



Prelude to the Cross-Part 6
Provision & Planning
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I want you to picture for just a moment someone that you think has a vibrant faith in Christ. I want you to imagine someone who you think this guy has an implicit trust. He really has a confidence in God. He sees God as his Father and there is a deep and abiding confidence that God is going to care for him. Then I want to have you envision that same guy buying life insurance. I want you to picture him locking the doors to his car as he leaves it in the parking lot. I want you to think of him every year going to get a flu shot. Now think of him putting a password on his laptop and putting money in some kind of secured investment. Saving for retirement, making sure his banks are FDIC approved. These are the kinds of things I want you to imagine and then I want you to think about those two things at the same time and say, is there any problem there?

That is the kind of virtue, I should say pair of virtues, that come into sharp focus at the same time in the passage that we are discussing this morning as we wrap up our six part series "Prelude to the Cross" which is all of Jesus' instructions before all the common scenarios that you know about the drama of the unfolding Garden of Gethsemane, and the trial before Caiaphas and Pilot and the cross. This is the last section of Luke before we get into that. I want you to turn there, if you haven't already, Luke Chapter 22. We'll only cover four verses this morning when Jesus reminds us that he gave some instructions to the apostles in Chapter 9 of Luke, which have very different meanings than the instructions he's giving right now.

Picture this: they've had the Upper Room. They've initiated the practice of the Lord's Supper that was to continue on until Christ returns. We've been clear that there's a traitor among them, Judas, Luke says has been filled by the enemy to go betray him for forty pieces of silver. They're headed to the Garden of Gethsemane and this discussion takes place.

Look at it with me, verse 35. "And he said to them," that's Christ said to the apostles, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or a knapsack or sandals," this is Luke 22:35, "did you lack anything?" And in the margin, if you have a reference Bible I trust, or even in your memory, if it's a good memory, you know this took place in Luke Chapter 9, the first four verses, it was very clear, he said, "Don't bring any of those things on your trip." "Now, did you lack anything," he said? "They said, 'Nothing.'" We had everything. And then he said to them, very strong, contrasting grammar here, "But now..." Very different. "But now, let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that the Scripture must be fulfilled in me," he is quoting now Isaiah 53 verse 12, "And he was numbered with the transgressors." It's going to get real tough here in the next few hours. "And you're going to see me hauled off to be crucified by the Romans, be beat by Roman soldiers. You're going to see me crucified between two common criminals." "What is written about me," he says, bottom of verse 37, "has its fulfillment." It's going to happen. "And they said, 'Look Lord here are two swords.' And he said to them, 'It is enough.'"

This passage has caused some consternation and concern for people, in part because they see this as a very bizarre set of teachings from Christ that don't seem in keeping with what they've heard him say earlier and there's no doubt about that. But I would suggest to you that this passage, to rightly understand the hermeneutic of this passage, to rightly understand how to interpret this passage, that you need to recognize that the bizarre instructions are not these instructions, the bizarre instructions are the ones he gave in Luke Chapter 9. That's the bizarre instruction.



Just like if I were to say to you we have a missions trip and I want you to be on it. "Okay, that'll be great. I'll go." We're going to go to Guatemala, or we're going to go to Jordan, or we're going to go to one of our ministries that we do and we're going to have you go and participate in that ministry, but here's the thing: I don't want to bring any luggage. Your wallet, leave it at home, even your passport, don't even bring that. Don't bring it. We're going to do ministry, but I don't want you to bring any provisions at all. None. That, I trust, you would say is weird. As a matter of fact, that doesn't coincide with anything that the rest of Scripture would tell us regarding the prudence of planning and being someone who prepares for situations. I mean, the Bible is filled with that.

Proverbs Chapter 6 verse 6 says you guys ought to go to the ant, if you don't know how to prepare for things, the ant's pretty good at storing up stuff in the summer so they can have stuff in the winter. You need to understand, you ought to prepare, you ought to look ahead, you ought to see issues ahead of time, you ought to see danger and you ought to prepare yourself. That's the normal biblical advice and instruction that's given from the beginning of the Bible to the end of the Bible. We have this very bizarre set of instructions where Jesus says, in essence, I want you to tie one hand behind your back and go do ministry for a while. Jesus is now not changing things into some bizarre set of instructions, he's reverting things back to the common set of instructions. That, I think, is a key to understanding this text.

If you're taking notes, and I hope that you would, I just want to understand why he gave this instruction in the first place. It's also that they can say what's said to us in verse 35 and that is, we didn't lack anything. "Did you lack anything? When I tied one hand behind your back and you went to Guatemala City without a passport, without any luggage, without your wallet, did we have everything we needed?" And they said, "Yes, we had everything that we needed." He proved to them something about God's care in their lives. And it was all something that he continued to say throughout his ministry should lead Christians to never be anxious, to never fear. Why? Because we have a heavenly Father who cares for us and you need to believe that even in the worst situations when you feel like your back is against the wall and you are completely without what you need, God can provide what you need.

