



Christ's Perfect Provision-Part 1

When Our Preparation Isn't Enough

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Do you ever have those dreams—or perhaps I should say nightmares—where you wake up: cold sweat, heart beating fast, shallow breathing, panicked? Not because you're falling or because you're being chased (I have those too), but the one where you're in a situation for which you're completely and totally unprepared.

I find that when I discuss this—though I don't often discuss my dreams with people—when I do, it seems to be related to one's profession or job or role in life. So for me, you might imagine it's related to preaching. I often have the nightmare where I'm in a situation, maybe in a crowd at some big place, and then they call my name and introduce me as the preacher. And I'm sitting there not knowing I was scheduled to preach—usually in shorts while everyone's in suits. And I wake up in a panic and a cold, cold sweat.

I find, you know, if you're a salesman or whatever—whatever you do—if you're a student and you have the dream, you walk in, you get your notepad out, you're ready to take notes, and then you find out it's the final exam that's 70% of your grade or something. And, you know, maybe you're a mom raising kids and you're dreaming you're in the grocery line; you've got all your cart, you realize you don't have your purse, you don't have your cash, you don't have your credit card—and then you left all your kids at home and you forgot them. You know, just this kind of bizarre, surreal thing where you're just not at all prepared for anything that you're facing.

We have those dreams sometimes, I realize. But that feeling of panic and being completely under-clubbed and not prepared—we have those feelings in real life too, don't we? I mean, that happens when we're awake. We might be in a situation—maybe a new job, maybe a promotion—you get new responsibilities, you're looking at the job and you look at the magnitude of it, and you think, with that same kind of panicky feeling, "I just can't do this. This is just too much. It's just beyond me."

Or maybe at the end of your career, and you're looking at your investments and your money, saying, "I can't retire. There's no way I can live on this. I'm completely unprepared." And you have that accelerated heart rate and that sense of, "I am not ready."



I think we all have that feeling as new parents, don't we? When you bring the baby home—it's one thing when you're surrounded by all the nurses and stuff at the hospital—but I remember, as I've said before, bringing home my first 17 years ago and I lay his little, you know, blob body on the sofa. And I'll never forget standing back, and my wife goes to lay down or something, and I look at this baby and I just said, "Now what? What do I do?" You know, Dad—what is that? It was a feeling of just being overwhelmed by the responsibility.

Or maybe, as I've had experience and I know many of you have, the doctor gives some kind of diagnosis that you just say, "How are we going to manage this? I mean, this just seems beyond our capacity." That panic feeling.

That had to be something of the feeling that the apostles had as we get to this series that we're going to begin this morning in Luke chapter 9, where they are facing a situation that clearly they feel is beyond them—have to feel that way. Even the most ambitious among them had to feel like this is way too much. Picture these twelve that have been designated apostles. And you know where we've been in studying even just the last series and the end of chapter 8: we have Christ displaying his credentials as the omnipotent Christ—he's calming storms (power over nature), he's casting out demons (showing his power with a word over these demonic entities), and then the last one is physical bodies that are failing—he can fix them; and even dead bodies—he can raise them to life.

And now in chapter 9, as we've just studied this morning the first six verses—if you haven't turned there yet, you should be turning there now—this passage right here, you see him just kind of hand them the football, if you will. "Here, it's your turn now. You've listened to me preach. You've watched me do these miraculous things. I'm now giving this job to you. Go out there and preach and do these miraculous works that you've seen me do."

And that's it, man. You can picture these apostles as kind of on the sidelines watching Jesus on the playing field of ministry—throwing all these touchdown passes (just to carry on this football analogy for a minute), and they're just handing him towels and water—the waterboy—and now all of a sudden he comes off the field, hands them the ball, says, "Now you get out there and I want you to do this."



Now think about that. This is not the seminary grads. This is not the scribes and the Pharisees. They've got people down in Jerusalem that are preaching this stuff with all kinds of detail. And Jesus now says this—take a look at the first six verses of Luke chapter 9:

He called together the twelve and he gave them power and authority over all demons, and not only that, sickness, and to cure diseases. And he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

Unbelievable.

And he said to them (v. 3)—let's just tie one hand behind your back here real quick—"Take nothing for your journey: no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money. And don't even have two tunics—don't take an extra change of clothes. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart—make that your base of operations. And whenever they do not receive you, when you leave that town, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them."

And they departed, and they went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

Now, you could read that real quickly and read that summary in verse 6 and go, "Okay, yeah, somebody went and did it." But please, this morning, can you just empathize with this scenario? These are fishermen, a tax collector—just young men—who are now going to do something that these old, educated people are doing in Jerusalem in terms of preaching about, verse 1, the kingdom of God. And then something no one else can do—walk in and have somebody that's blind or lame or sick, and just say a word and have them be healthy; demonic spirits that are making people crazy, and to step up and just say, "Be gone," and done—healed, demons extracted. I mean, there's just bizarre stuff—these young guys are going to do that.

I mean, they certainly felt that sense of panic. Even the most ambitious among them had to feel like, "This is a task that's too big for us."

Now, I'm gonna spend time just kind of putting ourselves in the sandals of the apostles and feeling that. Knowing that you're not an apostle—I get that—but I do know this: as it relates to your calling in life, there will be those times when you feel under-clubbed for it. That is just the norm of Christianity.



So I want you to jot that down—let’s spend some time making the parallel here between the apostles’ commission and yours.

Number one: expect a calling for which you feel inadequate. You will feel inadequate when you look at the calling to which you’ve been called.

And when I say calling, I hope you don’t designate that to some just theological profession or some pastoral ministry job. You do understand—as the Puritans used to say—that whatever it is that you are—whether it’s a cobbler, or you’re a janitor, or you’re a baker, or an insurance agent, or a mom—whatever you are, that is your calling. That is your profession. That is the thing that you are doing as a Christian, taking your Christianity into that environment, and that is the thing to which you’ve been called. It’s what the word in Latin—*vocare*—becomes the word “vocation” when we talk about our calling in life.

