

OpenTheo

Preparing for Trial



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In "Preparing for Trial," Steve Gregg reminds Christians that trials are inevitable and could involve serious tribulations such as persecution and opposition, even leading to martyrdom. Christians must prepare themselves by building their lives on the right foundation, the word of God. Both spiritual and practical preparation, including a prudent mindset and intentional community-building, is necessary to overcome the tests of commitment and faith that God permits to strengthen His people. Gregg stresses prioritizing eternal things over worldly possessions, focusing on an eternal perspective, and not fearing death when called to remain uncompromised in the face of evil.

Transcript

I'd like you to turn with me to Matthew chapter 7. These are the concluding remarks that Jesus uses to summarize and conclude the Sermon on the Mount, which I think many Christians would agree is one of the most profound and most important summaries of Jesus' general teaching in the Bible. And after he has gone through three chapters, chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew in that sermon, he closes it with an illustration that almost everybody, if they ever went to Sunday school, would be familiar with. They might even know a little song about this.

But it's not a really a lightweight matter. He says in Matthew chapter 7 verse 24, Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, that is the things he's been teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, whoever hears those things and does them, meaning you conform to them, you obey them, what he said to do, you do that. Whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, and it fell, and its fall was very great.

So here we have two possibilities. Jesus assumes that everybody apparently is going to be building a house of some kind. He's not literally talking about real houses.

He's talking about building a life. And when you're building your life, you have to be aware that just like a house will be tested by bad weather, so your life is going to be tested by trying events, serious ones, enough to cause some houses to collapse, like the floods and the rains in the story. Now most of us have probably been shielded from very many, very serious trials.

If we want to call a serious trial something like being arrested for your faith, being tortured, maybe being martyred. Maybe I say, well that's not even in my range of, you know, considerations. I live in America, you know.

Well you used to live in America. If America means a free country where you can be a Christian without persecution, and have freedom of speech without people taking offense and wanting to harm you, if that's what you mean by America, you don't live there anymore. Not at the moment.

Perhaps it'll be back someday. We can pray, we can trust, but we can't be sure. Every nation goes through its ups and downs, and usually the last direction it goes is down.

It's almost always the case that what goes up will eventually go down, and that was true of the Roman Empire, that's been true of the Soviet Union, that's true of every major empire on earth, whether it was the Babylonian, the Median Persian, the Grecian, the Roman, it doesn't matter. Every empire has its 15 minutes of fame, or its three or four centuries of power, and then it goes down. We've always assumed since this is the country we live in, that we will be the exception, that we will be the one that doesn't follow the trend of every other nation in history.

But we can't be sure. Maybe we'll come out of this. Well, maybe we have a future history of many centuries of freedom, but that is not the way things are looking right now, and I think it would be very foolish for people to pretend that the things that Christians have had to face from the very beginning of the Christian movement 2,000 years ago, in every country, in virtually every age, that we will somehow be the one generation, the one nation, that is somehow miraculously exempt.

Now, Christians do tend to think of themselves in that way, just like non-Christians do. We're self-centered. We tend to have to fight off a tendency toward narcissism.

I've heard Christians say, I can't believe, for example, and I'm not here to teach about the tribulation, but I've heard people say, I can't believe God would ever let us go through the tribulation, because we're his bride. He loves us. He would never let his beloved church go through something like the tribulation.

People like this have gone to churches that don't teach them very well, and they

certainly have learned nothing of church history. If you've seen movies about the end times, they usually are movies about the rapture and then what happens to people who are left behind from the rapture. You know, they depict a very unpleasant, unfree kind of world under some dictator, and people say, well, I sure hope we get out before then.

You know what? For 2,000 years, most Christians have lived under circumstances worse than those depicted in those movies. I don't know what you think the tribulation will be like, but there are Christians right now in Muslim countries. There are Christians right now in North Korea.

There are Christians in China who have been experiencing that for decades. Now, I'm not saying anything about whether the pre-trib rapture is going to happen or not. That's not my interest.

That's not my subject. I'm just saying that if people think, well, it can't happen here. I remember when I was in my teens, reading Brother Andrew's book, *God Smuggler*.

He was a Dutchman, a free Dutch Christian, who made trips secretly. I believe he began in the 50s. His book, *God Smuggler*, didn't come out until about 1970 or so, but I think he'd been doing it for some decades.

But he smuggled Bibles. He was one of the first ones to smuggle Bibles into closed countries behind the Iron Curtain at great risk to himself. And eventually, years later, he wrote a book about his experiences.

But he was talking about, and this is near the early days, not the early days, but the middle days of the communist power in Eastern Europe. He said that when he'd meet with underground Christians in secret meetings and so forth, the leaders of the church, as he'd bring them Bibles and so forth, they'd say, you know, we knew that the Christians in Russia had had to face this. We knew that, you know, whatever, Yugoslavia had to go through this.

But we just were sure it couldn't happen here. Whether they were in Romania, Albania, you know, whatever it was, Czechoslovakia, these countries that had fallen to communism and the Christians were meeting underground or, you know, their leaders were arrested, put in prison and tortured. They just thought that, you know, that can happen somewhere else, but it certainly can't happen here.

In other words, Christians have as much of a tendency to be in denial about reality as anyone else does. Nobody wants to have to suffer tribulation. And yet Jesus said in John 16, 33, he said, these things I've spoken unto you that in me, you might have peace.

In the world, you will have tribulation, but cheer up. Be of good cheer. He said, I have overcome the world.

Amen. I was listening on YouTube to a pastor. Someone sent me the link because it was outrageous.

He was in Hawaii. He was a pastor of a church in Hawaii that emphasizes, again, the pre-trib rapture. And I don't even care who believes in the pre-trib rapture or who doesn't.

I'm not I don't care about anyone's eschatology. But I don't like it when their eschatology makes them wimps. And this pastor, he was in his sermon, a Sunday morning sermon.

He says, I don't know how anyone can believe that we will be here through the tribulation. He says, I don't know if you believe that. I don't know how you can sleep at night.

He says, I don't know how I would even. He said, if I believe that we're going to be here for the tribulations, I'd dig a tunnel. I'm not sure how that would help.

But that's what he said. He said, I'd curl up in a fetal position. I would go crazy.

I could not bear it. I thought, well, he must not have read what Jesus said. In the world, you have tribulation, but be of good cheer.

I've overcome the world. I've spoken these things so you have peace. In the world, you have tribulation.

In me, you have peace, he says. Apparently, this pastor had never really thought about what it means to be a Christian. I've heard people say, if we have to go through the tribulation, I'm not sure you want to be a Christian.

In my opinion, those people probably are not. Jesus said, he that seeks to save his life will lose it, but he that will lose his life for my sake shall find it. So we I mean, tribulation is not a strange thing.

Peter said in First Peter, Chapter four, he said, brother, do not think in a strange thing when fiery trials come upon you as if some strange thing was happening to you. There's nothing strange about that. It would seem strange here in this country because we have lived in a bubble of fantasy in a world where outside in other countries, Christians are being tortured as much as they were by Nero in the Roman Empire and worse with high technology and, you know, all kinds of tortures that they didn't have in Nero's day, though he was very creative.

But, you know, we've lived in a world where we just think Christianity, we're not supposed to suffer. God loves us. Yeah, he does.