Number one on your outline, let's just make that note from simple reading of verse 35 and that is that you and I should "Fearlessly Rely on God's Care." You ought to fearlessly rely on it. There should be no fear, no anxiety, that you say, I know God can supply. That is something Jesus tried to teach these apostles and it's still something we're trying to learn today, that we need to know that God can provide.

Taking your Bibles really, really quickly, if you would, and turn to Psalm 33. That set of instructions is based on some observations that we could look at throughout the Bible. We could look from the entirety of Genesis to Revelation and see these things. But I think Psalm 33 is a helpful psalm that kind of just from one to the next to the next gives us this kind of itemized summary of the biblical teaching regarding how all this relates to the topic at hand. And that is prudent planning versus me trusting in God's provision. Prudent planning, trusting of God's provision. How do those work together? Well, here are a set of foundational and fundamental principles from Psalm 33.

Now I'd love to go through the whole thing, but I don't have time, but let's at least get six quick observations, believe it or not, from Psalm 33, start in verse 6. "By the word of the Lord..." Psalm 33:6. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made and by the breath of his mouth all their host."



There are a lot of things I say with the breath of my mouth and nothing happens. Do you feel that way? God speaks and things happen. Why? Because he's all powerful. "He gathers the waters," verse 7, "of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord." Why should you stand in fear of the Lord? Why should the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him? Why? Because "He speaks and it comes to be; he commands, and it stands firm." He is, here's the first observation, all powerful. God is all powerful. He does things with a word and things happen. God is all powerful. Dah... Yeah, OK, well that's the summary foundational statement that I think we could glean from a million different passages in the Bible. God is the almighty God.

Verse 10. "The Lord brings the counsel of nations to nothing." Not only does it bring your counsel to nothing, not only does he bring, you know, some simple guy's plans that, "I want to do this, I want to travel here, I want to go there, conduct business there, come back, make a profit," all that, he can frustrate those plans. I mean, we can plan all we want. The nations can get together and plan. The kings can get together and plan. And it doesn't mean it's going to happen. They can speak, they can plan, they can do all that they want, but it doesn't mean it's going to happen. "The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing, he frustrates the plans of the people." Right? Not in every case, but in many cases, and we know that. "The counsel of the Lord" though, by comparison, "it stands forever." He plans something and it happens. "The plans of his heart to all generations."

God has no problem. I can say, I'm going to plan this, everyone in Orange County should do this for all generations and no one's going to pay attention to me. Maybe a few people. But my strength, here's the second observation, is limited. My strength is limited, my power is limited. God's power is infinite. My power is finite. Dah... Oh yeah, that's the general lesson of the Bible from beginning to end. Number three, verse 13. "The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man. He sits enthroned." He's the powerful one. "He looks out on the inhabitants of the Earth," those little people down there. What about them? "He fashioned their hearts," he made them, "and he observes all their deeds." But he's the father, he's in charge, you're the children. He is the one who has given you any power to make any plans and if they succeed, well, it really is based on something that we haven't addressed yet in this passage.

But when it comes to your plans, you need to understand, all of your power is derived. There's the third observation. God is all powerful. Your power is limited and every bit of power that you have, all authority that you have, is derived authority. Right? Just like a rock has less authority than you do. That's because God assigned the rock to have less authority and the tree to have a little more authority and you'd have a whole lot of authority. As a matter of fact, you're the pinnacle of physical creation. You have more authority as a human being made in the image of God than any other piece of God's creation. But all of that is derived, it's only because God gave you that and he can stop it at any time. You are the children of man, you are the people that God has fashioned. He's fashioned your heart, he's fashioned your capacities.

Verse 16, number four. "The king is not saved by a great army." Well, just like nations getting together and trying to do something by their counsel. Right? I mean, it doesn't mean just because you're a king and you've got a crown on your head, that you're going to be saved just because you have a great army that you've assembled. "And a warrior is not delivered by the great strength that he has." No, "A warhorse..." oh, it has the armor, it may have all the stuff, you might have an armored chariot, "that's a false hope for salvation," if you want to win the battle. "And by its great might it cannot rescue." In other words, there is a situation when you look at people, even with their best planning, that it would be a bad hope.



I put it this way. Number one, God is all powerful. Number two, our power is limited. Number three, all my power is derived. And number four, trusting in my power is foolish. It's a bad bet. Trusting in anything that I would do to prepare for anything, a battle, anything, is a bad bet. I know this: it doesn't mean that I'm going to succeed. I could be the most prepared person in the world. I shouldn't trust in myself.