And that’s not just when you get a paycheck. If you walked down an aisle and you got married, you are called to be a Christian husband; Christian wives are called to be a Christian wife. If you’ve had some children, brought them home from the hospital and laid the blob on the sofa and stood back and said “Now what?”—now you know this: you’ve been called. This is your vocation—your calling from God to be a Christian parent.

Not to mention that there is some overlap in terms of your ministry, because every Christian has got an investment from God to have a ministry post. And in that ministry post, you go there and you represent God and you stand up for God’s truth. You’re not an apostle—I get that—and you don’t have the power and authority over demons and to cure diseases. But you may not be an apostle, yet you’re an ambassador. You represent Christ in every arena of your life. And whatever that job is, it’s been providentially given to you. Whatever your role is, whatever your status is in terms of family life and vocation, that is something God has granted and you are there as salt and light. Think about that.

I understand that you’re not bringing revelation to mankind, but you’re there to preserve it. I know you’re not presenting light as a regulatory agent like an apostle would be, but you’re there to reflect that light in whatever your setting. That’s your calling.



And it's not a football game. It's not like we handed you a football in some college game—"Get out there and move the ball down the field." This is not for the adulation of fans or television viewers. These are things that, according to God, are eternally significant. Your conversation with a coworker as you represent Christ could forever turn the destiny of that individual.

These are things where you're not just representing facts or information about something that's out there—some hobby or interest or even some industry. You're there talking about eternal truths of God. When you sit there and share the gospel with someone; when you shape people's lives in whatever ministry post you have here in the church; when you teach, or you disciple, or you train someone—those things that you're doing—these have eternal consequences.

And if you don't, at some point in your Christian life—and I would say more times than not—feel inadequate for the task, then I'm not even sure you're taking your Christian life seriously. You do understand how significant and profound this is. Christian husband, Christian employer, Christian employee, Christian serving in the church—you represent the living God in this dark world. That's a big deal. And there will be times when you just need to get used to the feeling of feeling under-clubbed: inadequate. "I don't think I can do this."

I don't have time to turn there, but jot it down at least: Gideon. Remember Gideon back in Judges chapter 6? He was called of God. And the way God called him is a lot like what we've read from the beginning of Genesis: God going and picking people that seemed like the unlikely candidate for the task they've been called to.

Now think about this just in terms of the two words Jesus used in verse number 1: he called the twelve together, and he gave them—two words—power and authority. Power and authority. Think about this: power—that's the wherewithal, the endowment, what they needed to do this. And then the authority—that's the playing field, the position, the venue. It is, as some commentators have rightly called it, the "might and the right." They have the might—the power, the endowment, the enablement—and then they have the right: this is your post, this is your job, this is what you're called to do.

Now, when it comes to those two things, and we find ourselves in a position like Gideon—when we're given a venue, a role, a position, a playing field—and in that case it was "go defeat the Midianites," he's going to feel like we often feel: "I'm not sure I have the power, the might. I don't think I have the wherewithal, the resources in myself to do that. Why don't you pick someone else that's a little better suited for this?"



I mean, all parents go into parenting, and it's a gulper just to sit back and say, "Oh man, I'm going to be a parent and train lives." But then you get a child that's a special-needs kid. Or you get some situation among siblings—you go, "This is just more difficult than I ever could have imagined." And you start really realizing, as the playing field shifts—as it does like on a football field—"This is getting harder and harder." And you sit back like Gideon and the first thing Gideon said when God came and appeared to him and said, "Go defeat the Midianites," he said this: "Why me? I am of the tribe of Manasseh." And Manasseh, by the way, split by geography over the Jordan River. I mean, you want to pick a fighting tribe—go pick Benjamin or maybe Judah. "Manasseh? I'm from Manasseh—really? And not only that, my clan within Manasseh—it's the smallest clan. And then you pick me—why would you pick me for this?—because I'm the youngest and the smallest and the weakest within my family."

Just saying that, I hope as I put those words in your ears, you start thinking all through the Bible—that's how God often does it. He picks the unlikely runt of the family to become the king—King David. He picks the smaller, the younger, or the weaker—the Jacob—so he picks Jacob to be the patriarch, not Esau. It's amazing how God is often showing that he can choose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He has, all the time, a great sense of picking weak vessels so that they can—let me quote for you now from 2 Corinthians—that the surpassing value comes from God and not from us. You know the first part of that verse in 2 Corinthians: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," in jars of clay, so that it's very clear that when God does great things and you end up raising children that make a difference in this world and they end up being godly disciples, you stand back and you say, "Well, you know what—the challenge was too great. I realized the whole time I was over my head anyway. But look at what God did."

I understand the task is going to feel overwhelming, and you will feel too weak for the task—insufficient for the task. But the whole point of this passage is: God promises not only to give them the right to do it—not only the authority of the playing field, the place, the job description—but to give you the power to do it. He will enable you to do it. It means that. Not just a biblical concept from beginning to end in the Bible.

Now, I should say as a sidebar real quick for some of you that are new to the church or whatever, and you see a passage like this and you say, "Sounds like this whole thing about authority over demons and healing people from the sick—like, you're not buying that." Here's the deal: I recognize this as a very unique endowment of authority and power to a band of people called the disciples. Jot down these two references—and I don't want to be redundant because I know from time to time we have to clarify this when we hit this in the Bible—but: 2 Corinthians 12:12 and Hebrews 2:1–4. 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:1–4. Those are just two passages that will help you understand that the way Christ endowed



the apostles is very unique from endowing the rest of the body of Christ. They are, as Ephesians 2 says, the foundation of the church, and through their prophetic ministry they end up speaking and saying things that become the New Testament truth on which the rest of the church lives. They thrive on that; they feed on that; they look to that. So they are sent out teaching New Testament truths without a written New Testament, and to verify that—as 2 Corinthians 12:12 says—God gives them the credentials, and that is that when someone is physically, obviously sick, they can do things like heal them miraculously, instantaneously—as we said a couple of weeks ago with a GT-1 (with a “God Thing One”), which suspends natural law—a miracle of the first order.