And that's why he lets us go through tribulation, because that is good for us. You know, when Jesus prayed for his church in John, Chapter 17, before he left, he said to the father in verse 15, he says, father, I don't pray that you take them out of the world. But that

you keep them from the wicked one.

I don't pray that you take them out of the world. Now, in the same chapter, Jesus, no, no. Two chapters earlier, Jesus said to his disciples, if you were of the world, the world love its own.

But because I've chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hates you. He said, if the world hated me, you know, it's going to hate you. If they call me Beelzebub, what are they going to call you? Now, this is the world.

That's how the world's going to think of it. And Jesus, father, don't take them out of the world. What? Please let me go.

Jesus said, no, father, don't take them out of the world. Just keep them. Keep them from the wicked one.

But why not just take us out of the world? Wouldn't that be nicer? Nicer, perhaps, but not as profitable. One reason that we are in the world is because the world needs us. And another reason we're in the world is because we need it.

That is, we need the opposition. We need the persecution. We need the things that God accomplishes in his people through testing and suffering.

And the Bible says that such tests are inevitable. Now, some Christians have made it through their life, especially the greatest generation after World War Two. After that war, we had the most charmed season, the most charmed generation in history in any world, in any world, in any country.

We were here in America. We didn't have war on our shores for what's it been? Over 50 years at least and longer now. But I mean, I'm thinking of my dad's generation.

You know, the latter part of their life, they lived in peace, in the most prosperous, the most comfortable, the most technologically interesting world that had ever lived, in the most interesting country in the world to be in, that everyone wants to be in. If you were born here, you hit the jackpot. But even people who hit the jackpot sometimes run out of funds.

All the relatives show up, you know, and want their share. Eventually, you're broke and depressed and on the verge of suicide when you win the lottery. You know, that's kind of what happens.

And we won the lottery by being born in this country. Now, don't you mean suicidal or on the brink of suicidal? Well, we need to be aware this is not normal. Most people do not win the lottery.

And don't think it's strange if you don't live the rest of your life as if you had won the

lottery. You need to realize that we're human, too. We have no more right to exemption from suffering and persecution than Christians throughout the world have always lacked.

They didn't have that exemption either. Now, Jesus said a wise man is one who builds his house in such a way that when storms come and floods come and the structure he has built is challenged with destruction, it doesn't fall. That person remains on his feet.

It's like what Paul said in Ephesians chapter six, put on the whole armor of God so that in the evil day you may stand. You may withstand all the attacks from the evil one and having done everything to still be standing. That's the idea.

There will be attacks from the evil one. There is it is a war. We're not in a playground.

We're in a battleground. And that's sometimes hard to remember when things are going only well for us. But the truth is, we need to be able to withstand the attacks of the enemy and having done all to stand.

That means when all the dust is settled, you're still on your feet. You haven't collapsed. When all the floods have passed, you want your house to still be standing.

Whereas there's others, and Jesus described some that would build their house on sand, they're going to have the same storms. Doesn't matter what your house is built on. You have the same kind of trials.

Everybody in the world has trials. Don't think that being a Christian is going to make you have trials. And if you deny Christ, you're not going to have any.

The world has trials, too. They just don't have God. I've been through some rather serious trials.

People who know my life know I've had a few seasons of very severe trials, such as some of the kinds that I mean, I've known people who've lost their faith going through less. But it's never occurred to me that that was a reason to depart from the faith, because I knew there were non-Christians who went through the very same things. What I couldn't understand is how they could stand it without God.

Having God in the world is what makes the difference. It's not that if you're a Christian, you suffer, and if you're not a Christian, you don't. Or if you're not a Christian, you suffer.

And if you are a Christian, you don't. It's not like that. Everybody suffers.

The floods come. All the houses that are standing are going to be tested by the weather, by the storms. But some are going to fall and some are not.

And therefore, it's fair enough to say storms are coming. I don't know when. I'm not making any real predictions, except that Jesus indicated houses are tested by storms.

And what makes the difference between the house that stands and the house that falls in the storm is not apparently much to do with the design and the architecture of the house or even the materials that it's made from. In Jesus' statement, it's what it's built upon. It's what is the foundation of the house.

If you want to be prepared for trial, you better make sure your house is on the right foundation. And you have to realize this. You don't wait for the storms to decide to lay the foundation of your house.

You don't say, I can get by with the foundation of sand, but, you know, if the storm comes, I'm going to start digging around and start laying a concrete slab there. You know, I want some foundation. Now, you build the foundation before the storms come or it doesn't get done.

It's the first thing you do. It's once the house is built on top of it that the testing shows what it's what it's built on. In other words, we can't just wait till things are bad and say, I guess I better get serious about Jesus now.

Jesus said the ones who have built their house on stone are those who hear his words and do them. In other words, there are people who've heard what Jesus has said, a radically different way of life than the world offers. Not just living a more moral life, living a totally consecrated life to God.

Living like Jesus said, you read the sermon on the night, you figure out what it is. And he says, if you do those things, you hear me and do those, your house will be built on a rock. In other words, if you have submitted to his lordship and said, okay, what Jesus said, that's what I'll do.

Nothing else will be considered but what Jesus requires in my life. Now, you do that, you can't fall. Well, I'm not saying you can't, but it's the one thing that Jesus said gives you the edge in the storm.

There may be other flaws. You can have that as a foundation, have other things, compromises or whatever that obviously compromise your structure. But the truth is the house that's built on sand that Jesus has doomed to fall is the one who's heard his words and doesn't do them.

Now, I'm assuming many of you have been in churches for years. I've been in churches all my life. Some of you are probably lifelong Christians, some are maybe adult converts, but you've still been, you've read in the Bible, you've heard sermons, you've heard the words of Jesus.

The next question is, are you doing them? And it's not that you have to answer to me about it. I'm just interested in you surviving spiritually. It may be that none of us will survive physically.

Of course we won't. Everyone's going to die. That's another thing, too.

You say, I don't want to be a martyr. I don't want to die for Jesus. What do you want to die for then? You're going to die for something.

You don't die for nothing. You're going to die for something. You don't die for the kingdom of God.

You don't bring glory to God in your death. You're going to die. Why have it be nothing you die for instead of the most important thing that will have eternal value and eternal impact? Ever since I've been young, I remember thinking, I've spoken to people too, that I don't have any choice about how I die, of course, but I would feel the greatest privilege would be if I had the opportunity to die for Jesus.

Because otherwise I'll die for something that's not as valuable. Maybe for nothing at all. I used to tell people I'd be very embarrassed if I was up in heaven talking to the apostles and those who were crucified and beheaded and burned at the stake for Christ and were sitting around in a circle exchanging war stories.

And they're telling about what they suffered for Jesus. And they say, how about you? What happened to you? Oh, I died in a rollercoaster accident at the boardwalk. Oh, well, some do.

I don't want that to be my story. You need to wake up and realize, frankly, we're going to die. And to die for Jesus, nothing could be a greater privilege.

And, but I'm not here to hope that you will die for Jesus. I mean, if you do good on you, congratulations. But what might be certainly could be worse is you suffer for Jesus and don't die.

Richard Wurmbrandt, a pastor in Romania under communism, was arrested for being outspokenly Christian, and he spent 14 years in prison. He was tortured almost daily. Three of those years, he was in solitary confinement, didn't see anything but gray walls and his torturers for three whole years.

