

Fear and Fears-Part 3:

The Fear of Violence

Luke 12:4,6-7

Before we get to opening our Bibles to Luke 12, I'd love for you to open them to the Old Testament book of Isaiah chapter 8. Isaiah chapter 8 which is 8 centuries before the coming of Jesus Christ, I think you might be surprised to discover that the headlines that they were reading, the people of God were, in the 8th century before Christ, looked an awful like the headlines that we read today. The crimes was on the rise, societal breakdown in almost every area, you had political unrest, you had all kinds of conspiracies going on through the peoples discussions in the land, you had the treat of war on the borders, particularly as they look north to their brothers up there in the northern tribes. They saw Assyria there beginning to attack, infiltrating the ranks of the Israelites. You saw all kinds of uncertainty, all kinds of violence and the people were scared. They were afraid.

Now if you've got Isaiah chapter 8 open you might remember that two chapters earlier Isaiah had encountered a sermon that was a whole lot better than the sermon you got from me last week but the same topic. God is a God who is exalted and transcendent that when He speaks it rattles in this vision the thresholds of the temple, you got smoke, you got his train filling the temple, you got seraphim, these extremely powerful beings flying around covering their face before God and crying out, "Holy, holy, holy" and here is Isaiah trembling. Seeing his sin for what it is, in need of forgiveness and great respect when God speaks, he immediately answers, and he's ready to go, here I am send me, that's what took place two chapters earlier.

Now he's out in the streets doing his work that God has called him to do. He was sent and he's looking at the people reading the headlines, there's a lot of fear, there's a lot of conspiracy, there's a lot of violence, there's a lot of crime, there's a lot of ensuing persecution. And God shows up and puts His proverbial hand on Isaiah's shoulder, and here's how it's described. Isaiah chapter 8 verse 11. For it says the Lord spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, settle down here Isaiah, and he warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying – here's what God said to him, "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy." They're uptight, they're anxious, they're worried. "And do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him shall you honor as holy." Oh that flooded back all those memories of the exulted God on His throne. Yeah, I remember that scary scene. "Yes, let him be your fear, let him be your dread." I don't want you to be afraid of what's going on in society Isaiah. I don't want you to preach a message that's going to make the people afraid, that's not it. They need to fear God, if they fear God, listen all of this fear of what's going on in the world, it's going to chase those fears away.

Now that juxtaposition of fear, the fear of God and the fear of things in this world, that's exactly what we started to study last week and it just one little paragraph but I thought it was so important that we break those two fears into two separate sermons that we jump right into the middle of this paragraph in verse 5 of Luke chapter 12. And we said let's just think of this concept of the fear of God, since it's so uncommon and all in our day. It's rarely preached on. We decided to put it up on a pedestal and say let's look at this doctrine of the fear of God. Let's look at all the promises of the fear of God. Let's understand that and now let's get the context.

Go back with me now if you would to Luke chapter 12. Let's look at verses 4 through 7 noting that we already dealt with the topic of the fear of God which is the solution to the fears that surround this one verse. So we'll focus this morning on verses 4, 6 and 7. So if you've got your worksheet, if you weren't here last week, you see it's printed and it looks like the verse 5 is grayed out, you're saying, "I guess they don't believe in that verse, they've even grayed that one out" That's not the point. That means it's mandatory that you go back to last weeks message and stream that, view that, download that, listen to that and recognize what's going on in this text. Exactly what we read in a society that sounds and feels a lot like ours, matters of fact the headlines in the 8th century BC Israel they're eerily like our headlines. They weren't talking about the problems in Syria they were talking about the problems in Assyria, same place by the way. Same idea. They weren't talking about the conspiracies of the invading combatants they wanted to invade their brothers up in Ephriam, and saying well look at all these things are going on. Did you hear, did you see that? I think they're forming some kind of rebellion, there's going to be things that are going to happen, they're trying to kill us. They weren't talking in terms that we are with terms like ISIS, but it is the same

thing, same idea. If you've ever read the first 5 chapters of Isaiah, if you want to talk about the other things you read in the other sections of the paper. I mean the complete decadence of a societal breakdown after years of prosperity. They've used their prosperity really just to spiral into all kinds of deplorable activities, drunkenness, violence, crime. You saw all of that in the first 5 chapters of Isaiah. And I'm thinking well this is the world we live in. And I hate to hopscotch right over the context of Jesus when He said these words but really I could go into all that too. The Roman occupation of the land in Israel, I mean there's all kinds of things similar to what was going on 8 centuries before Christ and certainly now in the 21st century after Christ. This is nothing new but the principal and the solution is exactly the same. You got to fear God and not fear them. We've got to fear the living God and understand what that means and not fear the things we read in the headlines. We cannot be "terrorized" by people that have made it their goal as professional fear inducers to try and follow the rest of our society and call conspiracy what they call conspiracy and be afraid of what they're afraid of, and dread what they dread. We're not to do that, something radically different about those who fear God.

Let's read our text again, verses 4 through 7 we read it last time but the emphasis on verse 5. Let's read it today and get the surrounding verses. Verse 4 says, "I tell you, my friends." - Luke 12:4 - "Do not fear those who kill the body, after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, you are more value than many sparrows." Fear not, fear, fear not, yes fear him. What am I suppose to do? Well, get the objects straight and you'll understand the verbs. I don't fear them, I don't fear the people that can kill me, I don't fear them, I fear the violence in society which by the way is getting worse, is it not? Think about it, 1.6 million violent crimes reported just in our country alone every year, 1.6 million, I mean incredible stats. Rapes over 100,000 per year, homicides 14,000 per year, robberies, armed robberies, strong arm robberies, muggings, I mean in the hundred of thousands every year. Not to mention the persecution that goes on around the world.