Yeah, I don’t think you need to worry about feeling under-clubbed for a ministry of commanding demons to go to the lake of fire and having a ministry of walking down the halls of CHOC or City of Hope and healing people. This was an apostolic gift that played a very distinctive role in the early church.

But again, you may not be the apostle, but what you’re called to do is no less important in the history of the church—to take the message of the gospel and bring it to people. We can defer now to the written Word of God, but how important is it that the written Word of God and what you represent in your children’s lives, in your grandchildren’s lives, in your workplaces—you’re an influence there for good and righteousness and for the name of God? In your church, when you step up and say, “I’ll serve there, and I will serve to do something for good according to the agenda of what God has required and wants from the Bible—I’m going to make that happen in the church”—you’re going to feel under-clubbed, inadequate. That’s where God wants to keep you. Expect that feeling. As a matter of fact, if you don’t have that feeling, I wonder if you’re really providentially where you need to be. You’re always going to feel like, “This is just a little beyond me.”

I’ll give you one passage that will help you with this: 2 Corinthians chapter 2. (I was quoting earlier chapter 4, verse 7: “We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”) But see, as Paul’s building up to that statement in chapter 2 and recognizing that the ministry that he has to bring the Word of God to people—though it’s polarizing—look down in verse 15, for instance: some people, it’s the fragrance of death; for other people it’s the fragrance of life (end of verse 16). But he starts in verse 14 by saying, “We’re thankful to God because he always in Christ leads us in this triumphal procession,” which is this image of coming back from war and the spoils of war. And the idea of: here I am doing what God has called me to do, and I’m seeing him do things through what I’m called to do—I’ve been faithful to respond to that. And he says at the bottom of verse 16, “Who is sufficient for these things?” This is a big deal—that we are agents of God in this world.



Verse 17: “And we’re not like so many others—peddlers of God’s word.” Does that sound dismissive? It is. Because there are some people out there—this is not even that important to them. They may quote verses, or they’re into it for the wrong reasons, because of greed or whatever. “We’re not like that; we’re sincere. We’re men of sincerity.” Now underline this—here’s the idea of vocation as commissioned by God. It’s a good idea: you should see everything you do in life (unless you’re in a place where you shouldn’t be) as commissioned by God. That’s your field. That’s the authority. That’s the playing field. That’s the role. That’s the job. He says: that is how we see ourselves—in the sight of God (he’s the boss; he’s the one I’ll be accountable to) we speak in Christ. So he’s got a speaking role in his life, and he’s going to do that and make sure, “I’m speaking in Christ.”

Now keep reading into chapter 3. People are questioning Paul’s authority, so he’s saying, “Well, do we need some kind of letter of reference and recommendation?” “Well, you know what—you are that” (v. 3). “You are the letter from Christ, delivered by us.” Right? We were the tool used. But when we spoke in Christ, Christ got the job done. He changed your life. And he’s a missionary, and he says, “Look at the fruit of this—your life has changed.” And that letter of recommendation, that reference, is not written with ink, but it’s written with the Spirit of the living God—not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of the human heart.

Now look at verse 4. That’s pretty heady wording to say you’re there as a tool of God to change people’s lives. Well, yeah. “Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God.” We know we’re being used by God in our workplace, in our neighborhood, in our family—in our case, for him it’s in the city of Corinth as he went through there preaching the Word. “Not that” (now it’s going to sound schizophrenic, but keep reading) “we’re sufficient in ourselves to claim that anything is coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God.” Now I’m trying to build here the complement: you will feel inadequate, but you need to stand back and recognize that’s the whole point of this—God will give you the power, the wherewithal, to do it. And in your personal inadequacy, I want you to feel a little of that schizophrenia: I’m confidently raising my kids; I’m confidently leading this business; I’m confidently working at this job; I’m confidently representing Christ in my neighborhood, in my church—I want to confidently do that, knowing that sufficiency isn’t me. Because I realize I’m really inadequate for this task. But I recognize—underline it—“our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient,” in his case, “to be ministers of the New Covenant.” And in our case, there’s some nuance of that—in everything we do representing God’s truth in this world.

That idea of you looking at a passage like this, knowing that Christ is in the pattern of calling people that feel inadequate to the task—putting them in forums, in positions, in jobs, in ministries that they feel under-clubbed for—he’s always in the business of empowering them to do it. But that feeling of “I don’t think I’m sufficient in myself,” you always got to keep that. You always got to have that. You got to feel that tension between “This job is too big for me,” and (if you ever find yourself) “I just can’t do it. I can’t do this.” Great. That’s not a bad thing. Then you recognize, “The power that I need, the



sufficiency that I need, the ability that I need—all that I need to get this done, in terms of what I need inside of me—God promises to grant me.”

Let me quote you one verse you know (you can jot down the reference, then we can move on to the second point): write this down—Ephesians 3:20–21. You know the verses: “Now to him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly more than we could ever ask or think,” remember that? Now, that’s a good statement. Let’s ponder that for a second. When you look at your home, when you look at your job, when you look at your life and ministry in the church—you do know that God can do himself—he has the ability to do way more than anything I ever think can be done. He can blow my mind with what he can accomplish. “I want to see this happen in my house; I want to see these good things happen in my church; I want to see these good things happen in my industry or my business.” God can do way more than that. “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably, abundantly more than all we can ask or think”—now, here’s the next line—“according to the power that is at work within us.” See, there’s the schizophrenia: God can do great things—oh man—he can do that in and through me. I recognize that I don’t have the credentials to do it. I realize I don’t have the inherent power to do it. But the derived and dependent mindset of getting the derived power from God—God can do great things through us.

You need to have that confidence—“that confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we’re sufficient in ourselves to claim anything is coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God.” And that’s what the last verse is all about there in Ephesians 3:21: “To him be the glory in the church.” And we’re all going to stand back when fruit comes from our ministry—when good things happen in our jobs—and I hope with the right understanding, you’ll say when Gideon defeats the Midianites, “Look at what God did. Look at what God accomplished according to the power that is at work within us.”