His wife also was in prison. The movie about her is coming out soon, if it hasn't already come out. He wrote the book *Tortured for Christ*, and a movie came out about him recently based on the book.

But now I understand his wife, Sabina. There's a movie coming out on her story that I've seen advertised. I haven't seen the movie yet.

But they were simply among hundreds or thousands of Christians in communist lands that suffered like that years and years and years. He wanted to die. You get tortured every day for years.

You want to die. You think, Lord, take me home. But he wasn't allowed to.

He died natural causes later on after his release. But the point is, if you die for Jesus or you live for Jesus, just wishing you could die, you're going to have to be prepared to stand firm in the face of any test. And that's what that's what suffering is.

That's what persecution is. It's a test. Are you really what you appear to be? You appear to be a Christian.

I think every one of you, if I got to know you, I would say, I think they're Christian. Sure. But are they? Have you built your house on the foundation? Are you living by what Jesus said? If not, he said, you're built on sin and you're not likely to make it through as a Christian faithfully.

The thing is to die faithful. When Jesus said he that seeks to save his life will lose it. He doesn't mean that, you know, if you're dying of covid and you take ivermectin to save your life, well, you're going to lose your life doing that because that's a bad thing.

No, he means that if you lose, if you if you seek to save your life by compromising your commitment to Christ, if you do what's wrong in order to escape martyrdom, if you do what's a compromise in order not to lose your life. Well, you'll lose it. Everyone's going to lose their life.

Whether you try not to or not, because if you lose your life for my sake, you'll find it. So, I mean, there's there's no ambiguity in the teaching of the New Testament. Paul said to live as Christ and to die is gain.

The martyrs in Revelation are seen as reigning with Christ and, you know, crowned and rewarded in heaven. I'm not really going to talk about rewards here. I want to know how to be prepared for that.

But basically, the passage we read at the end of the Sermon on the Mount is the is going to if I had only one scripture to tell you how to prepare for trial, here's what you do, build on a rock. If you build on a rock, your house is prepared for the tests, for the trials. And if you don't build on the rock, you're not prepared to stand.

But there's more. We can put a finer point on these things. The main thing is that we have to understand that trials are inevitable for everybody and and for Christians, no less.

The truth is that Christians will suffer some things that other people don't. But other people will suffer things that are perhaps just as bad and without the assistance of God, you know, in them. It's not like you have an easier or harder life by being a Christian, but the hardships in your life as a Christian may be different hardships than you'd have if you weren't.

You receive persecution for standing for Christ, which an unbeliever will not receive that persecution, but they they still might be killed by a terrorist or a murder, a mugger or a battlefield. I mean, people die of cancer. I mean, people die.

Don't think you can choose an easier or a harder life by choosing to be a Christian. You don't know what comes. But we do know that Jesus indicated that trials are pretty much inevitable.

This is a war. In war, bullets fly. In this case, flaming darts.

Paul said, take the shield of faith with which you'll be able to quench all the flaming darts of the enemy. And we've got armor. We're fighting.

We've got weapons that are mighty through God for pulling down strongholds. That means we're aggressive, too. Armor protects you from the enemy's arrows.

Your weapons make him need protection from you. And that's why the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to pull down the enemy strongholds and cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts us. I think it's the knowledge.

This is a vicious war. We are harmless, like Jesus appeared to be harmless. But when Jesus was harmless, the demons screamed out in terror.

I mean, Jesus never heard a flea, but he heard some demons. And and when they saw him, have you come to torment us before the time Jesus was accomplishing some pretty serious hurt against the enemy while he was doing no harm to any human being? Jesus said, be harmless as doves, but wise as serpents. And to Jesus, I mean, Jesus to those who saw him in heaven was the lion of the tribe of Judah.

To a man who looked at him, he was a lamb as it had been slain. Remember, John was in heaven and one of the elders said, ah, the line of the tribe of Judah has prevailed. And he looks up to see the line and he says, I saw a lamb.

As harmless a creature as there is, and even more so because he was slain a dead lamb, one who had been slain is even more unthreatening than a living lamb. But neither are very intimidating to the eye of man, but to the eye of heaven, he was a conquering lion. And that's why the demons who saw him through that eye were as terrified as they were when they saw him.

They should be as terrified of you and me. And because we have taken up that battle, we have been given the weapons that Jesus himself used. We have been assigned the task of completing his mission to to the nations and making disciples of all the nations.

The devil doesn't want that. And he resists. And one way he resists is through physical force.

Of course, other ways are through temptations of a more spiritual or moral type to try to get you to be corrupted. But the devil, if he can't corrupt you, he'll probably try to take you out. And the devil is hostile.

So that's why trials come. But why does God let them come? The story of Job makes it very clear that the devil is very hostile toward Job. And my dad, when I was a kid, was talking about the story of Job, and he's showing me how, you know, God was pleased with Job and the devil.

So we'll just let me at him and he'll he'll curse you to your face. And I remember saying to my dad, why did God fall for that? Why did God let that happen? Why did he let the devil at Job? And my dad, always a very humble man, said, I don't know. And I think many Christians don't know.

Why did God let Job go through that? Job certainly didn't know. His friends didn't know. It's not exactly obvious, except in those first chapters, Job was being tested.

What was being tested is his motivations, the depth of his commitment to God. The devil said, you know, you put a hedge around him. I can't touch him unless you let me, which is nice to know, by the way.

But he said, if you take down that hedge, you'll find he's not so fond of you, God. You'll find he'll curse you to your face. And God allowed that test.

He allowed Job to be tested. Will he curse God if God stops prospering him, takes away his peace, takes away his health, takes everything away from him? Will he still praise God? Lo and behold, the man did. And God won that, that wager.

And it's our duty to make sure he wins that wager in our case, because the enemy would like to believe that if he hurts you enough, you'll curse God. You'll depart from him. That you're not really deep down inside a lover of God.

You just love the benefits that God offers to his children. And some people, I'm afraid the devil's right about that. I mean, the devil is not stupid.

He's watched human beings for a long time. What he said to God about Job, he says, skin for skin, all that a man has to give in exchange for his life. Well, most men, that's true.

Wasn't true of Job. Wasn't true of Jesus. Wasn't true of the apostles.

And it should not be true of you. You should not be concerned about your life. But he said, but I have kids and I have loved ones and there's people depend on me.

I think God knows about that. If he knows the number of hairs on your head, he knows the number of kids in your home. Jesus said, don't worry about anything when they persecute you, because there's not a sparrow that falls to the ground without the will of

your father.

And you're worth more than a lot of those. So what he's saying is you can't die any more than a sparrow can, apart from God's will. You don't have to worry about that.

Don't worry about staying alive. Worry about staying faithful as long as you're alive. Be faithful unto death and I'll give you the crown of life is the command Jesus gave in Revelation 2.10. So faithfulness is what we need.

There's a battle against our hearts. It may take the form of physical attacks at some points, not for everybody, but for many. And we've just got to be ready.

Whatever the attack is, we're saying no to the devil. I'm not going to break down. I'm not going to curse God.

For one thing, I can't even, I couldn't even do that. I could never sincerely curse God. He's too good.