Did you read this first verse, in verse number 4, you might get the wrong idea, because here's how we want it to read. Look at it again, I tell you my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, because I would never let that happen to you. Is that what it says? That's what we want it to say. Is it not? Oh Jesus, tell me we'll be protected. Hey, do you think of those 1.6 million that were victims of violent crime, do you think that there were any Christians among them? What about the targeting of Christians? You know when you get a couple layers deep on the internet to look at the stuff that's actually going on without the filters of network news and you see what's happening when Christians heads are lopped off and put on the tops of fences, with Muslim militants with their guns standing and posing victoriously with Christian's heads and their gaping mouths that use to pray and sing to Christ and now they're dead or hanging crucified in these towns. I mean you got to say, "don't fear because that's never going to happen to you." Well, where's the promise of God there? That's not the promise of God. You see the first thing we do to vanquish fear is to get this very straight in our minds. Number 1 on your outline, we've got to expect crime and persecution, we are not exempt from that.

1. Expect Crime and Persecution

You need to understand that the violent things that happen to people around the world are going to happen proportionately to us and perhaps even more proportionately because there are at least 60 countries in our world right now that specifically target the persecution and martyrdom of Christians. Sixty of them, 80% of them are Muslim countries that are driving Christians either out persecuting them, enslaving them or killing them. We are the target. You stand up and be counted with Christ in many places you are targeted. There are 2000 that we know of martyred Christians every year, at least. People dying because they simply follow Jesus, so we know this, the proportions may even be greater for us, that if we stand with Christ, this text doesn't say don't fear the people that can kill the body because it'll never happen to you. I'll make sure that never happens to you. That is not the promise, as a matter of fact. He says after that, and I'm thinking that's the problem. No, that's not the problem. Jesus says the problem is something beyond that.

Forecast, we've had some unseasonably warm weather this weekend, haven't we? Which we gloat over. You know the Michiganites in Illinois dumped record snow this weekend. Poor slubs over there in Chicago. My son who is back east, he's texting me yesterday because he's concerned about weatherizing his California car. It's going to be in the twenties. He's texting me last night, it's going to be in the twenties tonight, low twenties. I want to make sure my car doesn't turn into an ice cube. What do I have to do? I want it to start; I got to go to church in the morning.



It's good for him to have the forecast because he knew how cold it was going to get before it got cold so he could get what he needed. He didn't know what an ice scraper was. He didn't even know. But trust me; he knows this morning that he needed one. So he went out last night bought all the things that he needed to weatherize his car. It's good to have the forecast, for us too because this is going to be in the sixties this week it's going to be cold and breezy. Sixteen mile an hour winds they say. Good to know the weather. Speaking of winds if you were to sail your little yacht over to Guam this weekend, should be quite a trip, there's a class 4 typhoon out there in the Pacific, with a 132 mile an hour winds right now. If you're going to Guam see me out in the patio, I need to give you the latest weather report so you can chart your path. You need to know what the forecast is. It's good to know the forecast.

Let me give you a quick rundown of the forecast when it relates to crime and violence and persecution in the world. Doesn't sound like a very happy sermon, it gets better but let's start with the reality that we are not exempt from these things by giving you three passages from Matthew, just jot them down, I'll run through them. The first one you know. Matthew chapter 7 verse number 14, the gate is narrow, the way is hard that leads to life and those find it are – do you know the last word? Few, just few, okay so this is what I know, that those who enter life are few and by that we're talking about regenerate Christians in this age and this dispensation what we know is this that the Christians will be the minority who have that heart of flesh that new spirit driven to keep the law of God as God moves them to keep His commandments. Oh, just a few, it'll be just a few. I don't know what a few is but it doesn't mean the majority it means a few.

That's the first proposition in our forecast, here's the next one. Chapter 15 verse 19, speaking of unregenerate hearts Jesus says here's the problem with the unregenerate heart out of it come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, you could add rape to that, you could add child molestation to that, theft, false witness, slander, all that comes out of unregenerate hearts. The source of it is an unregenerate heart. So I know this, few people in this age will be regenerate in their hearts. Non-Christians have a problem that resides within them. It's not more money for education, it's not after school programs, it's not getting kids for START program, it's none of that. The problem is their heart, that's the problem. Well, thank God for common grace. Thank God they're being restrained.

Okay here's the last proposition in our forecast. Chapter 24 verses 6 through 10. Matthew 24:6-10 jot that down. And what Jesus says is this, the grace of God in restraining unregenerate hearts will continually and progressively be loosened. The restraint will be loosened. You see this all over the Bible. In the last days, difficult times will come and as Jesus says, hey when it gets near the end, just know it's going to get bad. He says this, you'll hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, there it is, it's always there for Christians. Don't be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. Nation is going to rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. But all of these are just the beginning of birth pangs. Then they'll deliver you up to tribulation. They'll put you to death; you'll be hated by all nations on account of my name. That's not a happy forecast is it? Because right there in that text is you will not be exempt but don't be alarmed. You will not be exempt but don't be alarmed. They may kill your body but don't fear them. Now I could sit up here like a lot of preachers do, open the Bible and read a poem or two and say fear not, God will protect you, you're the apple of His eye. Now, you are the apple of His eye, and He loves you, but He never promised you exemption from persecution. He never promised you exemption from crime. He never promised you exemption from violence or people breaking into your home or holding you up or raping you. He never promised you exemptions from that. Now thankfully God's common grace is still restraining but the Bible has promised the forecast is getting worse. It's going to get worse; the storms are going to get worse.