Verse 18. "Behold..." Now, that sounds like a terrible place to be. No, no, it's going to get good now. "The eye of the Lord," his care, his concern, his favor, "is on those who fear him." You recognize his great power and your relative lack of power. "On those whose hope is in his steadfast love." God loves me. I know God, if I have a plan and I'm submitted to God and I commit my plans to the Lord, maybe, maybe God will empower this plan and maybe there'll be success. "That he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine." It's not because I stored up a lot of stuff in storehouses for the big famine that was coming. But you know what, because of God's mercy, I recognize his great power. I recognize that my power is limited compared to his. I recognize that all my power and authority is derived.

I recognize that banking on my provisions and my planning is not smart, but I know this, number five, God cares for his people, the people who see him as the all powerful one. There's a special place I have in God's heart, not because of anything inherent in me, but because of his covenant love set upon me. And I know this: I recognize God empowers his people, even to survive a famine if he wants them to, because God is gracious and kind and compassionate to his people.

Therefore, number 6, I said six quick observations from Psalm 33. Verse 20. "Our soul," then, here's a good response, someone understands those first five things, "waits for the Lord; he is our help, he is our shield." Right? "Our hearts will be glad in him because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you." So we hope in you. We may have a storehouse ready for the famine, we may have a horse that's ready for the battle, we may have an army that's ready for the onslaught of the enemy, but we are going to hope in you. Number 6, we ought to trust in him.

Six things. God is all powerful, my power is limited, getting my power is derived anyway, that's why it's so limited. It's derived to the extent that God wants to give me any authority or power. Trusting in my power and all my provisions and all my stuff is not a smart bet, but I know this: God cares for his people who recognize that disparity, who recognizes his greatness. So therefore I have a trust in him.

If you want to look at the tension between these two great virtues of wise godly planning and trusting in God's provision, we need to know this: what God wants to do is make sure that our trust goes over here to this side, which is God cares for his people. My trust is there. My trust isn't in locking my door, putting a password on my laptop, buying health insurance, life insurance, making sure my bank is FDIC approved, none of that really matters. What really matters is that God cares for his people and God can get me through a famine, through a collapse of the market, through problems in my health. God is a God who cares for his people. I'm going to trust in him. It's a great ending to this. Right? "Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help, our shield, our hearts are glad in him because we trust in his holy name." He's a good God and a powerful God. "Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you."

Now, God so often is trying to make the people of God understand that they ought to fearlessly trust in his care. And he does that sometimes by taking the powerful things that we have, taking those away and saying, "Can you see that I love you and that you can trust me? Can you see that?" Like



tying the disciple's hands behind their back and saying go out there and do ministry, hard ministry, where you have no wallet, you have no cloak, you have no weapons, you have nothing. Go out there and do that and see if I can't provide for you.

Just like when the Midianites came up against the Israelites and he said, "I'm going to pick someone here. Hmmm. I'll take Gideon. Gideon. When Gideon was picked, Gideon says to God, "Ah... do you know who I am? I'm from Manasseh, our clan is the weakest. We are weak. We need strength. We need a General Douglas MacArthur. We don't need me, not Gideon." And God said, "No, I'm going to choose you. Now get an army together." 32,000 people came together and said, "OK, we're ready to fight the Midianites. The Israelite soldiers 32,000.

And God says, "Listen, send them home," Judges Chapter 7. "Send them home. Anyone who wants to go home, send them home. Let's see who stays." 10,000 remained. That's rough. 22,000 people said, "Ah, we don't have to fight. Okay, we're going home." God said this, "You've still got too many with 10,000 for me to deliver you, lest you think by your own power you delivered yourselves." So he got them down to this strange thing about how they drank water and they pick those who drank water like a dog, which was not a compliment, it was a slam. Right? "You're drinking like a rat." That's the way they viewed that. So, you're despicable.

Let's take the people who most people in society would say they're throwaways. How many were left? 300. Now with 300 go out and fight the Midianites. Of course, you know the story, it wouldn't be in the Bible there in Judges were it not one of the cycles of God's deliverance and he delivers the people with 300 people who drink like dogs. "That, was one of the reminders that you should trust in me. Because I can save with a lot, or I can save with a little. You need to understand the hope isn't in the war horse, the hope is not in the number in your army. Your hopes should be in me."

So, the difference between these two virtues of godly prudent planning and trusting in God's provision, we know this: we're never supposed to put our trust in our provision. We always are supposed to put our trust in God. "The horse is a false hope for battle." "The victory belongs to the Lord." I couldn't state any more clearly than that psalm. That should be where our hearts are. Why? Because we are fearlessly trusting in God's care. Well, of course, you may say, "Well, if that's the case then I shouldn't prepare at all." And Jesus, in certain situations like we saw in Luke 9 and Luke 10 said, "Let's not prepare at all and see what happens," and God provided.