You feel inadequate? Welcome to the club. Feel that way every day—you should feel that way as a Christian. If not, I doubt you’re following Christ obediently into those forms that are going to make you feel that way. Because that’s the way we feel as Christians trying to do noble, eternally important things in this world. But once you feel that, remember: God is able. He can enable anyone to do more than we could ever ask or think, and he wants to work that through us.

Verse 3. As I read verse 3 in Luke chapter 8 (it’s printed there on your worksheet), I said—humorously—“Hey, let’s tie one hand behind your back as we send you out.” Is that what that sounds like here?



“And he said to them, “Take nothing for your journey.” “Well, I have some things I could take.” “No, no—don’t take a staff, don’t take a bag, don’t take bread, don’t take money.” “Well, take two tunics?” “Don’t take two tunics—don’t take two t-shirts.”

Think about that—you can’t even take a change of clothes. This is bizarre. And you know, there are inns, if you will—motels. Remember in Bethlehem, they go there, there’s no room in the inn. They have places you can rent out. The Good Samaritan puts a guy up in an inn in the parable. You could go and lay money down on a table and stay somewhere. But instead—no, no, no—you’re going to go to someone’s house. You’re going to have to rely on the hospitality of people where you go. “Stay there, and from there depart.”

Now, we don’t get this in this text, but over in Mark 6 it says they went out by twos. Matthew 10. So they’re going in pairs; they’re breaking up. So six groups are going out, and they have to stay in a home, and they can’t bring anything.

Now, if I had an STM that’s leaving tomorrow morning—let’s just pretend—you’ve been planning on going. We’re going to go to Guatemala; we’re going to go to Jordan to our church in Jordan; or we’re going to go to Southeast Asia—one of our ministries. And I say, “Okay, I want you to go. We’ll take our 50 people with us,” and you’ve been planning and you’ve been praying. And I say, “Oh, here’s the thing. By the way, tomorrow morning we meet in the parking lot at six o’clock. We’re going to leave from the church here; we’re going to go to LAX, Bradley Terminal, and we’re going to fly overseas and do this work—it’s going to be great. But one last thing before you go home today: don’t pack anything. Don’t pack it. I don’t want any luggage on this trip. I don’t want carry-on—no, I don’t. Carry-on laptop? Don’t bring your laptop. ‘Well, I gotta bring money.’ No—don’t bring money. ‘Well, I’ll bring a credit card.’ Don’t bring credit cards. As a matter of fact, you get here tomorrow morning in the parking lot; we’re going to leave on this STM to do important things for God, and you will have no luggage with you at all. As a matter of fact, I don’t even want you to bring me a change of clothes.”

That’s a group you don’t want to travel with. I’m thinking, “This is craziness. This makes no sense.” This, by the way—dare I say it—sounds foolish. Why in the world would I be asked to lay aside all the principles of the Bible regarding prudence and planning and careful strategizing? You would never want to go on a missions trip when I said, “Hey, we’re not going to—don’t pack anything.” That wouldn’t make any sense.

So you need to understand: Jesus is artificially creating something that all of us experience in life, and he’s doing it through these instructions. As he ties a hand behind their back, he is necessarily



ensuring—ensuring, guaranteeing—that these twelve will run into situations where they feel like they don't have the provisions they need. They will feel ill-equipped.

And, by the way, he did this to them because he knows that's the reality for every generation of Christians. Put it this way:

Number two: expect situations in which you'll feel ill-equipped. You will not have the things that you need—the resources that you need. One of the things that we need, of course, because our world runs on cash—because we can buy everything we need—you're going to have times where you're going to say, "I want to do good things for God in this business; I want to do good things for God in my family; and good things for God in the church," and you will not have the money to do it—you won't have the resources to do it.

He's doing this to them as training. Note that—that is super important. It's like: if you're going to go running, here's one thing you probably don't want to do—you don't want to weight yourself down. And yet there's this weird thing called leg weights. I had to look this up to make sure they still make these, because believe it or not—you won't believe this—but I was on the track team in junior high. But I remember at that point in my life buying leg weights, and there were these little brown canvas things with Velcro full of, you know, sand—or, I don't know, pellets of lead or something. (Smile at me if you know what I'm talking about—because I realized they're still making them and selling them.)

But anyway, I'm going to go running, and you see me strapping on the leg weights. That's stupid. Don't you want to buy shoes that are light? Don't you want to wear your—going back to junior dolphin shorts or, you know, your running shorts? Don't you want, like, a tank top so you're unencumbered? And then you're going to strap on leg weights? That doesn't make any sense. But you understand: you do that kind of thing when you are training.

This is training for the disciples. Training. Because at some point he's going to take those things off.

Let me show you this—turn with me to the end of the book, Luke chapter 22. When Jesus is done with his earthly ministry, we start to understand why in Luke chapter 9 he tells them to go out there without any of these resources.



Here's the reason: he wants to prove to them, by artificially creating a situation in which he knows they're going to need things—he's going to put them in a situation where he knows they're going to feel ill-equipped and they don't have the resources—he's going to tell them, "Don't take your wallet with you." Now, at the end of his ministry, drop down to verse number 35. In this text, he's about to go to the cross; he's about to be crucified; about to spend the weekend in the grave; and then he's going to go and ascend. So he's leaving the disciples behind. And he asks them a question (v. 35):

"When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals—remember that?—did you lack anything? How did that go?"

"Oh wow—yeah, you're right." And they said, "We didn't lack anything." Three squares a day—we had all that we needed. "I needed a tunic"—we had it. Everything we needed, we ended up having it. It's interesting how that was providentially supplied for us when we went without those things and you tied a hand behind our back. We still had everything we needed.