I mean, if I was under torture and I don't know that I won't be someday, I don't know. And they're saying, curse God, and we're going to torture you, cut you to pieces or whatever, little bits at a time. And I'd say, well, you know what? I'm no hero here.

I'm not going to curse God. But I got to trust God to give me the grace because I'm not, I'm not a strong man. I'm no hero.

But if you somehow bring me to the end of my strength and you hear me say something that sounds like a denial of Christ, just know I'm lying to get out of this. Because there's no way that you can change my mind about God. And God forbid that I'd ever pretend that I didn't love God or that I'd be brought to that point.

You never know what drugs they may give you or whatever to, to make you do things you wouldn't do or vaccines or whatever. And so, but this, no, you will never willingly turn on God. And that's what tests are for, to make sure that you're of that type.

Be faithful unto death. I'll give you the crown of life. You'll reign with Christ.

Paul said in 2 Timothy 2, 12, if we endure, we will reign with him. And so that's what this war is about. It's about spreading the gospel in a hostile territory.

It's about staying faithful until death. And that is not always easy. And that's, as I said, because there's a very fierce enemy.

He's like a roaring lion walking about seeking whom he may devour, according to 1 Peter 5. Now, by the way, the Bible makes it very clear that trials are inevitable for the Christian. You might say, well, I haven't had that many. You probably actually think you've had more than you've had because we're weak.

Weak people feel trials where they're hardly, you know, a strong person wouldn't even know something's going on. You know, a mosquito really annoys me. It doesn't annoy a rhinoceros, you know, because I'm, I'm thin skinned.

A rhinoceros, not so much. I mean, what would be a trial to me may not be a trial to someone who's stronger than me. But I actually don't feel like I've suffered much.

I mentioned I've had some few seasons of intense trial in my life. They've been relatively brief and I'm an old man. So I've made it through a lot better, a lot luckier, more blessed than most people.

But I'm not done yet. So I have to, like anyone else, be prepared for trial. How do you get, how do you get prepared for trials? Well, I'm going to talk about spiritual preparation you can do and mental preparation.

But I'm also going to talk about prudent and practical preparation, you know, like prepping, that kind of stuff. Now, that might not sound like a Christian thing or a biblical thing, but it's absolutely Christian. What I'm going to talk about is going to be based on scripture.

Every word is going to be based on scriptural example or scriptural commands. But we're going to talk about spiritual, mental and practical preparation for harder times, just in case harder times may be in the cards for us. They may be coming up.

As far as spiritual preparation, I mentioned that Jesus said in John 16, 33, these things I've spoken to you that in me, you might have peace. In the world, you'll have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.

Now, he has overcome the world and his overcome the world is. He's the forerunner, he's the shepherd who goes ahead of the sheep, the sheep go where he went. We have to overcome the world and John's gospel talks about, well, John's gospel only talks about Jesus overcoming the world, but John's epistle talks about us overcoming the world.

John's epistle in first John five says, who is he that is born of God, but he that overcomes the world? Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the son of God? That's what it says in the verses of first John five and first John chapter two. John says, I've written unto you fathers because you've known him. That is from the beginning.

I've written to you young men because you've overcome the wicked one. I've written unto you children because you have known the father. I've written unto you fathers because you've known him.

That is from the beginning. I've written unto you young men because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you've overcome the wicked one. Notice you are

strong.

The word of God abides in you and therefore you overcome. You, Jesus said, I'm speaking these to you so you'll overcome. I have overcome the world and I'm speaking these words to you so that in me, you'll have peace even though in the world you have tribulation.

We live in two realms and we need to become more cultivating more awareness of the one that's eternal. Because everyone, Christian and non-Christian, lives in physical bodies and in the world. That's one realm we live in and in the world we have tribulation.

But Jesus said, in me, you have peace. I live in the world, but I'm also in Christ simultaneously and the more I'm aware of being in Christ, the more I have peace. And it's his word that gives us the peace and the possibility of overcoming.

In the book of Revelation, John uses that phrase, or Jesus does really, and John writes it at the end of each of the seven epistles. Each church is told to him that overcomes. I will grant.

And then what follows is different in every case. There's always something to relate it to salvation. You have to overcome.

You have to pass the tests. In order to really be saved. It says that in Revelation 12, 11, as the dragon came down and attacked the saints, it says they overcame him.

That's overcoming again. They overcame by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony. And they did not love their lives to the death.

Would that be a description of you that you don't love your life unto the death? It's a lot easier not to love your life if you live, let's say, in a Muslim country. I know that when I see movies about that are set in the Middle East and stuff and, you know, little Arab kids playing out in the desert, you know, and they live in a house that doesn't have any real windows and it's hot and horrible and it's ugly desert. It's not pretty desert like Arizona.

And I think, you know, if I live like that, I wouldn't love my life in this world either. It's when it's beautiful, when it's comfortable, when it's luxurious, when every pleasure we really want is at our fingertips. That's when it's hard not to love your life in the world because it's lovable.

It's a lovable life. And that's where we are tested. You know, when you hear about people who are tested in persecution, that's a test to be sure.

We are tested with prosperity. All Christians are tested, but not all the same tests. The Christians who are tested with persecution often, frankly, fare better than those who are tested with prosperity.

Jesus said how difficult it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. That's not easy.

In fact, he said with men, it's impossible. With God, nothing is impossible. The thing is, being the rich man is apparently being the one who's got the greatest disadvantage when it comes to spiritual survival, spiritual well-being.

Not that a rich man can't. With God, all things are possible. But it doesn't sound like a very promising prospect.

If you're rich, comfortable, everything's going good. That's your test. Remember, Paul said in 1 Timothy chapter 6, I think it's verse 17.

He said to Timothy, tell those who are rich in this world to not be arrogant, not to trust in their uncertain riches, but in a living God who freely gives us all things to enjoy. That they be rich in good works, ready to share. You know, in other words, they can't be attached to these comforts and things that make life pleasant.

They aren't really ours anyway. They're on loan to us from God. But why does he even lend those things to us? Part of the reason, you know, because he loves us so much.

Well, he loves you better than the Christians who are being tortured somewhere else. I don't think so. I don't think you're more lovable than they are.

You're just happier than they are in some ways. But why does he give this? Because they're a test. Will your heart attach to those? Will you love your life in this world? Those who overcome are those who do not love their lives, even to the death, according to Revelations 12 and 11.

So spiritually, what do I have to do? Well, I have to make sure that I'm more aware of the fact that I'm in Christ than that I'm in the world. In the world, I'm aware I'm here, but I have tribulation here. In Christ, I have peace.

Where do I need to focus my life day by day? The more I focus on being in Christ, the more my eye is on Christ, the more I'm going to be strengthened in that, the more I'm going to know him, the more I'm going to become like him. And it says in Daniel chapter 11 and verse 32, which is talking about a period in Israel's life, which is one of the most horrible times that they ever went through under a tyrant named Antiochus Epiphanes. Let me tell you something about this is about one hundred sixty seven years before Christ.

A Syrian tyrant who had conquered Israel and they were under his rule, he decided to make Israel pagan. And he tried to bring all the pagan culture into their culture to compromise him. And he had some opposition, opposition from some people who were called the Hasidim, the holy ones.

There were Jews on copper. These actually the Hasidim were the ones from whom the Pharisee Party developed. They were kind of a proto Pharisees at the time.

