla fleeing threats from paramilitaries. In Barranquilla, she was one of the leaders of the organizations working to return the displaced people to their land. Saray and her husband received new threats and had to flee a second time to another city in Colombia to protect their lives.

I asked Enrique and Saray if they were afraid and how they could feel protected by God in the face of the army and the paramilitary groups. They answered me with words very similar to Psalm 91.

Studying Psalm 91, we can see that the person who wrote it is in a situation of danger. We can see that the dangers are many like the traps of the hunter, terror, arrows, pest, plague and a thousand and ten others things that can do him harm.

But with many dangers this person describes the protection from God as being in the place of the highest defender, a sheltered place like an all powerful shade. He calls on God for refuge and strength. The affirmation is that we can live in a place whose destiny is guaranteed by God.

He affirms that God frees him from the traps of the hunter and from frightening plagues, sheltering him with His feathers and giving Him refuge with His wings from which he will not be fearful of the dark of night, nor of the arrow of the day, nor of the plague that destroys at mid-day. Here the emphasis is on the protection of the dangers of life during the night as well as the day.

In others words there are six images of the protection of God. God is like cover, shade, refuge, strength, feathers or wings, shield and armor that guarantee that nothing can overcome the love of God..

Psalm 91 shows us that there are many dangers and threats; but God guarantees that we can live securely if we trust in His protection. The testimony and life of Enrique Petro shows us that this protection from God continues with people who dare to trust in Him.

Today we know that the threats against Enrique, Saray and against people who return to their land continue, but we know that confidence in God remains firm, and that God, permitting the presence of companions from national and international organizations, maintains and strengthens the guarantee of protection of the displaced without any kind of arms.

More displaced farmers return to their land in Colombia and in other countries. Consciousness is awakening that they need to be supported now if they return to their land. The cultivation of palms that is putting the biodiversity of this region in danger has to be stopped.

Brothers and sisters, the Bible and the experience of men and women of faith who dare to trust in God tell us that we can also put our confidence in God, and that we should celebrate with joy because in this world, which has so many threats, we can live with the security of the presence of God.

But it also says that united with others we can help to be shelter, shade and refuge by accompanying communities that have their lives threatened. This protection gives testimony to our faith in God.

And so together, we the churches, the displaced people in Colombia and you can celebrate and give thanks to God because we can live and enjoy the security of living in the shelter of God's presence.

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