Well if this is a sermon about me not fearing, you're not doing a very good job Pastor Mike. I mean you're really not. You know one of the best things we can do to vanquish fear, at least one of the first things we can do, is recognize what's on the forecast. When the Bible says that Noah feared God in the little summary statement there in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 7, it talks about Noah fearing God but here's what it says. It says when God warned him about the coming flood out of fear, not fear of the things to come, but because he feared God, he made preparations, built the ark, saved his family. God wants you to be prepared for this and part of the preparations is not sticking your head in the ground saying, "God loves me, God love me, it'll never happen to me, God loves me." You know what? It's going to happen to some of us in this room. It's going to happen. And you know what? If we traveled to other places and claimed Christ, it's going to happen. I mean you don't have to be in some news headlined country, you can be in Paris as we learned this last week. You could be here in America because you know they made a bunch of threats about what they're going to do today in American cities. Oh it's just threats. Well, you know what? What's it going to be like for our kids, our grandkids? What about our great-great-grandkids? How about them, standing up



with an open Bible and saying I believe the Lord Jesus Christ, He's the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Him. They say the same things and sing the same songs that we sing. What's going to be for them? Persecution, oh that's scary Pastor Mike. Well one of the reasons we're not going to be alarmed is because we know what's coming. We read the forecast, we're going to run to Target like my son did last night and say I got to buy some things to prepare for this. What do you need to be prepared for? Not for the killing of your body, because the Bible says that's not the big deal. It's about being assured of what comes after that. Knowing what comes next. And that leads me to a few things that you can do if you want to put some sub-points here if you're taking notes this might be helpful.

Knowing that the storms are coming here's the first thing you can do. This is based on Philippians chapter 1 when Paul is sitting in a prison and he's under threat of death and there's a real possibility he might die. This is what we call a prison epistle. He writes a letter from prison and he says, "I'm in prison, they've threatened to kill me, now here's what I've decided." Here's the first thing we can do. Resolve ahead of time to courageously honor Christ. That's what I'm going to do. If they lop my head off, or they shoot me, or someone comes into my house just because they're a thug and they rob me and murder me. The Bible says I should, like the Apostle Paul, determine ahead of time I'm not going to be a coward, and I'm not going to be afraid and I'm going to trust in God and honor God all the way to the end. I need to resolve ahead of time. Here's the words of Paul after thinking about, talking about, the reality that he could die in this prison. He said, "it is my eager expectation – this is Philippians 1:20 – and it is my hope, and that's not cross your fingers hope, it is my resolve and my confident expectation that I will not be ashamed but I will with full courage (love that word) now as always, that Christ will be honored in my body whether by life or by death. If I live or die, I'm resolved to courageously face the future no matter how bad it gets in this country, no matter if I'm sitting here preaching while the secret police are out taking license plates tags and I end up being the target. Doesn't matter, if that sound so dystopian for you, oh I don't think we'll ever get there. Great, it's happening around the world in various places. And it isn't getting better and the forecast is for darkness so I need to know this. No matter how bad it gets for being a Christian, no matter how bad it gets in terms of crime, you can keep moving to the friendly secure suburbs. But eventually you understand the problem what God has predicted is going to come true. So what am I going to do? I'm going to resolve ahead of time, I'm going to resolve ahead of time to courageously honor Christ no matter how bad it may get.

Number 2 the next verse. Philippians 1:21, you know this one. It's says this, "for to me to live is Christ, and to die would be a big bummer." You know that verse? For me to live is Christ, and to die would be a tragedy. For me to live is Christ, to die would be such a terrible, mournful tearful thing. Pray for me that I don't die. No, you know the verse, you learned it as a kid I hope. Philippians 1:21, For me to live is Christ, to die is gain. Okay, here's the problem. We don't love the next life enough. Do you want to take sub-points? We haven't courageously encountered in our imagination the courage of our future come what may. And secondly and some of us just aren't in love with the next life enough. We're not like the Apostle Paul who 2 Corinthians chapter 5 says, I groan inside waiting to put off this tent and I can't wait to put on immortality. I can't wait. It'll be so much better. It's what he goes on to say in Philippians chapter 1. How much better would it be for me to be in the next life than this one? Do you love the next life enough or are you like so many people let's make this the third point. You're in love with this life.