They were loyal to the law of God. They were uncompromising. And so what Antiochus did, he said, OK, I'm going to make it a capital punishment offense for you to own a copy of your scriptures, for you to keep the Sabbath, for you to circumcise your children.

And several other things that Jews had no option but to do. They couldn't, if they were faithful, they couldn't break the Sabbath. They could not be circumcised.

Those are things God said, if you don't do that, you've broken the covenant. And the Hasidim did not compromise. They were slain in large numbers.

And it made it harder because they'd be slain on the Sabbath when they couldn't lift a sword to defend themselves because they were keeping the Sabbath. This is a horrible time they went through. And Daniel predicted it in Daniel chapter 11 in some detail.

There's reference to Antiochus there and to the Hasidim who survived. And this statement may be familiar to you from Daniel 11, 32. It's talking about the righteous at the time.

He says, those who know their God shall be strong and do exploits. Now, those who know their God. But this was in Israel.

Didn't all Israel know God? No, they all knew about God. Everyone in Israel knew about God. But not all of them knew God.

Everyone who goes to church knows about God. Everybody who reads the Bible knows about God. But knowing about God, the devil knows about God, too.

Knowing about God doesn't make you a better person than someone who doesn't know about God. In fact, it might make you the more responsible than they are. Before God, because you know what they don't know.

And Jesus said that servant who didn't know his master's will. And did things worthy of stress would be a few stripes. But that servant who knew his master's will and didn't do it will be beaten with many stripes.

So, I mean, a person who doesn't know about God. Isn't on the same level of accountability as someone who does. Knowing about God isn't really what it's about.

It's knowing God. This means that it may count for little if you know the Bible well. I've studied the Bible all my life.

I know the Bible pretty well, but I don't think that it counts for anything with God. If I don't know God. I heard about a college professor who had the Gospel of John

memorized.

He could quote it. He was an atheist. He just quoted it, I guess, to show that he could know the Bible better than the Christian students he had.

But he knew the Bible, but he didn't know God. Those who know their God are strong and do exploits in the time of trial. And the Hasidim, many of them were killed, but they remained unbroken.

They remained uncompromised. And eventually God helped them, as it says in Daniel 11, with a little help. That was what we call the Maccabean revolt.

And a group of Jews rose up against the more armed Syrian oppressors. And through guerrilla warfare over a period of years, many of them dying in the process, finally got independence for Israel. And that's what they celebrate next month in what they call Hanukkah.

It's Hanukkah is a celebration of the Maccabean victory over Antiochus Epiphanes. It's that important to them. But they went through a time of ordeal where the faithful were tested and they had to not love their lives, even unto death.

That's knowing your God is your spiritual preparation. Make sure you know God. If you don't think you know him, if you wonder, maybe I just know the Bible, maybe I know theology, maybe I can recite everything my church and pastor believes.

But I'm not really sure I know who God is. Well, then your assignment is clear. You better get to know who he is.

I remember I was raised in a denominational church. And when I was 16, I knew the Bible really well, I was actually I preached in the church I grew up in before I was 16. And, you know, I was I was the Bible nerd in my church.

But when I was 16, I went into the Calvary Chapel. This is the only Calvary Chapel there was in the world at that time in Costa Mesa on a Wednesday night. There's a revival going on.

People get saved like crazy, mostly hippies. I was not a hippie, but if they were. Yeah.

And it was after that that I decided to impersonate a hippie, but I never really was a hippie. But I sat down next to a young man, a hippie, new convert action. And he said, hey, do you know the Lord? I said, yeah, I've been a Christian all my life.

He said, wow, well, tell me what's the Lord been doing in your life? And when he said that, I didn't even know what that meant. I was not aware of God doing anything in my life. I was aware of the fact that if you believe in Jesus, you go to him when you die.

That was all I knew. And I knew a lot of Bible verses to prove it. But I didn't know God in the way that he was like, I was conscious of interaction with him on a daily basis.

Now, maybe you were raised in the church and you had better grasp of that than I did. The amazing thing is I knew the Bible much better than any of the kids in our youth group. They said so.

But, and I think they were right. I did. But I didn't know God the way that this young man who'd been saved for only a couple of weeks knew him.

And it was clear that God had been working in this man's life. He had all these testimonies of people that, you know, he was delivered from drugs and alcohol. And he was, he led people to the Lord, his own parents, I think he led to the Lord, as I recall.

I was just stunned. I mean, wow, this guy really talked about God, like he's really like there, like he really knows him. Like, like I know certain people, you know.

And I, I honestly had never heard in the church I went to that, that you're supposed to know God that way. I was raised in a Christian home, knowing about God, knowing the gospel, believing the gospel. There was never a day in my life I didn't believe in the gospel.

But I realized I need to know God. And, you know, you better make sure you know God. Get to know him.

I can't go into how you do that, because that's a different subject. But I do have a series online called Knowing God. The whole name of the God of the series, it's not listed on that because it's a long name, but the whole name of the series is Knowing God Other Than By Hearsay.

I knew God by hearsay. Other people who knew God had told me about it. I'd read the books they written in the Bible.

And I, you know, but I didn't know him other than by hearsay. And that's what you want to be strong in time of tremendous trial and do experts. You'd better know God and you'd better not make that a back burner issue.

You know, when people are married to each other and they love each other, they'll do heroic things that they wouldn't ordinarily do for each other. I mean, if someone broke into our house in the middle of the night, had a big knife. My natural instinct would be jump out the window.

Very few things could prevent me from responding that way, except with my wife next to me in the bed. I think I really want to jump out the window, but I'm not going to leave her in danger. I'm not going to betray her.

You know, I'll take the hit. I'll be stabbed. I'll be killed if necessary to, you know, to be loyal to her.

And you've got to know God like that. Like, you know, things that would terrify me, things I'd run away from normally. I just don't.

I just won't because I'd have to be betraying God to do that. I can't deny God for any price. And you've got to be, know God in that way.

And be loyal to God in that way so much that nothing could buy you off to buy off your loyalty to God. Because if you have a price for your rejecting God, the devil knows how to pay it. And you've got to be just someone who can't be bought.

You can't be, you can't be moved by threats. And I don't know any way to be that way except to know and love God. If you know God, I can't think of anything that could make you deny him.

So that's the first thing about spiritual preparation. Make sure that you know God. And another part of that, of course, is to develop, because you know, God, develop what we'd have to call an eternal perspective.

What's an eternal perspective? We just see everything through the eyes of eternity. Like whenever you're going through anything, you think, what will this matter? 10,000 years from now, you know. I mean, for most of your trials that are really bugging you right now, you could probably think, what will this matter a week from now? And it probably won't matter at all a week from now.

Probably all the little irritations we have now won't mean anything a week from now. But nothing that irritates you today will matter a hundred years from now or a thousand or a million or a billion. And that's when you're going to be still living without this irritation, without this pain, without this trial.

It's just a little while that you go through trials. Paul said it this way in 2nd Corinthians, Chapter 4 and verses 16 and following, 16 through 18. Paul said, but we don't lose heart because even though our outer man is perishing, our inner man is renewed day by day for our light affliction.

And when Paul talked about his affliction as light, it's a lot more optimistic than we are. His afflictions, we would run away crying if we had to go through what Paul went through, you know, he said, our light affliction is, which is but for a moment. It works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen, because the things that are seen are temporal.