Now he says, "Great—you learned a valuable lesson. Now listen: that's not the principle for the entire church age to live by." We shouldn't be sending Compass Bible Church short-term missions teams overseas without luggage. I know—this was training. It was very unique. It is not normative for Christianity. Now he said to them (v. 36), back to the principles of Proverbs:

"Let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And the one who has no sword—sell a cloak (it'd be better for you to be a little chilly and have your sword by you to protect yourself) and buy one. Because I'm going to go; I'm going to be numbered with the transgressors; the Scripture has to be fulfilled."

And they were scrambling around with swords—"Does anybody have swords?" "We've got two right here." "That's plenty. That's enough." I mean, not trying to build a militia here. But you know what—it's good for you to have protection as you go on your way, preaching the kingdom.

Now think this through: here he says, "Go without provision, and I'll show you that I can provide." Now, I'm not saying—if I was your pastor in the 21st century—"Hey, you know that retirement illustration at the beginning? Don't save anything for your retirement. Trust the Lord—you get to retirement age; watch him supply." I would never tell you that. That would be foolish, and it would go



against all the principles of the Bible, including the specific instructions of Proverbs. And yet Jesus does it right here just for a season—just for a time. And he says, “I just want to show you—it’s like tying one hand behind your back—send you out with nothing. When you’re running thin on resources, God will come through. God will come through.”

So if it is that you’ve tried to save and your investments tanked, and now it’s time for you to—because you’re being, you know, you’re a pilot or something—you’re done with your job and you can’t stay on—God will provide. When it comes to the things that you want to do—like in our church, Project 2014, we want to buy this facility (that only makes good prudent sense in a church like ours—should own it; we shouldn’t be renters for the next 20 years). Well, every time we sit down and deal with this, it’s funny how it just keeps on—this is impossible. We don’t have the resources for it; we can’t possibly afford it. I guarantee you, God will put you in those situations—even when you’re prudent and conservative and you have this financial look on life—God is always going to sit you in a situation, put you in a situation, where you’re going to feel that sense of need. And that’s right where he wants you. That’s good. Because in those situations, we shift our trust. And that’s very important.

Now, before I talk about shifting our trust, can I just deal with one thing that some of you overachievers have already discovered? Maybe you’re a home fellowship group leader, whatever, and you’re looking at the parallel passages—Matthew 10, Mark 6. Well, in Mark chapter 6 there’s something very disturbing if you read it, and then you read Luke chapter 9, and you see a very clear discrepancy in the text. It is what some people call a contradiction in the text. And it may be slight, because it’s something you know about the provisions they take, but hey—we’ve got to deal with it. Are these true? We’ve got to figure this out.

In Luke 9 we just read it in verse number 3: “Take nothing for your journey—no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money.” Mark 6:8 says, “He charged them to take nothing for their journey, except a staff.”

Question: are they taking a staff, or are they not taking a staff? Oh, I don’t know. Mark 6—same setting—“Take a staff; take nothing at all except a staff.” And here we are in Luke 9—“Don’t take a staff.” Taking a staff...not taking a staff.

And I say, “Well, you know, pastor always likes to solve these with languages, so, you know, probably a different Greek word—just some sloppy translation here.” *Rhabdos*. Greek word. Luke 9: “Take nothing for your journey...no *rhabdos*.” Mark 6: “He charged them, ‘Take nothing for the journey except a *rhabdos*.’” Same word. That didn’t help. It’s fun to say it, but it didn’t help.



What's going on here? Let me help you with this—because language will be involved. *Rhabdos*. If you go back to the Old Testament in your mind, we often refer to that very familiar passage—probably one of the most familiar in the Bible—Psalm 23, when it talks about the comfort that comes from us following the shepherd: “The LORD is my shepherd.” And then it says, “Your **rod** and your **staff**—they comfort me.” Your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

Now follow me here—not that you remember all these words—but *shevet* is the word that translates “rod” (this is Hebrew now, okay? Old Testament in Hebrew). *Mish‘enah* is the Hebrew word for “staff.”

Now, we've explained “rod and staff”—the *shevet* and the *mish‘enah*. These two words represent two different things that the shepherd has, which, by the way, he journeys for a living, does he not? He's always out going somewhere. Now this thing that I'm showing you (with your thinking caps and imaginations on) is the *mish‘enah*—the long stick, the walking cane, the walking stick, the staff—translated “staff.” Then, if you've been around hearing a little bit about the teaching of the Old Testament in terms of the “rod,” the *shevet*—that's something you keep on your belt, and that's like a little billy club—that's a stick. And that's something that we said, as we look at the comfort derived from following the shepherd that has not only the staff (which is helpful to see—“There's our leader; there he goes”—it's the thing that you take on the journey), and he's also got the *shevet*, so if there's a threat—I know what he can do with that *shevet*. It's a defensive tool. It's a weapon. *Mish‘enah*—staff. *Shevet*—the sap, the billy club, the nightstick.

If you say, “Well, help me now with a little Greek, because if I just knew what the Greeks would do in translating those two words, maybe I can understand what's going on here in Luke 9 and Mark 6.” Well, hey, we've got something for you—it's called the Septuagint, which, three centuries before Christ, they commissioned its translation (and then, you know, second century we had most of it done; the Pentateuch was done third century BC). So we have these Greek translations in the wake of Alexander the Great—in the great Library of Alexandria—we have this thing called the Septuagint given to us.

If you look up in the Septuagint, “How did you translate *shevet* and *mish‘enah*?” You have the words *rhabdos* for the *shevet* (the “rod”) and you have the word—back to Greek—the word *bakteria* for the “staff.” *Bakteria*. (That sounds like “bacteria.”) That's it: *bakteria*. In the modern era, when we discovered what bacteria look like under a microscope—(you science buffs) what does it look like? To me it looks like, you know, Dodger Dog wieners—there's these long tubes. But we named that



“bacteria”—we’ve named it *bacteria* from the old classical Greek word from before the time of Christ. Philo and even Josephus use a couple times this word *bakteria*, *bakteria*, *bakteria*—and because they’re long sticks, it’s what it looks like under a microscope. Okay.