You want to not be afraid; first of all you have to be courageously honor God in your mind ahead of time no matter what happens for you. Secondly you need to say I need to stop looking at the next life as some Casper the friendly ghost ethereal unreachable, no I need to start pinning my hope on things above knowing that where I'm going is much better than where I am now. And secondly I need to stop loving this world and the things of this world. I got to stop loving this earth and all these things here. Is that really, really what we want? Is this is really our best life now? Wink, wink, really? Really? I don't think so. The Bible is very clear on this. In this world we will have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world. Where we're going is the kingdom prepared for us before the foundation of the world. Because you know what, the courageous heroes of Bible were courageous because, let me read one for you, Revelation chapter 12, when the martyrs in the tribulation when really all hell breaks loose on earth are held up as examples, here's what God says in honoring them. They conquered by the blood of Christ, same reason we conquer in that we don't fear death the enslavement to the fear of death is taken away because Christ shed His blood for us. We've conquered by the blood of the lamb, by the word of our testimony, we're not going to shut up about this and they love not their lives even unto death. They didn't love this world, they didn't love this current life and unfortunately we can be insulated Southern California Orange County Christians, we got it relatively good, it seems like all the stuff we read about is there, over there, far away somewhere else. We can start loving this world

far more than we should. I think Christianity is some sort of icing put on our current life. Let's just sort of enjoy life, take a bite out of life, let's just have fun, do this thing and maybe Jesus will make it a little more fun. As apposed to saying like Paul did, you know what? Through Christ this world is crucified to me and I to it. Doesn't make us angry people, doesn't make us frustrated people, doesn't make us monks. As C.S. Lewis rightly said, it's not that we're so heavenly minded we're no earthly good, the problem is that we're not heavenly minded enough. We can't be earthly good until we pin our hopes on heaven and realize it's not about this life. Then we can really live. Then we can really make a difference. Then we can, as it says in Philippians 1, have fruitful ministry in this life. Did you get those 3 sub-points?

Courageously determine ahead of time to honor Christ come what may. When you see the next announcement that there's a terrorist attack, when you see another Christian in another country strung up because he loves Christ, when you hear of a friend, a neighbor or coworker, someone in your neighborhood who's a victim of some kind of terrible violence act and you sit here and say, you know what? Were that me, I want to resolve a head of time, Christ is going to be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. I'm not exempt from these things, and I'm going to honor Christ, and I'm going to stop being so in love with this life that I think to die would be a tragedy. No, for me to live is Christ to die is gain. We got to be able to say that with some kind of assurance and some kind of sincerity and truthfulness in our own hearts. Paul said that to his loved ones, who in Ephesus he'd been there for three years, he was leaving them. People knew that if he goes to Jerusalem he might be captured and imprisoned and he might be killed which is eventually what happened because he got shipped off to Rome. They were weeping and crying. He says this in Acts 21:13, "Why are you doing this? Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? For I am not only ready to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." We need to resolve to honor Christ ahead of time, we need to love the next life more, we need to love this life less.

Strangely enough when you read verse 6 of Luke chapter 12 we need to affirm something that may not be right there on the surface for you as you read it. But I don't want you to miss it. As we move from fearing God and we talked about the right fear of God that we should have. Distinguishing from the fear of God of thinking about the Lake of Fire but the fear of God we have of the all powerful God that we serve, though He is not domesticated and nothing changes with His transcendent power in this passage, what we learn about that transcendent undomesticated God is that, He really cares even for birds. Verse 6, are not five sparrows sold for two pennies, and not one of them is forgotten before God. Now Jesus had used this kind of example elsewhere in His teaching. Here's an example of birds that were sold, and they were sold for meals, for snacks. It was like the hot dog cart. You'd go and you'd buy a bird, probably wasn't the sparrow you picture hopping around McDonalds eating the fries off the floor but the bird that they would buy was a small bird for a meal. They would go and they would buy it for a couple pennies, a fraction, a cerion is the Greek word for part of their wage, they would go and it would be cheap, it'd be a meal. They'd go home, they'd roast their little snack, the Top Ramen of the first century, little bird, and they'd eat it up. And he says, "not one of them is forgotten before God". Now here's how we miss the analogy. We think this might be a statement about God's incredible omniscience. Look at how much He knows. He knows all those bird and when they die because they become a meal for someone in the market place. No, it's not about His knowledge; this is not a statement about His omniscience. This is a statement of His oversight. He makes the crystal clear over in the other wording of this same principle when he says this, not talking about buying them and eating them for a meal. But over in Matthew chapter 10 verse 29 when he's saying, are not two sparrows sold for a penny and not one of them falls to the ground. Now we're talking about the natural death of a bird, falls to the ground out of a tree, apart from your Father. Now that's different than He knows about it. It doesn't happen apart from God. In other words, the Father has to be involved in that. The Father has to decide that it's time, nothing happens outside the prevue and the oversight, here's the theological word we like to use, the sovereignty of God. God has got this thing under control. Whether the bird is sold for a snack or whether the bird dies of natural causes it all happens under the umbrella of God's sovereignty. Now if birds are dying under God's sovereignty, under His watchful eye. Then is there ever someone, verse 4, who dies because someone kills their body without the oversight and sovereignty of God? The answer here is clearly, of course not, because we're more valuable then them. Number 2 on your outline, and here's the real challenge for our theology; we have to never doubt the sovereignty of God. Never doubt God's sovereignty.