Now, that little test is over, Jesus is done with this three-and-a-half-year period of ministry, and he says, "Now I'm going to leave you, let's get back to everything you learned in Proverbs and Sabbath school. I need you to get back to taking your wallet. I need you to get back to taking your luggage. I need you to get back to carrying a sword. I need you to get back to all the things that normal people do. And you need to," look at verse 36, "take your moneybag, take your knapsack. If you don't have a sword, it would be better for you to be cold and shiver at night than to not have a sword. Go buy one." We'll look at verse 37 in a minute. It's all because of this fulfillment of Scripture in Isaiah 53. And in verse 38, they go "OK, we got two swords." And he said, "That's enough."

Now this is a debated passage by so many people and I wish that it weren't, because I think it's straightforward and straight ahead. But it's unfortunately a lot of scholars who sit around in their ivory towers or, to be more specific, in their air conditioned office in padded chairs writing their commentaries, that have a problem. Not with a knapsack, not with a moneybag, because when they go on trips they take their luggage and they take their wallet.

They have a problem with the sword. They think, "Oh, I don't know. That doesn't sound right. Why



would Jesus say, get a sword?" Especially because later in the passage look what happens. Jump down in your text here. You see in verse 50 that Peter strikes, it says, "One of them," in this text, but the other gospels make it very clear this is Peter, "takes a sword and strikes the servant of the High Priest and cuts off his ear." And Jesus goes, "Yeah, get them, save me from the cross." No "Jesus said, 'No more of this!' And he touched the man's ear," his name was Malchus we learned from the other gospel writers, "and he healed him.

"And then Jesus said to the chief priest and the officers in the temple, 'You came out against me with clubs like I'm a robber with swords and all the rest. I was in the temple day after day, you didn't lay a hand on me.'" Now, people say because Jesus said to Peter you can put your sword away. As a matter of fact, to make it very clear, in John and in Matthew he says, "Put your sword back in its sheath," "Put your sword back in its place". We think, "Oh, he's obviously a non-violent passivist, you know, there's no way that he'd want anyone to walk around with a sword." Everyone in the ancient world walked around with a sword. As a matter of fact, they didn't have any time to go shopping at the gun store at this particular point. And they had two swords among them. See what I'm saying? They carried swords. People carried swords. Why did they carry swords? Because if you had anything, and they didn't have much, right, at this point, you'd better protect what you have. OK?

Now understand how this works. This kind of provision, this kind of wise preparation for life, whether it's a cloak to protect me from the elements or a knapsack to protect me from not having enough food, because that's usually what they put in it, or an extra pair of sandals as he told them that you're not supposed to take, but now you take an extra pair of sandals. Well, because you might have a strap on your sandal break. Or even a stick of a weapon. a Rhabdos in Greek. The thing that would use to hit someone with. You might need that or in this case a sword. As a matter of fact, you're going to need a sword because it's going to be tough. I'm going to be numbered with the transgressors, it's going to get real difficult.

Now, I know a lot of your favorite commentators will say this is all allegorical. It is very common modern way to look at this passage, that this is all allegorical, that there is none of this going on. But I'm saying that just as you would protect yourself in any area of life, there is an expectation in a first century world for you to be prepared for every eventuality.

And the reality is that we should, just like the godly person I made you envision putting passwords on his computer and buying health insurance and life insurance, we should, number two, we should "Wisely Prepare for Life." You ought to be prepared for all of life's demands, all of life's eventualities, and you should wisely get ready for those things. That's what the Bible would teach us. Wisely prepare for life's demands and life's got a lot of demands. I assume you know your body is heading toward, you know, not looking too good, entropy is at work, Second Law of Thermodynamics. You're not going to be as powerful as you were in the prime of your life. You're probably saving for retirement or some kind of point in your life where you're not going to be able to make as much money as you make now.

That kind of preparation is an eventuality, a thing that you're going to expect, that's going to happen. And there are lots of things that you do. You put a roof over your head and I'll bet if your roof was leaking you'd, at some point say, "I ought to make it a priority to fix that roof because I got to protect my family and my stuff from the elements." And so you do what you can to protect yourself.

The sword was no different. If you're managing a Costco or a Target or, you know, a WalMart or



any kind of cash business, maybe a fast food place, I assume what you're doing is you're taking the advantage of that industry out there that will transport the cash from your business to get it to the bank. Do you do that? I'm assuming you do and if you own a business I bet you would. And you know what those guys have? And it's not the government, right? This is a private organization. They have things strapped to their hips so that they can carry your bags of money out. You ever see them when you're there at Target or whatever? And now they're walking with these bags of money. You're always wondering, "I wonder how much cash is in it." But you know what? I'm not going to ask, "Hey, can I look through your cash bag," because they've got a gun on their hip. They're carrying that gun on their hip.