The things that are not seen are eternal. Paul says, this is how we live our life. We're

going through a lot of trials.

Our outer man is perishing, but our inner man is thriving because you know what? We're not looking at the things that are seen. Our focus is on things that are eternal, things that are not seen. And as we go through these brief trials, they're only a moment.

They're working for us an eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen. That's your spiritual preparation. You should be looking that way at everything now.

If you never have another trial, you should still be looking at things because that's reality. That's reality. When you see some teenage kid at the age, he probably should be maybe going to college or going to trade school or doing something to support himself, learn how to support himself, and he's staying home just playing video games day after day in his mom's basement and a year from now, it's no different a year later, it's no different.

He's frittering away his life doing meaningless things when there are important things that will help him in the long term. The time when he needs to support himself, the time when he might need to support a family, the time when he's going to want something that most people can have, but he can't because he played video games while everyone else was doing something responsible because he's looking at the short term instead of the long term. Now, Christians have a much longer term to look at, and we should be looking at it, and every decision we make should be affected by the fact that we're not looking at things that are temporal, we're looking at things that are eternal, and then even our trials will work for us in eternal weight of glory while we look at those things.

But you have to have that focus. You need to know God and make sure you know God and keep your focus on the things that really are real and really matter. Spiritual things, because they are eternal, are more real than physical things.

That's not just sort of a slogan for people to say to kind of get people's heads turned. Everything that is so real before us right now, this could be burned into ashes tonight. Everything in this room could be burned to ashes tonight, including every person in this room.

Everything you own could disappear tomorrow. It's real. I'm not saying the physical world isn't real.

It's not like I'm a Buddhist who would say it's all illusion. It's real, but it's not as real as things that will never go away. Things that are eternal are more real, and that's what you have to know.

That's what your kids need to know. That's what you need to live like because that's your spiritual preparation. If that's what you're in the habit of, if that's your perspective, then

bring on the trials.

They're going to only affect the part of you that you don't think of as all that real anyway. Oh, my body, oh, look, they cut my arm off. Oh, well, I didn't expect to have it forever anyway.

You know, and I'm not saying that you can be that stoic, obviously, but when you're weighing, shall I give up my soul and gain the whole world? Or shall I let the world and my life on this world go and gain my soul? It's a no-brainer to anyone who's in touch with reality, but you have to be in touch with reality habitually for that reality to dawn on you in those moments of crisis. In those times of crisis, what will come to you is what you're accustomed to having come to you, what your habits of mind are. Now, let me talk about mental preparation real quickly.

You thought, well, I thought that's mental. Well, it is, but that's spiritual stuff. Just your philosophy, your way of looking at things in general.

You should be able to say in times of trial, you know, well, it says in 1 Peter 4, 1, okay, therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind. Now, arm yourselves means you're prepared for battle, right? You're armed. How do you arm yourself with the same mind? It's a mentality.

What mind? Jesus suffered in the flesh. I need to have the same mind. I'm prepared to suffer in the flesh.

If I have that mind, I'm armed against the spiritual challenges, the spiritual tests. And, you know, when I suffer, we are so accustomed to feeling so self-entitled. Well, what did I do wrong? Why should I have to go through this? You know, doesn't God love me anymore? I mean, how unjust is God to let this happen to me? I mean, that's just mentally wrongheaded.

You should be thinking if Jesus suffered for me, how could it be wrong for me to suffer for him? I'm not even worth someone suffering for. He is. If he would die for me, if he'd be tortured for me, if he'd give up his luxuries in heaven for me, like, how could anything be appropriate other than me doing the same for him? Be armed with the same mind, Peter says.

Christ suffered for us. Arm yourselves with the same mind. Of course, you need to have a total consecration to God.

And as you mentally have to keep that in your mind. Everything I have become God's when I became a Christian. Oh, I didn't know that at the time? Shame on the preacher.

The preacher didn't tell you that. He just told you, you can have all this in heaven, too. You just raise your hand and walk down the aisle and say a little prayer.

Shame on him. He should have preached the gospel instead of the American gospel. The gospel in the Bible is you're all in or you're not in.

Jesus didn't let anyone come partway and call them his disciples. He said, unless you forsake all that you have, you cannot be my disciple in Luke 14, 33. All in or not at all.

All in. Now, all in doesn't mean you wander around in sandals, you know, on the hills of Galilee and don't work at a job anymore. Unless that's what it does mean.

I mean, unless that's what God has you do. But most people who are all in still hold their jobs. They still support their families.

They still have homes and cars and the things that people have to get by. Those are OK. God is not against people having what they need to have.

But God wants us to see everything that we have, including those things, as things that are purchased with his time and his money. If you are not your own and you've been bought with a price, then you don't have any time of your own. You don't have any money of your own.

You have his money, his time. He wants you to use it wisely. And certainly supporting your family is a wise thing to do.

In fact, if you don't do it, you're worse than an infidel. There are responsibilities we have, and he wants us to meet those responsibilities. But even in the course of meeting, we have to realize that those children I'm supporting, they're God's, not mine.

This wife I'm protecting, she's God's, not mine. She's on loan. I've got a responsibility.

I'm a steward. The house we live in, the car we drive, the job I have, everything I have, that's really God's. He could take it all away, and there'd be... He would not have to give any account for it.

And you know that you don't have that mentality if, in fact, something... You do suffer significant loss. And you think, wait a minute. God, you better explain that to me.

Well, why should he have to explain to you what he does with his stuff? I mentioned I had a wife who was killed in an accident. And it never occurred to me that God didn't have the right to take her. When people say, were you mad at God when he took your wife six months after you got married? No, never crossed my mind.

I never thought she was really mine. I thought she was on loan from God. She's his.

He took her home. That's his business. You don't question God if you really are fully consecrated to God.

If you've committed everything to him, and that's how you have to think about everything. Paul said in 2nd Corinthians 1.12, he says... I'm sorry, 2nd Timothy 1.12. Paul said, I know whom I believe. There's knowing God.

I know whom I believe, and I'm persuaded that he's able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. I've committed my children to him. I've committed my life.

I've committed all things to him. I can trust him with it. What if he takes it away? What if he takes my life? What if I have a child who dies? Well, I've committed it to him.

It's his problem, not mine. I don't have any problems. If I've committed everything to God, all my problems are really his.

Let him worry about it. Now, again, that sounds really stoic, but it's not stoic. When my wife died, I experienced emotional pain.

But I didn't experience existential crisis. It's not like suddenly everything I believed was up for grabs. You know, I thought, well, I mean, I didn't expect to lose my wife at age 25.

But I've known, I knew when I married, she was going to die. Because I didn't think she was an immortal. I know I'm going to die.

Everyone I know, I look at, I expect them to die. I expected her to die. I just didn't expect her to die at 25 years old.

But the thing is, that's stuff that God doesn't let us know in advance. He can do with his things what he wants, including the things that he's entrusted to us. I am persuaded he's able to keep what I've entrusted him, what I've committed to him against that day.

That's my mentality. Has to be my mentality toward everything in the world, including my loved ones. Another thing is, well, I think it's helpful for the mental preparation to read books, not about successful tycoons and how to get rich.

And, you know, how to learn things from the rich dad instead of the poor dad or whatever. I mean, those may be helpful for some little things of temporal interest. But read books about the martyrs.