2. Never Doubt God's Sovereignty

God's sovereignty and by that I mean His oversight of all things, that He's not surprised by the violent crime in our country, that He's not surprised by the beheading of Christians. That in His plan, even though it's a bad thing and His revealed will is, be nice to each other, don't kill each other, don't behead people because they're Christians. He



says treat others as you'd have them treat you. He's given His revealed will, there's another will in the Bible and it's not His revealed will. It is His decreed will. He has a will that He decides this is how it's going to play out. And you know what? In the forecast, He's told us how it's going to play out. Not because, and I know some of you think His sovereignty is simply He's got the TiVo, He watched your program, He watched how it goes, He know, now He can say, "I know how this ends." Sad as it was, I was biting my fingernails when I watched it the first time, but wow, terrible how your life ended. No, no, even birds, God has a plan and He works that plan, as it says in Ephesians 1, He works everything after the council of His will. And if that's the case, then here's the thing as Psalm 39 poetically says and seemingly in a positive context, there's not a single day of my life that I experience that God hasn't ordained, He has it planned, put this way poetically before one of my days began, before I was ever born, all of my days, and here's the idea, what would I do and what would happen they are written in a book before yet there was one day. So God not just saw it, but God decreed it. Some people make this distinction between His perfect will and His permissive will. His revealed will in the Bible, here's how I'd like you guys to function, but here's the decreed will, here's how it's going to play out. Here's how I've planned to have this thing play out.

Now that's hard for us. Really hard for us to imagine. But even if you have a different view of God's will which I think you shouldn't, but if you do you just think He's watching the TiVo and saw how this thing would happen. Here's what you need to understand this one passage I'd like you to turn to in the Garden of Gethsemane in Matthew chapter 26 will still leave you with the problem that people with a biblical view of God's sovereignty are going to have and that is this. When God the Father watches his son in the garden being betrayed by Judas the question is couldn't he have stopped it? This is a travesty of justice, the innocent one is being arrested and betrayed by an insider. That's terrible. Couldn't God have stopped it? Well, of course He could have. And Jesus makes that point right in the middle of the drama. Take a look at it beginning of verse 49. Matthew 26:49 – He, that is Judas, came up to Jesus and at once said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And kissed him. Of course that was their predetermined sign as to which one was Jesus. In the darkness, the pre-dawn darkness here. Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands, this crew that Judas came with, the officials laid hands on Jesus and seized him. Now behold, now one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand, drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. And that's where everyone in the theater stands up and cheers, "Yeah, get him! That's awesome." I mean you got to applaud that, okay there you go. And when you applaud that, you got to recognize Jesus' response. He says, "Listen, Peter that's a really dumb thing for you to do. I mean you've got the Sanhedren, the High Priest and all their people in cahoots eventually that same night with the Romans, there ain't no way a fisherman that can't even hit the skull of the enemy and only can cut off his ear is ever going to make it through this night, you're going to die by the sword. This is not just a proverbial statement, it's clearly he's made statements else where that I've preached on about the legitimacy of self-defense, that's not what's going on here. Put your sword back in it's place." You're not good at it for one, and number two, you're going to take up a sword in a situation like this you're going to perish by the sword. Now here's the real issue to highlight. Jesus introduces this theological truth. Do you think that I can't appeal to my Father and He will at once send me more than twelve legions. A legion is six thousand Roman soldiers, so what is that? 72,000 angels and I don't think you need that many. I mean you can do this with one. But to make the point for Peter, who can't even hit his target. You're going to get the angels that could slaughter every Jewish official that wants to kill the Messiah and every Roman official that's going to sign off on it. You want to talk about it? God could do it in a heartbeat.

Now the problem for our theology is, why not? Why doesn't He do it? Here's the answer, verse 54, how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so? Now I know in your book, God has written out how this thing is going to go and it ain't the scriptures, but it's certainly as unyielding as the scriptures. Now it's written in the scriptures because the whole point of history is Jesus Christ so clearly that's all laid out for us in the scriptures. But your life and mine is written in a book as well. And it sits there in the library of heaven and on that book God has a plan for you and it does not exempt you from violence and crime and even persecution because you're a Christian and perhaps for a couple, I don't know, in this room maybe martyrdom or those who hear my voice on the radio. Perhaps you would die for Christ. Just like in John 21 when John was told that he was going to live into old age but Peter was prophesied by Christ to die and stretch out his hands the sign of being killed on a Roman execution rack and clearly that's what happened. And John is like, well wait a minute, what about him and he says if I want him to remain until I return, of course Jesus knew that was going to be more than 20 years, he says I can do that. But as for you Peter it doesn't matter what's on your schedule and what's in the final chapters of your book or how short your book is, you follow me. You just follow me. Trust my sovereignty; don't doubt it, even if it includes some difficult things.

So here's my point. Every horrible thing that comes into your life, and I know we're talking about extremes, but back it off of that, even when it's just the test from the doctor, the legal letterhead in that letter where you're named in that lawsuit. The loss of your job, I mean your house being repossessed, whatever it might be, the relationship breakdown in your life. When you sit there and are tempted to shake your fist at God and say, "God I know you can send 12 legions of angels and you can fix this problem, you're not doing it." Here's what you need to do. How in the world could God accomplish His sovereign decreed plan in your life if every time you had a pain and ache or you were a victim of some crime, you said God why don't you stop that from happening? You've got to come to the place of resting assured that God has a plan and He's working it out. It's not a license for us to be careless, it is a comfort for us to know God is working out His plan. Oh, I want my plan to be pain free. Well, you're born on the wrong planet for that, it's not going to happen.