Just like if you're going to walk from Jerusalem to Jericho you can know this, as Second Corinthians says, you're going to have lots of dangers from robbers, you can have dangers from strangers, dangers from foreigners, you're going to have dangers of people who don't want your stuff. It's good for you to walk around, just like the disciples were at this point, with two swords on your persons because it's good for you to know that if you were going to be jumped on the road to Jericho that you're going to defend yourself. That's what the sword was for.

And for those who say this is a metaphorical sword, which so many people do, I'm saying is it also a metaphorical cloak? Is it a metaphorical moneybag? Is it a metaphorical knapsack? Therefore, I want to see those people who say this is a metaphorical sword, they're saying I should never try to defend myself in any situation with any means, even if it's secondary like I'm going to hire an armored truck to pick up my cash, which you see, you may not be carrying the gun around but you recognize you're hiring people to carry the gun around to protect your stuff. Where's your trust in God? Well, that's the kind of thing we do. Just like I want my bank to be FDIC insured.

You recognize that the provisions that you make in this life, much like the provisions they made and those lives, are very real and very practical. To say that the sword is allegorical you might as well say all the rest of it is allegorical, but I don't see anyone who has the allegorical view of the sword taking an allegorical suitcase on a plane on a missions trip. Nor do they take an allegorical wallet. And even if you're saying, "Well, you know what, they kind of were, maybe all of this is allegorical." Then I want to know this: when it says, "But now do this because I told you before to take none of that," I want to know what that allegorical difference is. Right? He said, "I told you to take no money bag, no knapsack, no sandals." Do you think they were taking knapsacks and moneybags and sandals but they just weren't taking their metaphorical ones? Or, if you're saying, "No, they took none of that and now they are still to take none of that because they're supposed to be hyper-spiritual and trust that God is going to provide them with everything, so I realize this: what they're saying is this is all allegorical, I just want to know what the difference is.

In other words, what's the allegorical sword that I'm taking now that I didn't take before? Well, the sword of the Word, some people say. So they weren't taking the sword of the Word on those trips before. In Luke 9 and Luke 10, are you telling me that they're going out there with some kind of spiritual gullibility when Christ says you're going to go into these places and they're going to reject you and you're going to kick the dust off your feet. By the way, I know he didn't mean that at all because he said this: "You are to be as shrewd as snakes, shrewd as serpents, but as innocent as doves."

He wanted them to be allegorically wielding the sword. He wanted them to be allegorically having their moneybag, their knapsack and their cloak and their sandals. But now he's saying, "We're getting back to real issues. I didn't want you to take any of that stuff in a literal way and now I'm telling you to take it in a literal way." We not going to be walking around in a day, we're not in the



Old West where maybe you're carrying your 357 on your hip and walk in a church. I realize that. Some of you are, perhaps, but keeping it covered, that's helpful perhaps, but the idea is the ways in which we protect our things, including things like people wanting our stuff, wanting to hurt us, wanting to injure us, wanting to steal from us, whether it's your armed security that you can hit with a button in your house and people show up with their guns, you do recognize that all of that is part of the wisdom of the Bible from beginning to end.

And in a day when we can sit around in an air conditioned office, pick up a phone, dial 911 and have people with guns show up, you need to recognize that it's not the same scenario in the first century. If you're going to walk from point A to point B you can't call Brinks to say, "Can you bring some armed guys to take this stuff." Look at the Apostle Paul trying to get the riches of the donation from Corinth to get it to Jerusalem, he's sending people with them. There is an entourage and I assure you of this: they had swords with them. Everyone did or else you're going to get jumped, you're going to get mugged, that's what happens. And so it is in our day.

This is not a Second Amendment discussion I'm having here with the Republican base in church this morning. But I am saying this: the biblical principle of defending yourself, even if we want to get to that level in Scripture, couldn't be clearer. I mean Exodus Chapter 22 says, "You come into my house at night and try and rob me and I kill you," that's not going to be with a feather or a Bible verse, you understand, this is going to be with a weapon of some kind, "Then I am not held accountable." You can come and invite me to your potluck the next week and say, "Oh, Johnny, there's Pastor Mike. I am not held to the blood guilt of that person's death.

Not to mention Jesus even in Luke Chapter 11 when we read it, he told that story about the strong man who is fully armed who guards his own place and therefore his goods are safe. That was just the standard because you didn't have the kind of security that you may have in your neighborhood or your homeowner's association or in your local neighborhood or your local cops or whatever you have. Everyone was going to be armed to protect their stuff and to protect themselves. That was the standard.