Read Fox's Book of Martyrs. Someone gave me Fox's Book of Martyrs when I was 18. I didn't want to read it.

I knew I'd heard stories about martyrs. If I see a dead cat at the side of the road and his guts are out, I don't even want to look. I'm squeamish.

I didn't want to hear about humans having their guts cut out of them. And I just, I left that book on the shelf. I knew it was a famous book, classic book.

I just thought it wasn't my taste. But then I kept hearing things about it. So I thought, well, I'll read a little bit of it.

And as I read it, I was really drawn in. Because it's not really, it's not really a gross book. There's some horrendous things Christians have gone through.

It's a victorious book. You read how God gave them the grace and all the courageous and bold, heroic things they said to their tormentors while they're burning and things like that. Suddenly it builds your faith.

You say, well, this is really what Jesus talked about, really. Being faithful unto death and God giving you this, this grace to go through it and so forth. And I'll tell you, I've read that book several times now, but not only that, but modern martyrs.

I've read Richard Wurmbrand's books. I've read Corrie ten Boom's book. I've read, you know, I believe that reading those books prepares your mind to understand what normal Christians go through, not privileged Christians who live in a single little speck of time in a very small speck on the earth.

So we need to be spiritually prepared. I make sure we know God and we've developed an eternal perspective. We need to be mentally prepared by realizing suffering is really the norm.

What we've been gone through isn't the norm and we can't count on it. But then there's a prudent preparation. And that means actually when you see danger coming, doing something about it.

Is that biblical? Of course it is. What about Noah? Now, when Noah built an ark, was he worried? I don't know if he was worried. He didn't have to be worried.

Everyone else should be worried. He's got an ark. I'll admit something that many people would be embarrassed to admit.

I'm not the least bit embarrassed about it. When Y2K was coming, I was reading about it in all the respectable journals. The computer journals, the science journals, they were all saying, you know, we're not sure what these computers are going to do when the year 2000 comes.

And it could confuse a lot of things. And if the computers get confused, our whole way of life gets confused. And there were all these stark predictions of what might happen.

Now, there are always people who are saying, ah, nothing's going to happen. And when nothing did happen, they thought, see, well, the reason nothing happened is because people were actually worried about it and did something. They updated the computer code.

They frantically, for two or three years, worked on updating the code to avoid this problem. They still weren't sure it was going to be OK when January 1st came, the year 2000. But they'd done an awful lot to prevent it.

And even, frankly, I'd listen to the naysayers say, oh, nothing's going to happen in 2000. They say, the worst that's going to happen, there's going to be a few blackouts around the country, a few brownouts around the country, but no disasters. There weren't even those.

It was less than even the most optimistic people thought. But I saw President Clinton on TV bringing generators into the White House on December 31st. And he had access to as much information as anybody in the country had.

And I thought, to be prepared for this is not something I will regret if it doesn't happen. I mean, some people probably did some really crazy things, which they did regret. I don't recommend anyone doing crazy things.

I recommend people doing wise things. It's a wise man who foresees the evil and prepares himself, it says properly. And, you know, people ask me, do you think something's going to happen and why do you care? I don't know.

An awful lot of people seem to think so. I don't want to have that come without having any preparation. On the other hand, I don't want to do any preparation that I'll regret having made.

If it doesn't happen, just be wise. The truth is, the Mormons, for example, have always encouraged their people to have, what, a year's worth, five years worth of food or something stored up. And in fact, when we were storing up food, we actually went to the Mormon facilities where they let you for a very cheap price, you know, can things.

They had a canning facility. You could get this dry food and can it very cheap. But I'm not saying you need to store up food for years to come.

But I will say this. There are some supply chain issues at the moment. How these will be resolved, when they'll be resolved, we don't know.

A lot of stores in some places don't have much on their shelves. People who've got a little bit of food may be happy they did. Now, someone says, well, but that's selfish.

What are you going to do if all your neighbors are starving and you've got food? Well, I'm glad you asked. I'll be of use to them. If I'm the only one in town, in the neighborhood who's got food, I can be of use to people who don't have any.

And even if there are food lines, rationed food, I won't have to take someone else's portion. You know, if you're not part of the solution, you could be part of the problem.

You're a consumer rather than a provider.

To be in a position to help other people is never a bad thing. When Noah built an ark, the Bible doesn't say he did it because of his word. It says, by faith, Noah, being warned of things not yet seen, built an ark to the saving of his household.

He did it to save his household. Now, we don't build arks because we're not expecting floods. But whatever it is we can reasonably expect, it wouldn't hurt to make whatever preparations.

That was an act of faith on Noah's part to do it. Joseph was warned of seven years famine coming. What did he do? Sit around, say, I'm just going to trust God.

No, he says, no, we need to start gathering up some food here for the seven good years so that there'll be food in the seven bad years. Now, was he being selfish? Not at all. Jesus said, don't lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.

Was he doing that? No, he wasn't doing it for himself. He was doing it for the whole world. Joseph's prudence saved all of Egypt and all of Israel and all the nations around because they were going to have food because of his wisdom.

In Proverbs, it says in chapter six, consider the ant, you slugger. Consider ways and be wise. In the summer, she stores up food for the winter.

Well, that is wise because there's not as much food to store up in the winter. And ants do it. Are they selfish? No, they're doing it for their whole tribe.

They're doing it for the whole community. They're not putting away their private stash just for them. They see a danger to their whole community.

They could all starve in the winter if they don't do something. So they go out and do what has to be done. Now, biblically, therefore, there's nothing wrong.

When the Bible says, don't be worried, I've never been worried. Well, I want to do things that will prevent me from having to worry. Now, I trust God.

But trusting God doesn't mean you don't act on wisdom. A fool is somebody who really puts God in the... is really tempting God. And when the devil told Jesus, jump off the temple here, because God said he'll, his angels will bear you up.

Jesus said, don't tempt God. It's written, you don't tempt God. Well, what is tempting God then? It's putting yourself in a danger that God didn't require you to be in.

And then expecting him to bail you out. If you, if God tells you to go to the cannibals and you get eaten, you weren't tempting God, you were obeying God. But if God has given you the indication that there's something you should do and not put yourself in

unnecessary danger, and you neglect it and say, no, I'll just trust God with him.

Yeah, but maybe he, the one you're trusting is telling you, you can foresee something and do something about it. You can help your family, you can help others like Noah building an ark. This is an important thing.

I don't, I'm not a prepper. I have a little rice, a little beans and some six gallon buckets. We use them.

We don't use the beans much. We use the rice all the time. You have to replenish it.

But when there's no rice to have, if such time would ever come, we'll have some to help out the neighbors and ourselves. We won't just all be, you know, rioting, you know, for food. You know, there are things that, I mean, what I would just say is this, the wise man prepares for what he sees coming.

That's what the Proverbs says. That's biblical. If you can imagine what it would be like if certain supply chains break down or a certain law and order breaks down in your neighborhood, in your town, and you can say, well, if that would happen, which is extremely realistic, what would I wish I had on hand at that time? That's just thinking like a wise person.

I mean, when you go shopping once a week, you say, what meals do I want to make in the next week? What should I have on hand? I'll have to free plan. Okay, I'm going to buy some of this, some of that, because I want on Tuesday night to be able to make such a, if I don't buy it now, I won't have it. You anticipate what you're going to want.