Jesus proved the theoretical statement from Matthew chapter 6 back there in Matthew chapter 8. It would be a good one to quickly turn to if you would. Matthew chapter 8, the theoretical statement of couldn't God dispatch 12 legions of angels. Well that's a theoretical statement and it's not going to happen here because God wants His will to be carried out which was that Christ was going to suffer and die because there was a bigger purpose that included that suffering that God would be glorified in and same goes for you whatever it is that you're struggling with as a Christian. But the theoretical became reality and it wasn't a good thing it was a bad thing. That's why I always say when you get to Matthew chapter 8 verse 23 through 27, usually our editors of our English Bibles but some kind of label on that so we can quickly scan through the columns and find the story and they named this one, "Jesus Calms the Storm" or something like that in your Bibles. Wrong heading, I mean that is what happens, but it's not something you should read and smile and go, "Oh yeah, that's where Christ proves his, you know His omnipotence over nature." No, that is what happens here. It should say something like, "Disciples failed the test" or "Jesus rebukes his apostles" or something like that.

Because note what goes on here. Verse 23, And when he, that is Christ, got into the boat. This is Matthew 8:23, his disciples followed him. and I guess we should pause right there and ask are you following Christ?" Because this sermon really only applies to those who are following Christ. If you're following Christ, you're getting into whatever it is in your life because you're confident this is the thing that God would have me do. I'm faithful in my business, I'm ethical in the things I do here, I'm running my family the way I should, I'm doing the things and affirming the things God has revealed in His word, so I'm following Christ. Well great, you've gotten into the boat, that's fantastic. Verse 24, and behold there arose a great storm on the sea. What do I have to understand about that? That must be a sovereign storm for these guys - so that the boat was being swamped by the waves. Now when waves are coming in over the edge of the boat and it's filling with water here's the godly thing to do, start bailing out the water. That's a good thing to do, that's the right thing to do, that's an appropriate thing to do. The good thing too, if you knew someone who could stop all this, to call out to him. Problem is, they did and Jesus wasn't responding. Look at the last 4 words of verse 24, but he was asleep. Something theological there too for us, because that's how it feels doesn't it? Sometimes we cry out to God, God this lawsuit, this cancer test, this surgery, this problem, this issue, this violence, this terrorism and we're crying out and it seems like our prayers are hitting the ceiling. God, why are you not stopping it? Why are you turning around, there's political morass, that we're in, why aren't you fixing all this? It's not that he doesn't know, it's not that he can't stop it, it's not that he's unattentive, it's not that he doesn't care. The storm is part of God's plan.

So they went and they woke him up and they said, "Save us, Lord, we are perishing." A lot of fear in that statement. And Jesus responded to it verse 26. And he said to them, "I'm so sorry, I totally understand your fear." Is that what he says? No, he doesn't say, you know what? Sometimes trials can be hard so your fear is totally understandable. I get it. I empathize with your pain. See sometimes you so sentimentalize the God of the Bible you think every time you're scared, every time you have an issue a problem some kind of pain in your life, you think God is right there going, "Oh, baby, baby, baby, baby, it's okay. Put your head right here. It's fine. I'll nurse you through this one." You know what? When we take the storms of life into our horizon when we are following Christ, God does not want you to be afraid. And he will rebuke you and he will say what he says here, "Why are you afraid?" And I'm thinking at that point, Thomas raises his hand and says, "cause our boat is sinking". I mean, makes sense doesn't it? And the answer is, no, it doesn't make sense. I never promised you wouldn't have storms, I never promised that you would all live and not die in the ocean. If that is what God has on your docket, listen, face it with courage, do not be afraid, you don't have faith. You think because God is not answering your prayers the way you want them answered something is wrong. There's nothing wrong with God here, this storm is predestined and planned and decreed for you. Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.



Now, remember that statement, don't you think I can appeal to the Father to send twelve legions of angels? Seventy two thousand angels to fix the problem? Now, that was a theoretical statement, no, not going to happen, scripture is going to be fulfilled. Well, here, I mean this is not one of those miracles that Jesus was happy to perform. This is one of the miracles to show them, listen God is in control and has been in control the whole time. It was not something that you should have freaked out about. You're perishing, you should have trusted God and so he made a point, he rose up and rebuked the winds and sea and there was great calm. Verse 27, so all the twelve apostles repented and said, "you're right master we should not have been afraid." No, they did what we do, they see this and say, "what a great expression of the deity of Christ and the power of Christ". Now it is that I suppose but it's secondary to the main point. The main point is, why are you afraid? Why are you afraid? You think you're except from these things? You don't think God is sovereign? You don't think this bump in the road or this problem in your life or this tragedy as you call it is not a part of God's plan for you? Of course it is. You don't trust the sovereignty of God in this? God has got a bigger plan that will include your pain and mine. Never doubt God's sovereignty. There are providential storms. Reread the book of Job if you doubt that. All you need is the first two chapters to make that crystal clear, which is not always a punishment or something that's out of God's control.

Luke chapter 12 verse 7, sparrows don't die whether sold on a lunch cart or whether falling naturally from the tree without God's sovereign knowledge or oversight. Why even the hairs of your head are all numbered. You want to talk about God's sovereign oversight? The follicles on the top of your head, God, it's not only an issue of His knowledge, his omniscience, it's of his sovereignty. He knows these things, He's not only knows them He's planned them. Not a follicle of hair that dies without God's sovereign oversight. So, what's my response to that kind of attention? Fear not, don't be afraid. You are of more, here's a good word to underline, value than many sparrows. Value, now there's a statement that redefines for us the sentimental definition of the word love. That would be a good word to put down, love, but it would be good to know what we're talking about is God's value of you. Number 3, let's be assured of God's love, but let's make sure we understand what that means.