Well, maybe the distinction between the rod and the staff—we would see those words. Well, here’s the thing: how does language change in 200 years? Has it changed in English at all in 200 years? Oh yeah. Well, from the time of the Septuagint to the time of the New Testament the word *bakteria*, at least by New Testament writers—gone. Never used. We don’t even use it. And the word *rhabdos* started to be used interchangeably for the *mish‘enah* and the *shevet*—the rod and the staff.

So when you read the New Testament, if you read the word *rhabdos*, you’ve got to know context to know: are you talking about the walking stick (which is the thing you lean on when you’re tired and you take a break—it’s the walking staff), or are you talking about the club—the weapon? Well, we don’t know unless you tell us, or you direct us, or you give us some sense in the context. Well, we have no context here.

But the record of what Christ said apparently was: “Take your coat; don’t take your coat.” “Coat? What are you talking about?” Well, there’s one word in our language—we mean two very distinct things. My wife and I are going on a trip; I’m speaking somewhere; it’s cold in a colder region of the country; and she asks me before we leave, “Hey, be sure to take your coat.” Well, we get there and we’re in jeans and tennis shoes—“Okay, let’s go out; we’re going to get some pizza—be sure you grab your coat because I just got the weather and it’s really cold outside.” And I say, “Bring a coat? I thought I told you—I didn’t bring a coat.” “Well, you said you brought a coat.” “I meant my coat—my jacket to speak in—my suit coat, my blazer.” I’ve got to be very specific now, because “coat” can represent two very distinguishable things with an indistinguishable word.

When Jesus says in one context—which again is a summary of what Jesus says—he’s saying, “Don’t take a defensive weapon. Don’t take a weapon.” “Don’t take—what would you call it?” “Well, don’t take a *rhabdos*.” Later then he’s going to reverse that—say, “Take a weapon—and let’s leave the club out; let’s get a sword.” Right? Forget the pistol—we’re going to bring a shotgun. That’s what happens in Luke 22. So I know he’s got weapons in mind, but he doesn’t mention weapons in Luke 9. He just uses the word *rhabdos* and he says, “Don’t take a *rhabdos*.” What are we talking about? He’s prohibiting weapons being taken on the trip. And if you’re going to journey in the first century, you better take a weapon with you, because you might get jumped. No weapons, no money, no bread, no food, nothing—not even two tunics.



When it says over there in Mark 6, “He charged them to take nothing with them for the journey except, of course, your *rhombos*.” You take that—but then don’t take all these other provisions that you’ll need in a time of need. Well, your staff was the thing everybody traveled with.

Now, again, I just submit to you that this is one of the solutions which—again—we’re reading English twenty-one centuries later. I mean, we’ve got an idea of something a little differently from our perspective. But the *rhombos* meant two distinguishable items—indistinguishable word. What is he saying? Don’t take things that you would normally take. And he’s going to reverse this and say, “Take weapons.”

All right—did that help? I don’t know. It was a long sidebar; at least I got to say fun words like *rhombos* several times in the message. But maybe that’ll help you, because someone at some point—the critic—is going to say something about contradictions. And like I say—they rarely even read the Bible, so they rarely have one; but if some smarty-pants has one and they show you this passage, you can just remember: coat/coat—two distinguishable items with an indistinguishable word. It depends on the context for us to understand. And since there’s no context here—it’s a summary from Mark and a summary from Luke—you’d have to be in the context to know “the *rhombos* was okay to take / the *rhombos* was not okay to take”—depends on what you’re talking about.

All right—maybe that helped; maybe it didn’t.

Expect situations in which you feel ill-equipped. Transfer trust—that, I said, was the whole point of this. When Paul felt ill-equipped in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and he said he “despaired even of life,” God could have done a lot of things to give him what he needed to feel better. But he didn’t give him what he needed to feel better. He said, “All of this happened to us so that we would not rely on ourselves”—talking about the ultimate resource: ourselves, our health, how we feel—“but to rely on the God who raises the dead.” Think about that. “I didn’t have the tools in this case—not because I wasn’t a planner—but because the situation got me by surprise, and I found myself in need.” But you know, all of that was to shift my trust.

John 15 (v. 2)—you might remember the vine and the branches: Christ is the vine; we are the branches; the Father is the vinedresser. Verse 2: when he sees a branch bearing fruit—think this through now—he prunes it so that it will bear even more fruit. Now, on the surface, that even doesn’t make sense. I mean, if you didn’t know how things work with vines and branches, you’d say, “Well, there’s a lot of branch there—more fruit. It’d be good for it just to grow. Why would you cut it back?” See, well, the



whole point of the passage is: the branch has to abide—remain (*meno*)—in the vine. And as it remains and clings and sticks to and relies upon, then it bears fruit. Well, here's the thing: when it bears fruit—and your life may be bearing fruit right now—God may come along and reduce the resources. He may cut you back in the tools that you think you need and the resources you think you need to meet that challenge. And all of a sudden now you feel like, “I don't have it.” What does that make you do? Transfer your trust. You cling to Christ. And when you cling to Christ, that's the secret—that's the key—that's the thing that gives us the ability to bear fruit.

We don't want to rely on ourselves; we rely on God. Isn't that what we saw last week, by the way, when we were talking about health in 2 Corinthians chapter 12? “God, take this thorn away.” “No, I'm not going to do it.” “Well, I now recognize there's enough grace in Christ as I cling to him that I can manage this problem.” God now will perfect his power in my weakness.

So when you're sitting there, like us as a church, saying, “It seems like we can never afford this property,” that's where God wants us. Because what does that make us do? Makes us pray; makes us cling; makes us trust; makes us rely. And that's the secret to it. Isn't that what Paul said in Philippians 4? “I know the secret” (as the old translators have it) “of contentment—of doing without and having a lot. It doesn't matter—I know the secret because I am now able to do all things through my bank account.” No. “Through my great education.” No. “Through the resources of my ministry.” No. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” I'll cling to him.