And you wisely do whatever precautions you can. Now, if you don't, if you are incapable of taking precautions, then you just leave it in God's hands. But God may lead you to do something that you can do.

And I would say, don't think, well, Christians ought not to do that. We should just be trusting God for our daily bread. Yeah.

And then somebody else who started up, you'll drain their resources instead. Let them pay the price for your foolishness instead of you paying the price for theirs. Now, I think that to be able to help others is important.

Now, the last thing I want to say, and I've gone along, I know, and it is time, it was time to take a break earlier, but let me just say this. One thing I think Christians should be doing in terms of prudential preparation for who knows what, is reestablishing what the church has lost in modern America. And that is community.

Not just the church. With the breakdown of the church has broken down just community in our society. And we, you know, people used to have the same neighbors all their life.

They went to the same church all their life. They worked at the same job until they retired. And their kids grew up and went to the same church and lived in the same community.

And they married their neighbor kids. There used to be community. That was a normal thing in every society until it got to be possible that you can commute to a job an hour away on the freeway, and you don't even live near the people you work with.

You don't even know their families. You know, people get transferred all over the place. So, commonly people move every three years to another town.

Never build any relationships. Now, church can help, but an awful lot of churches don't really build community either. I'm not saying they don't try, but they're working against this very strong cultural trend of impermanence.

People do not stay in the same place anymore, said Carole King. Doesn't anybody stay in one place anymore? No, most people don't. The ones who do will see that their neighborhood changes around them all the time.

Dana and I have been together 10 years in our neighborhood, and almost all the houses around us have changed occupants at least once. Some of them twice in that time. That didn't used to happen.

But it makes it very, very unlikely that community will form unintentionally, just as a way of culture. You have to intentionally form community. Churches try to form it, but still most churches are a matter of people showing up, looking at the backs of the heads of the rest of the people in the rows ahead of them, listening to a sermon, hearing a band sing a song.

Maybe you try to sing along, but you can't hear your voice because the band's so loud, you can't hear if anyone else is singing or not. But then when the show is over, you go home and watch TV and remain totally isolated from almost everybody in the church. A few people in the church join small groups, but even those people kind of move away and the constituency changes.

What I think that every Christian ought to be doing intentionally right now because the body of Christ is the support that every individual Christian needs in times of crisis, is intentionally, even uncomfortably, building community with like-minded people. Homeschool groups are doing this somewhat. I mean, they're cooperating with each other and doing things together.

But even if you're in a homeschooling group, to make sure that you're not just in the homeschooling group, but you're in the lives of the people. I've often told this story because it's such a great example, I think, of a church I was in briefly in Idaho. And it was a very small church and there was no official leadership.

There were a lot of people who preached, myself included, and there were a lot of people who were spiritually mature. In fact, there weren't very many people in it who weren't spiritually mature, but it was a small group, probably about, I'm thinking about 30 families of homeschoolers living in rural Idaho. And they shared their, not automatically, but as needs arose, they shared their resources with each other.

Many times my family paid the rent for another family that couldn't pay their rent or bought groceries because they were temporarily out of work. There was one family there that the whole, all the men in the church showed up on a weekend and built a house for them on a piece of bare property. The family of five was living in a travel trailer.

And they bought this property, they couldn't afford to do that. So the church pulled their resources and built a house on their property on a weekend, sort of like an Amish farm. These people were in each other's lives.

They didn't just see each other on Sunday morning. Even decisions for the church weren't made by any hierarchy. There was no hierarchy in the church.

There were two side meetings, all the brothers in the church would get together and they'd talk about what are the needs in the church. Anyone know of someone who's in need here? You know, a whole bunch of money got given in the offering on Sunday. What should we do with it? And they made decisions by consensus.

Who has needs? This was getting into each other's lives in ways that people always used to in the old days, but no one seems to now. In times of crisis, having that community, having even cells, you know, cells of like-minded people that you know that you're loyal to each other, to live and to die for each other, if necessary. Because, and maybe to bug out, the Bible is not against strategic relocation.

Jesus said, if they persecute you in one city, flee to another. That's strategic relocation. In Luke 21, Jesus said, you know, when you see Jerusalem survivors, you flee.

Who are in Judea? Flee across the Jordan to safety. That's strategic relocation. Noah going into the ark was definitely strategic relocation for his family.

When Paul was in Jerusalem the first time after his conversion, Acts chapter 9, in verses 29 and 30, it says that the Jews in Jerusalem were plotting to kill him. And when the brethren heard it, they strategically relocated Paul. They sent him out of town.

That's, that's, we've never had to leave any location because of danger. We leave locations, if at all, because of new opportunities. A better job, a promotion or something.

We'll leave for that reason. But we've never known having to leave any place because it was dangerous to stay there. But frankly, Christians may have to even be thinking in those terms.

It's biblical. It's not very American by American historical standards. Americans don't have to do that.

We're the country that all the persecuted people from other countries come to for refuge. But what if we become the country where the Christians are persecuted? Where can we go for refuge? That's not an easy answer. Maybe nowhere.

Maybe there's nowhere left to go. But most people who think we'd even be wondering that at some point here in America, think, what are you paranoid? This is America. That will never be a problem.

This is the land of free. Yeah, well, I remember it once was in my lifetime. But we don't have the greatest generation here to keep it free anymore.

We don't even, I don't put my trust in horses and chariots. Some do. Some trust in chariots and some in horses.

We'll remember the name of the Lord our God. But let's face it. I don't trust the military.

But we have to say, if it ever came down to our freedoms being fought over in another war, let's say against some other major world power that's breathing down our necks at the moment. I don't think we have the horses. I don't even think we have the leadership.

I don't even know if we have the will. We're not living in the country. It's not your grandma's America.

And, you know, obviously leaving the country for safety, that's, most people would never be able to really do that. That's not really very realistic for most people. And where would you go anyway? But to think of moving to rural areas, I'm not saying you should.

I'm just saying, I certainly think about it. You know, going places where you're not in the bull's eye, and your family might actually get to grow up before it costs you, you know, your life. I mean, there are ways to be wise.

Not afraid. I am not afraid. I talk about all these negatives.

People, oh, you must be really worried. I'm not worried. I'm ready to die for Jesus.

I'll die today. I'm not worried about that. But I don't want to be foolish.

I don't think I can die until God's done with me. But I don't want to be foolish with the opportunities I have. Because that's part of my stewardship, too.

So preparation for hard times is spiritual, first of all. It requires a certain mentality to be faithful unto death. Also, and there's also some practical things that wise people should at least consider doing.

If you're pretty sure that there's nothing you could do, practically speaking, then don't do it. Just trust God. But I think there's a lot of things we could do.

I think we spend a lot of our time and our money on things that would be of no value in a crisis. They're just fun. Or they add to our comforts at the moment.

But in a crisis, we'll say, well, I could use that money for something I wish I had now. A wise person starts thinking now, what will those things be? Because even if I don't need them, someone else may. I can always give them to someone else.

The thing is, it's better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it. That's I mean, that's just common sense. And certainly common sense is not unspiritual.

That wisdom is the voice of God speaking in the book of Proverbs. It's even almost equated with Jesus speaking when wisdom speaks there.