3. Be Assured of God's Love

This is not every time you ache he calls you over and cradles your head on his chest and says, "There, there now." That's now what we're talking about. We're talking about a God that values you and because he values you he may have on your docket, on your decreed plan in your book, some very difficult things, some painful things, victimization of crime and who knows what's on the docket, maybe martyrdom for you. But you're going to look at it with a courage and a resolve that you're going to glorify Christ in life or in death and you're not going to love this life love the next life more than this one. You're going to assured of God's sovereignty and you're going to remember he values you. And because there are problems in your life, because there's pain, because there's victimization in your life it does not means God doesn't love you. In no way does it detracts from his concern and his love for you.

In Psalm 139 that I quoted talking about the fact that every day of our lives in a books is already there done, God has planned this out. It starts this way, Oh Lord you've searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down you're acquainted with all my ways. You know everything, even the follicles of hair on top of my head. Even before there's a word on my tongue, behold, Lord you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind me and before me and you lay your hand upon me. Picture that, you got me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; too high too vast, I can't attain to it. I can't even fathom what it means that the God of the universe would condescend to put his hands all around me and hem me in. See we don't have a problem with being the apple of God's eye. I don't have a problem in fact at all that God hems us in, but here's the thing, if you think because he hems you in, he's never going to lead you into trouble you don't understand the God of the Bible. When David was being chased, when a price was on his head and Saul and his men in Israel were chasing him down, he wrote these words. The Lord is my Shepard, I shall not want. Here's God who's hemmed me in and he leads me at times in the midst of my life and this book that I'm living out, beside still waters, green pastures. In the midst of it all he's restored my soul countless times.

But you know where that Psalm goes, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Why would a God who hems me in, puts his hands all over me, guides me, knows the follicles of hair on my head, why would he lead me on a path where there's trouble and trial and crisis and problems in a country that's falling apart? Why? Well, I don't have all the answers to why, right now. But I can tell you that he is with you and he loves you. And



your response should be the next line. I will fear no evil. Why, your rod and your staff they comfort me. Now what's the point? In the midst of the storm I understand you could stand up and say the word and be done because the rod and the staff were used for the enemies, that's the primary use to protect the sheep. So I know he has the rod and staff and he could obliterate and vanquish all my enemies. And yet the next verse he prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemy. That's not what I want. Start using that club and killing those wolves, that's what I want. You pray that and I pray that. But often like Jesus, asleep in the ship in the boat, we think God, why aren't you doing it? Because this is the determined forecast plan. What's his plan for you? I know this, fear no evil. No, I'm not afraid. Your rod and your staff they do comfort me because I know nothing is out of your control. That's a statement of sovereignty.

You know where he goes next? Surely goodness and mercy will follow me, now that's a weak English translation of the Hebrew word that is the word that is used of the army of Saul were doing to David. They were hunting him down and chasing him down. Surely goodness and mercy shall chase me down, gonna hunt me down. When I read that I wish it would catch me when things are hard. Catch me and over take me, I want goodness and mercy to overtake me, that's what I want because right now I've got a lot of problems chasing me. I open the paper I see a lot of terrorist chasing us, I see my Christian brothers in other countries being beheaded for their Christianity and I recognize I'm being chased down by all these things but they haven't quite caught me yet, not the way I want them to but here's the last line of the Psalm. I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. It will over take but again it just reaffirms everything we've learned in the New Testament, it's not about this life. This life is about not fearing and being courageous in the light of whatever breaks loose in this world. And it's about recognizing that goodness and mercy, they're tracking me down and when it feels like my enemies have overtaken me, when it feels like this church will one day be under persecution because we hold unabashedly to the word of God, listen it seems like the enemies are overtaken us but right behind when I cross this threshold you know what's going to over take me? Goodness and mercy in a way that's unmitigated and I'm going to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Christians we are not to be afraid.

There's a line in that Psalm I left out because I want to emphasize that right now. When I comes down to it we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we fear no evil. You know the next line? For God is with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me, that little phrase that I skipped over, because that phrase needs to minister to us. The love of God is not whether or not there's smooth sailing in my life. The love of God is he has promised to never leave me and never forsake me. Why are you afraid, you of little faith? You didn't think God was informed of this? You didn't think God had power over this? You didn't think this was part of God's sovereign plan, you need to trust me, I'm right here, I'm with you. I'm so with you I've got the hairs on your head all numbered. Now follow this, that's the key. Can I with my eyes of faith so to speak be able to say I know he's with me through the valley of the shadow of death, I'm not afraid. Joshua was about to go into a place where they were literally sacrificing their infant babies in the fire to their false gods. And they would just as soon kill Joshua as say 'Hi' to him. Those Canaanites they would induce fear in our lives by natural means. God said, "Do not be afraid, do not fear them, be strong and courageous." Why, I am with you, just know that.