This is not an allegorical sword in my opinion. You may disagree with that. You're free to disagree with that. I just think you got to do a lot of hermeneutical gymnastics to get to that place. And I would say put yourself back in the first century or any ancient culture and recognize this was the standard fare. You brought a knapsack in which you put your stuff in, you brought a moneybag, that's your wallet. You took a sword. Some kind of means of protection as you traveled and traversed through the ancient world. Wisely prepare for life's demands. And as I said, this is not a sermon about a concealed carry, you know, thing, we're not going to sign up for that. We're not talking about that. I mean, not that it doesn't apply to this passage. And the government, just like in the Old Testament, even today, gives you some principles and ordinances to allow you to do that, which is perfectly in keeping with the rest of Scripture.

What about turning the other cheek? You do understand what we studied in Luke Chapter 6 and you can look it up on the sermon database if you'd like, in verse 29, turning the other cheek. The concept of the enemies in that passage is those who hate us, who curse us, who speak against us. I am not supposed to, in any way, including with my fist or my words or my gun, to kill you because you're criticizing me, ridiculing me or cursing me. God was all about making that clear. I take no personal retaliation on you when it comes to insults or anything else. But you come to take my money or you come to take my stuff or you come to take my family's security or a life of my family, the Bible has from the beginning to end, even back in Nehemiah's day, they had bows and spears and slings and Nehemiah said, "We got thugs in the area." In this place that was a little



dystopian by the time we had the rebuilding of the temple and the walls at that point, and he says everyone was there and I wrote this down, Nehemiah Chapter 4 verse 18, "The builders had a sword strapped on his side while they built and the men who sounded the trumpet were beside him." They had alarm systems and they had personal protection as part of wisely dealing with the demands of that dark situation.

Well, what about this passage, verse 37? "I tell you that Scripture must be fulfilled." Luke 22. And now he quotes Isaiah 53 verse 12, which, by the way, not only says he'd "be numbered with the transgressors" as he went to his crucifixion, but that "he would pour out his soul unto death." That's what the passage says. Jesus had told Peter in the book of Matthew before, "I'm going to the cross and you're not going to stop me. I'm going to be mistreated by the chief priest and the scribes and I'm going to be killed." And Peter took them him aside, you remember, and he said, "Never!" He rebuked the Lord. He said, "Never is this going to happen to you." And Jesus said to him, "Yeah, maybe I should rethink that. Thanks for defending me. This is a time for personal self-defense." Is that what he said? No, he said what? "Get behind me Satan. You're a hindrance to me." Why? "Because I'm headed to the cross."

That's why, as it says in the Scripture, he turned his face toward Jerusalem and he went up to be the "sacrificial lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." It was going to escalate onto a Roman execution rack and that was God's plan. When Peter tried to stop that, Jesus said, "Don't stop that." When Peter pulls out a sword... As a matter of fact, looked down in the passage, I didn't quote verse 49, Luke 22:49. "And when those who were around him saw what was happening..." He'd just been betrayed with a kiss and here all these people with clubs and swords coming against Christ. Right? "They saw what would follow, they said, 'Lord, shall we strike with the sword?'" And I'm going to raise my hand and go, "I know. I know." No! Why? Because Christ said this is the point of going to Jerusalem in the first place. He's going to be arrested, mistreated by the chief priest and the scribes and he is going to be killed.

"Is it time for us to fight that?" It's not time for you to fight that. When people quote that passage and they say Jesus basically says, "No, don't pull your sword out right now," that there's no time to pull your sword out. And I'm saying that's ridiculous. That doesn't match the rest of Scripture in any way. I understand this was not the time to strike with the sword and Peter didn't wait for the answer. He just did it. And that was a problem. There are lots of times you shouldn't strike with a sword. If I insult you on the patio, don't pull out your gun and shoot me. That's not the time for you to pull out your sword. OK? There might be a time if I come in the middle of the night and I threaten your life. Right? Shoot me in the head. Right? That's the time to use your sword. There's a time for us throughout the Scripture to recognize that the use of force and personal protection of our lives is the biblical norm. Not all pastors agree with that, I understand. This has nothing to do with my politics, has nothing to do with my stance on policy in our country. It has everything to do with trying to rightly handle the word of truth.

Peter was told, by the way, in John 18:11, after he struck Malchus' ear off, "Put your sword back into its sheath." Not put your sword in the trash can. Could you give your sword to these guys that are coming? Put it back into its sheath. You just cut someone's ear off, but now is not the time. Should we strike with the sword? No. Matthew 26:52. Same scene. "Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place.'" Not throw it away or get rid of it. There were certainly needs for you to walk on the road to Jericho, for instance, with a sword strapped to your side so everyone can see that you're going to take seriously your own self-protection.