By the way (I have no time for this sidebar, but let me give you two fundamental staples through which God will give you what you need—we're talking about Christ's perfect provision). Let me give you two. One of them is found in verse 4. He could have given them money so that they can be self-sustaining—go into the Marriott, say, “I need a room for two.” (Matter of fact, I'm with Peter—I'll take separate rooms,” right? You can have that conversation at the desk of a hotel.) But instead—sorry, bad joke. Peter has gotten a lot of grief through the years—we'll have to apologize when we meet him. Probably not as bad as we've made him out to be. Okay, anyway.

He could have done that. But instead he says (v. 4):

“Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart—make that your base.”



So instead of paying my way, I'm going to have to rely on people. Paul even, by the way—there's a little bit of a double description of how God helped him in his difficulty—he said, well, God shifted his trust through saying, “I don't have the resources.” And then later in chapter 7 (2 Corinthians), he says, “God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of”—a fresh breeze of energy in my life? No. What does he say? (You'd have to be a Sunday school graduate, I guess, to get it.) “God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.” Titus—a human being—one of God's people—came and helped meet the need. “Hey, you're going to have needs on the road—I want you to look to people. They will help you meet those needs. They will be accepting of who you are and what your ministry is, and you need to team up—not be isolated, not be alone. The people of God will help equip you for the task when you are ill-equipped to do it.”

Secondly—talk about bread and water—here's the other staple. Here's a word: “equipped,” and it comes from 2 Timothy 3:17 (v. 16 you should know): “All Scripture is God-breathed—profitable for teaching, correction, reproof, and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” What does that? The Scripture. When you don't have what you need—need in your bank account, in your background, in your education—I've got the Word of God and I've got the people of God. I've got the truth of God, and I've got the people of truth. And those are going to be my resources. God will, through those very tangible avenues, bring to me what I need when I feel ill-equipped. Christ will supply.

Hey, if you feel inadequate, God will empower. When you feel ill-equipped, God will supply—I gave you two little things right there (big things): the Word of God and the people of God—to look to (hinted at there in verse 4).

Last two verses now—verses 5 and 6. And if you see on your worksheet, I'm also going to go back and touch on verse 4 again—but let's start in verse 5:

“Whenever they do not receive you...”

“Wait—stop. I don't like that sentence, Jesus. You're sending me out to proclaim the kingdom (v. 2) and to heal. Especially if I'm healing—they all should like me. I want to preach, and I want people to listen. I want to help people, and I want them to be happy about it. You're telling me there are going to be people that don't receive me—even though I've got power over demons and I can heal people and I'm preaching the truth?”



Exactly what I'm telling you. And I'm going to tell you what to do:

"When you leave that town, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them."

A very frequently used first-century thing—even the leaders of Israel did that leaving Gentile areas. It was clear. It was a sign of "Not with you." There were going to be people that are not with you—they're going to oppose you. And you need to be willing to break and say, "Okay—you're not with me; I'm not with you. Fine."

I wish the ministry wasn't that way. I wish work wasn't that way. I wish family wasn't that way. But at times—as Matthew 10 says—the truth will divide those things and divide those people.

If God calls me to preach, here's the fulfilling day: I go and preach, and everybody likes it. Still praying for that one day. Everybody—"It's wonderful!" That would make me feel so fulfilled. That's my gift; that's my calling—go preach. Everybody likes it. That'd be awesome.

Here, he's saying: you just need to know—whatever your calling is—there will be times when you realize, "I don't like it." Called to raise your children in the admonition and discipline of the Lord—the correcting and directing—there'll be times when your kids painfully remind you they don't like you doing that. And sometimes you will feel like a failure trying to raise kids in the way that they should go, and they're supposed to not depart from it—they're departing from it. "I am not fulfilled in my job as a Christian parent."

Number three: expect days on which you feel unfulfilled. You're a Christian wife—you'll feel unfulfilled. You're a Christian employer and employee—unfulfilled. A gifted Christian minister in some area of the church—you'll feel unfulfilled. Why? Because it won't always go the way you want it to.



When I talk about Christ's provision, you need to understand: I'm making distinctions clearly between what we need and what we want. What I need is God's empowerment. What I need is God's provision. What I want is success in everything I do. That I don't always get.

As a matter of fact, what's the first thing he says there in verse 1? He gave them power and authority—first of all over demons. Drop down to verse number 39—we don't even get out of the chapter until that one crashes and burns (at least in this episode). Here's someone running to Jesus saying this (v. 39):

"Behold, a spirit seizes him; he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth; and it shatters him and will hardly leave him."

"Well, I sent my disciples out to go—have all authority, but... (v. 40, underline it) I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not."

That's not good. Not good at all. Not good at all—when the things and the people and the places and the projects you're called to do X, Y, and Z with—and you look and X, Y, and Z doesn't happen. And you think, "God, I'm trying to be faithful; I'm trying to do this," and there's failure. Those days, I guarantee, you'll feel unfulfilled.

Want to share the gospel—want people to come to faith. I didn't quote this part of it, but I should—and I think I let you read it in your discussion questions back there in 2 Corinthians 2 at the end of the chapter. He says, "When I come into people's lives as a messenger of the truth, I divide them up: there's people who think I stink like death, and other people think I'm the fragrance of life." Same message—division.

Expect days when things are not going the way they should go in your own mind and the way they should go on paper. Don't be overly discouraged. You'll feel bad—and I'm saying: normalcy in the Christian life is times of feeling inadequate, ill-equipped, and even unfulfilled. But those are times when you should do exactly what we find in verse number 6: just keep moving; keep going.

"They departed; they went through the villages"—now this is a general statement of them focusing on what they were called to do—"preaching and healing."



That's what they did.

I said I'd grab verse 4—let me do that real quick before we wrap this up. In verse 4, we learn in the second point: listen—if they feel ill-equipped—they need a place to stay—they're going to have to depend on people for that. But there's a little twist on this command. Look at it:

"Whatever house you enter, stay there..."