Speaking of it, Gideon, the Midianites, talk about terrorists infiltrating. The Midianites were coming and infiltrating and basically oppressing the people of Israel. And here's Gideon told by God, "Listen, I don't want you to be afraid of them because I am with you". Speaking of those being persecuted for the truth, Jeremiah, we just got done reading that book in our DBR. Jeremiah is out there preaching the trust to a world that does not want to hear it and they're persecuting him, they're putting him in dungeons, they're throwing him in the prisons, they're physically beating him with fists and God says, "I know they oppose you but do not be afraid for I am with you." Solomon feeling completely overwhelmed by the responsibilities in his future and he's looking at it and for him it's not necessarily life and death but it's failure and he's thinking I don't see that I'm equipped to do what I can do here and God comes and says, "Hey, Solomon do not be afraid for I am with you." Paul the strong outspoken apostle he's called by God to do a job, he goes out and starts doing it and now they want to kill him. He's getting let out in baskets through the wall, there's a price on his head. God has to show up and say this to him, "Hey Paul do not fear those who want to kill you for I am with you." They would kill him by the way, that's how it ended for Paul, but don't be afraid, I'm with you.

The promise that reoccurs for us do not be afraid, trust me, fear the one who has all power to calm every storm, has a rod and a staff that can vanquish every enemy and one day will. You trust me and I will walk through this life with you and that promise is extended to every Christian in the church age in Hebrews chapter 13 verses 5 and 6. We've



read and he has said I will never leave you and never forsake you. Verse 6 therefore we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what men can do to me." Not going to be afraid. Going to be persecuted, yeah like Romans 8 says like sheep to the slaughter. People dying in Rome for their Christianity but you know one thing that can never be taken away from us? The value that God places on us in Christ. Nothing can separate you from the love of God. I love the list, persecution, no. Tribulation, no, Distress, no. Famine, Sword, Danger, nothing. I'm convinced neither death nor life, angels, rulers, things present, things to come, powers, heights, depths anything else and all creation they will not separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Can something separate you from your comfort? Yes, absolutely, but like Paul said, love that list too in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 he says we're persecuted but we're not forsaken. There's a difference there. He's going to walk through the valley of the shadow of death no matter how bad it gets in the geopolitical situation or terrorism in our country, do not be afraid. That's a tall order.

Now all this has been directed to Christians. If you are not a Christian here today, be afraid, very afraid, because you don't have what we have. You should fear death, you should fear someone lopping off your head, you should fear being shot, you should fear being the victim of crime, you should fear all of that because once you're dead you will face the king and if you don't have Christ it'll be the most dreadful day you've ever experienced being told, depart from me I never knew you. So I can't help you if you're a non-Christian here today other than to give you the words of life. Repent of your sins, put your trust in Christ that's the answer. And once you, as Hebrews says are no longer enslaved all your life to death and you really deal with that issue then you can resolve with the rest of us. I'm resolved not ashamed with full courage. Christ can be glorified in my body whether by life or by death. You take that fear off the table we've got to be the most courageous people on the planet. See, the wicked flee when no one pursues them, they're afraid of their shadow. I mean that's why everything they read in the news they just sends fear through them especially in this ensconced little county that we live in. But the righteous are as bold as a lion. That's what we need and the only way you can have it is to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ knowing he's solved the ultimate problem. Because when they kill your body they can't touch the reality of your eternity.

I hope in no way does this sermon leads you to believe that issues that we face in life aren't big. Our life is not sheltered, not living in a monastery, I understand the pain of this life, I understand what it is to be a victim of a crime, to walk people through really horrific situations, been in countries where Christians are under persecution. I understand all that. Not to minimize that, but to recognize that in life the greatness of God we should like those people of God, eight centuries before Christ, to know that when every one is freaking out about what they call conspiracy what they fear what they dread not to be our dread. Our primary concern is God and whether or not the day that we die we're going to be invited into the kingdom or whether we're going to be told I never knew you. And that's why this is the most important thing of all. Fear is vanquished by being right with Jesus Christ. I mean that's the core of it without that ingredient it ain't going to happen. You got to be sure that our sins are pinned to the cross because no matter how good you think you are compared to someone else you need this relative comparisons they don't matter to a holy God. It's like saying my windshield is only partially cracked because that guy's is a lot worse than mine. The problem is the cracks. We got a sin problem, we got to have it corrected and Christ did that by suffering and dying and spilling his blood on a cross. So that God could look at you and me and say the penalty has already been paid. That's why Jesus cried out on that cross, it is finished, tetelestai, it's done, paid in full. It's what that old accounting word means. It's been paid now.

God, we don't like the headlines. Psalm 15 says we look at the things in this world and it really bothers us as Psalm 119 says we have an indignation over these things and rightly so. And the closer it gets to our little ensconced life here in our county the more it starts to touch people we know maybe in Paris this last week, maybe some of these major threats that have gone on recently. And when we look at our world and see crime even in tranquil Orange County as it begins to touch our lives I pray that we would recognize that we have a God who's ready to walk us through the difficulties of this life not promising that we'll never be effected by these things, not even promising that we won't be the victim of these things. But knowing like Proverbs 31 that woman who can look to the future and smile because we know who has us, we've entrusted ourselves to someone that will take us to the kingdom that does not in any way have any threat what so ever. And bold and up there and the courageous end up there. I think of that statement in the end of the Bible the last chapter of the Bible when it describes those who are not in the kingdom they're described as cowards. God, let there not be a coward among us, let us be as confident that we be sitting here worshipping Christ and participating in the Lord's supper even if we knew there were people monitoring our activity and marking us in some database as Christians and targeting us. God that we be willing to sit here today and celebrate Jesus Christ, who forgives our sins, cleanses us from all unrighteousness. God let us be like the Apostle Paul in no way ashamed, with full courage, wanting Christ to be glorified in our lives whether by life or by death. In



Jesus name. Amen.