Well, what does this have to do with persecution? Well I'm glad you asked that question. This might



be good for us to turn back to, it's just across the page. Luke 21:12 and 13. Jesus said you're going to go and be persecuted before the authorities. By the way, let me give you the point here before we end this rushed sermon and we don't give it to you, number three. You need to "Biblically Discern God's Will" whether it's for you to put a savings account in place for your retirement, whether it's for you to up your life insurance, whether it is for you to go to school to prepare for a job, whether it's for you to learn the biblical languages so you can be a preacher, whether it's for you to buy a gun to protect your family. You need to discern the will of God based on the Bible and the Bible is going to say this is the right way to prepare, this is the wrong way to prepare. This is the right thing to be prepared for, this is the wrong thing to do. This is the right time to defend, this is the wrong time to defend. The Bible is very clear on this. You just need to learn to master what the Bible has to say about these situations and here's an example.

Not only stopping the Messiah on the way to the cross is not the time for you to use any kind of defense, you're supposed to let this one play out because the Scripture says that's what's going to happen. What about when they arrest me in Orange County for preaching the Word of God and they drag me to Santa Ana and I have to stand trial? Should I, at that point, try to in some way defend myself, take up arms against the government?

Look at verse 12. "Before all this," that he had talked about that's coming, "they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you up to the synagogues and the prisons, and you'll be brought before kings and governors from my name's sake." Underline this, verse 13. "This will be your opportunity to bear witness." When the government in the book of Acts started to bring these people before them and say, "Stop being a Christian, stop evangelizing people, stop preaching the Word," that was their chance to stand, like Paul before Festus and Agrippa, and give testimony to Christ. We see it repeatedly throughout the book of Acts.

That is very different, I hope you understand, from the criminal who jumps you on the road to Jericho and tries to take your moneybag that Jesus said you ought to take. Not a metaphorical moneybag, a real moneybag, your real wallet and a real source of some kind of defense to protect that. Very different. Criminal behavior is different than governmental persecution. Governmental persecution for the sake of Christ is my opportunity to bear witness for Jesus. And I'm not even talking about criminals who want me to bear witness to Jesus.

Remember that story in Oregon where the guy came in, took his gun, killed nine people and said, "Are you a Christian?" before he shot them? I'm just saying this. I don't answer to criminals on college campuses when I'm there to take a class, you understand. This is not me before a Superior Court judge, this is not me before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. This is me on a college campus trying to take a class. You want to come to me and ask me theological questions, I'm going to say it's not time for me to answer theological questions, it's time for me to disarm you or neutralize you or trying to protect the people around me out of love for them. It's not time for me to submit to a criminal as though he's some kind of magistrate in our society.

I'm not saying that Rachel Scott at Columbine, you know, shouldn't have answered Klebold's question. I'm not saying that. And I'm not saying even those that said at that community college in Oregon, what was it, south of Medford, I'm not saying that somehow they shouldn't have said, "Yes, I'm a Christian." But I'm saying if you asked me that with a gun in my face, you better hope I don't have a gun on me because I'm going to respond to you the way the Bible says I can rightfully. I should be able to sleep like a baby that night without a blood guiltiness on my conscious at all because this is not me before King Agrippa. This is me before a thug and a criminal. It's a very different situation. And we see that distinction throughout the Scripture.



I quoted earlier Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 26, when Paul said I was "on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers and dangers from robbers and dangers for my own people and dangers from Gentiles and dangers from cities and dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, dangers from the false brothers." The dangers that he describes, if you look carefully at how he tried to respond to those, all of those, he had ways to respond. "Well, why don't we see the passage where he pulls out the sword and kills a robber?" It wasn't a common occurrence any more than it's a common occurrence here. How many of us have killed robbers? Not many of them. Doesn't mean we haven't had the opportunity to show that if there's a situation that I'm going to at least show that I've got a sign in front of my front door that says, you know, armed security, or alarm system, or take my money generated by my business to take it to the bank in an armored car.

You are showing that you are going to defend and protect your things. There was nothing against the spirit of Christ, as commentators like to say, in the standard instructions throughout the Scripture. Jesus is reverting to these, what you need to decide is it now time to strike with a sword? Is it now time to defend myself? Is it now time for me to make an answer? Jesus stood before those authorities, including Pilot, and was quiet. Just like you and I may find that there are situations where no defense is needed. And there are other times that there should be a defense and we're reading it in our Daily Bible Reading as we read throughout the book of Acts.