Now think about this: you're with your partner—you've got a buddy that you're going with—a fellow apostle. You go to a house; you get to a region; you say, "Okay, would you welcome us? We're here to preach about the kingdom of God." And they say, "Yeah—come on in," and you take your spot in their house. They've got a house. And all of a sudden you start doing ministry and you start meeting more and more people. Would you not? You'd meet all kinds of people. And you meet someone, by the way, who has a bigger house and a better guest room, and the hostess cooks a lot better. And now you're thinking, "Well, I'm going to go to the next house then." You would try to find the right accommodations, because there's a lot of people, as you do your work, who would start to offer; and you'd want a little upgrade here and a little improvement there; and you'd have a desire—and you'd want to grab that if you could—just move from one. But Jesus—very specific: get to a place, get in that home, the hostess will set you up, stay there. Make that your base of operations. You can't go from house to house.

Think about that. Remember Jesus in Matthew 6? He said this in verse 33: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you." "All these things" has to be defined from verse 30, where he says about the Gentiles—they're worried about what they're going to eat, what they're going to put on, where they're going to live—all these external things. He says the pagans—they (strong Greek word—I like the other translations) "they chase after these things"—some translations, "they run after these things"; ESV, "they seek after these things"—but you, "seek first the kingdom." In other words, you'll have opportunity to get your wants met—don't even worry about that. God's going to meet your needs. Don't be chasing after improvements so your wants get perfectly coddled and cared for. Just get to the work—seek first the kingdom. "I'll take care of your provisions." "Yeah, she's not the best cook." I realize that. But it's going to be fine. You'll get your three squares a day. Just seek first the kingdom.



Now, back to verse 6: they went out and they did it. No, they didn't do it perfectly—and neither will you. But when there were setbacks—and there was a lot of dust being kicked off your feet—and there were a lot of houses across town you could stay in that would be better—but you said, “No, I'm going to stick to the business that Christ has called me to.”

Let me just put it this way: on days you feel unfulfilled, focus on your vocation—your calling—and not the setbacks. Not the things you don't have. Not the deprivation—“I could have that; this would be better; and I wish people were more responsive; and I wish ministry went better; I wish the business were better.” Don't worry about it—be faithful. What did God call you to do? “Well, kids are taking a left turn.” Be faithful. Be a Christian parent. Keep teaching, keep guiding, keep discipling. Let God worry about the increase.

And I like that—when Paul responds to the people that are gathering around their favorite teacher and trying to say, “Well, see, this—Peter is better than Paul,” and Apollos is in there, and he's a great teacher. And he said, “Listen—what are these people? They're just servants. They're servants who do faithfully what they're called to do. They focus on their calling. But it is God that causes the growth.” And I can be called to preach, and I can do it—and we could enter into a season where people start rejecting the message and the church, in terms of vibrancy and life, could tank. And I could sit there and be despondent and frustrated on those days I feel unfulfilled—that when I preach something, it should be responded to this way and it's not. And God would just call me—as these people—“Just get back to the calling. Do what you're called to do.” Focus on your calling, not on the setbacks. Because when you do what you're faithful to do—“it is required of a steward that he be found faithful”—you're being faithful to a Person, not a project. You're being faithful to the King. And that, as Asaph said in Psalm 73, should be enough for you.

In other words, when you feel unfulfilled—I guess, to say it poetically—Christ is enough, isn't he?

There's an Old Testament book—Habakkuk. He starts out complaining because the Assyrians are hassling the people of God, and he's looking at it saying, “How can they do that?” The Babylonians—the bad guys—they're winning. How can these enemies of God—these pagans—be winning? And he has this thing that starts as a complaint to God. Well, he gets schooled in the process. And at the end of this he says this—here's the ending of Habakkuk (maybe you remember these verses):

“Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines;
though the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food;
though the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls...”



Even if everything goes the wrong way and all the bad guys win; if I'm faithful and my kids take a left turn; if my ministry is tanking; if the job that I'm in is going nowhere—

"Yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
God, the Lord, is my strength."

Go another day at your calling. Go another day. Stop being so controlled in your emotions by the results, and be focused on what God has called you to do. In that you'll find the provision of God. And he ends and he says—if that's the case—"He makes my feet like the deer's feet; he makes me tread on the high places." I mean, that's kind of poetic language for "I feel like dancing." I mean, that's good—that's great. I excel in my heart with joy, because I recognize it's about being faithful to God—even when the produce is not there, even when the product isn't what I want.

You feel inadequate—I get that. God will supply power for you. You feel ill-equipped—God will give you the resources you need in the end, and they will come through weird avenues—I get that. Feel unfulfilled—I get that too. I understand it more than you know—I get it. But you got to recognize: Christ is enough. At the end of the day, that's all that really matters—what Christ thinks of my faithfulness. He's the one who worries about the fruit.

Talked about those dreams you have—you wake up: cold sweat, accelerated pulse, shallow breathing—because you've been stirred out of a dream where you were completely unprepared. Jesus told a story that was supposed to make you feel a little bit like that. Matthew 22—he talked about a wedding banquet, and the king was throwing it. So this was like everybody's decked out—this is a big deal, the reception of a wedding. And in the wedding party, there is everybody's feasting. The king walks through his guests, and (you remember this parable) he finds someone that is not in wedding garments. They don't have the tuxedo; they're not wearing the dress; they're in, you know, shorts and work clothes. And he says, "How did you get in here? How did you get in here and you weren't dressed properly?" And it says the man who was called out was speechless—no answer. "Kick him out. Send him out."

That image of being clothed is one that Jesus speaks about in that parable. And Paul picks up on that elsewhere—likes to talk about how we are "in Christ." And in another sense, Christ is clothing us—he uses that image in both Romans and Galatians. We are clothed in Christ.



We talk about our need and Christ's provision—I understand: for whatever task in our vocations we need to be empowered; we need resources; we even need encouragement when we feel down. I get that. But the real need you have is the last time you close your eyes in death and you meet your Maker. What you really need is to be **clothed in Christ**.