There are times when Paul says, "I'm willing to go to prison and even die in Jerusalem." We can't even get out of that chapter, what is that, Chapter 21, where he sits there and makes a defense and says, "Wait a minute, you're not treating me right. This is wrong. This is inequitable, this is unjust. I need to get out of this." We saw it in Chapter 16 when he forced the magistrates to come and let him out publicly because what they had done unjustly to him. He defended himself and he defended the situation because it wasn't one of those situations where he was given the chance to testify to Christ, as it says in Luke 21:13. "This will be your opportunity to bear witness." I hope you recognize there's a difference between those two things, the criminal, the thug. The reason that Nehemiah had everyone strap on a sword to their side while they worked on the wall in that very dark, dystopian day in Israel's history.

But even if you have that sword on your hip, Proverbs 21:31 says, or a big bank account for your retirement, or a great insurance policy if you die and leave your wife a widow. "The horse is made ready for the day of battle," and I hope you make good, prudent, wise plans for life's eventualities, "but the victory belongs to the Lord." I quoted that earlier but I didn't give you the reference, Proverbs 21:31. What a great, great passage for us to remember. Because just because David killed Goliath, the great Philistine, with a sling and a stone, when he became the king, guess what, he had a standing army. A standing army that was trained for battle. And that was a deterrent for all those nations around him, not to mention an arm of God's justice, as it says in Romans 13, to execute vengeance on those who did wrong. And that was something that God completely, 100%, sanctioned in the Old Testament and does in the New Testament and, by extension, he does today.

The problem with David was at the end of his life he shifted his trust to that army, which was evidenced by him numbering the troops at the end of his life and even Joab said this is not a good thing for you to do. And God punished him for it. Why? Because the guy who said, "The battle is the Lord's" and "the horses made ready for battle, but the victory belongs to God," he no longer lived by that in his heart. And so what I need to preach about this morning is you making sure when it comes between the two virtues of wisely, prudently preparing, and you trusting implicitly in God's provision, you got to make sure that your heart is over here, saying I trust God's provision. You've got a great bank account? Great, don't trust in it. I mean, you're eating right, you're doing



good with your body so you won't get sick, don't trust in that. You're going through the regimen of all the things your oncologist said you have to do, don't trust in that. It's not, don't do it. Of course you do it. Don't trust in that. You've got things that secure your life? Don't trust in those. Don't trust in your alarm, don't trust in your passwords, don't trust in any of them. Trust in the Lord.

The last thing that Jesus said in the prelude to the cross, before he went to the cross, which would forever change that relationship that he had with his disciples in terms of the proximity and closeness he had personally, he said, "Now as you go out to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth, you need to get back to the prudent planning that you would have had in any other period of godly living in the Bible. But you better make sure you trust me, because you got a track record that just because you can say God has provided in some very precarious situations, I know this: "I can walk through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil because you are with me."

Can God calm the storm? Yes. But you better take a life preserver. Can God pull money out of the mouth of a fish to pay my taxes. Yes. But you ought to save for paying your taxes. Can God provide manna on the lawn tomorrow morning for you to feed your family? Yes. But you should go to Costco and you should buy food for the rest of the week. See, the prudent planning says, I'm going to plan and be prudent. Not with excess, as I should have mentioned but didn't have time in this truncated sermon. "Look, there are two swords," and Jesus says, "That's enough." I don't need 22 swords among the 12 of you. And some of you, if you have the prepper tendency, I'm just saying that an obvious shift of your trust to the preparation. Wisely, prudently prepare. I know wisely is going to be on a sliding scale and we can debate what that wisdom is and how much of that preparation you should have. How much life insurance, how much insurance should you have. But you need to recognize that in all the prudent planning our victory is found in the Lord.

Way over time. Way over time for me is four minutes, were overtime. So let's pray together.

God, so much we could have said about this text. I'm disappointed that so often this is a source of contention among Christians and I hope it's not here. Please let my congregation not hear something that I'm not saying. This is not some kind of political rant about the Second Amendment. It's really about us knowing what it is to be prudently prepared and yet trust you fully. And God, in this room, there are decisions that are going to be made tonight, tomorrow, this week, this month, about things that they're going to do to prepare for life's demands, life's eventuality, and I pray that there would be prudence and wisdom, like the ant in Proverbs 6 makes provision for the winter. But that we would always implicitly fully trust in you. Don't let us be like David who had seen great victories in the past, but now as we walk through a period of our life, start to shift our trust to our provisions. Let us put our trust squarely in you and let that be a resolve we have every time we gather together, every time we open your Word, we say, "Yes, we trust God. He's a good God." Let our hope be in God. Give us that hope today, that trust, that confidence in you. While we continue to be faithful to prudently and carefully plan without being obsessed with that. So God let me let us be without anxiety, let us be without worry, as we go about our lives knowing that you're a good God and will care for us as we take proper precautions.

In Jesus name. Amen.