

Being Strengthened to Stand without Compromise (Luke 21:34-36)

Tonight, I want to share a passage. Jesus' exhortation in Luke 21 is particularly applicable to the end-time Church. Of course, it has had application for the past 2,000 years, but He was speaking to the generation of His return. Before we get into that exhortation, I want to take a moment and do a review of what I shared last Sunday. Last Sunday, I spoke from Ephesians 3:16: "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man." It is one of the most important prayers that you can pray for others or for yourself.

ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO STRENGTHEN OUR INNER MAN

Here is what the prayer is: "That God would strengthen you with divine might in the inner man, or on the inside." Paul is praying that God would release divine might. The might is supernatural, as this supernatural might from the Spirit makes you strong in your mind, emotions, and will.

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE IS THAT GOD RELEASES MORE STRENGTH

Paragraph A. As I said last week, one of the foundational principles of the kingdom—we all know it well, but it just needs to be said as a reminder—is that God will give more strength to your inner man if you ask. It is just that simple: your strength on the inside, your experience of His strength can increase, or decrease, just like physical strength can increase or decrease. In three months from now, some of you will be stronger spiritually, and others will be weaker spiritually. That is not a prophecy, I am just saying that this is true in the Body of Christ in a general sense because strength can increase just as it can decrease. People say, "I remember a year or two ago, when I was really on fire for the Lord."

When the Holy Spirit releases strength in our emotions, or in our heart, He literally strengthens us. He releases it in small measures. Do not despise those small measures day in and day out. Often you cannot measure, detect, or discern the Spirit working and strengthening you. That does not mean that the Spirit is not doing it. I compare it to vitamins. You take vitamins—the right vitamins—for years, and they will strengthen you physically. However, there is never a day when we say, "Wow! This vitamin really helped me today." It is over a period of time, but it is actually helping you that day even if you do not feel it. I have taken vitamins for years, and I cannot remember one day thinking, "Wow. This is the day the vitamins started working." It is the same way in your spirit man. If you will ask, God will answer, though many people never ask for the Spirit to give them might on the inside. The Holy Spirit is waiting. He is saying, "I will give you more, but I am waiting for you to ask Me."

TEN PRAYERS TO STRENGTHEN OUR INNER MAN: F-E-L-L-O-W-S-H-I-P

Paragraph B. I recently gave a message where I identified ten prayers. I used the acronym fellowship, as in fellowship with God. I use the ten letters in the word fellowship, like *f* is for the fear of the Lord. I went right down the list. *E* is for endurance, etc. Because if you will take these

ten prayers, and you can make it twelve, or eight. You can categorize them in different ways. I used the acronym just to make it easier, if you do not have the list in front of you. If you will pray for strength in your inner man, you will receive more. That is what Jesus is speaking of here in Luke 21. He is calling the saints throughout church history, but He is talking to one generation in particular. He is telling the generation of the Lord's return, "If you would ask for strength in your inner man, you would get it, and you would be able to stand before the greatest challenge that any generation in history will ever face." There is one generation in history who will face the greatest revival, but they will also face the greatest negative challenges and obstacles in any time in all of history.

Jesus cared so much about this generation having victory that 2,000 years ahead of time, He talked to them prophetically. He said, "If you will cry out always, regularly, often for strength, you will stand in victory in the most difficult hour in human history." Really what Jesus is talking about is praying the prayer, "Lord, release strength in the inner man," which is Paul's cry in Ephesians 3:16. Again, I break it down in ten prayers. You can organize it in different ways. It is just a practical tool. Take ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes a day. If you do that for ten or fifteen minutes a day, you will grow to need an hour. If you go through it slowly, it will take you more than an hour.

It will grow on you—this idea of praying for your inner man. A lot of people pray for outside things: ministry, breakthrough, and all kinds of things, but they do not pray for their own inner man to be strengthened. Let's move onto the actual exhortation Jesus gave to the end-time Church. He is calling them to pray for strength in their inner man.

JESUS' EXHORTATION TO THE END-TIME CHURCH: TAKE HEED AND PRAY

Roman numeral II. Let's just give a general feel for the context of Luke 21. In Luke 21:25, Jesus said, "There will be . . . on earth the distress of nations." What a phrase: "the distress of nations" (Lk. 21:25)! Who wants to live in the generation who Jesus calls "the distress of nations?" Well, I believe that you live in that generation. I believe there are people in this room who will actually witness the coming of the Lord in their lifetime. Therefore, they will experience the revival and the distress of nations. Luke 21:26: "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heavens will be shaken." Jesus went on to talk about how intense this distress is going to be. Men's hearts will fail because of fear. Fear will be one of the number one challenges in that timeframe. We are in the beginning of that timeframe, and fear is increasing all over the nations. Fear is increasing in the Church and outside the Church.

The Church has millions of unbelieving believers. They love Jesus, but they are as entrenched in fear as unbelievers are. They do not have a lively connection with Him to where the fear issue is being touched by the power of the Holy Spirit on the inside.

Jesus continues in Luke 21:31: "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near;" this idea of the kingdom of God means that the millennial kingdom, the second coming, the time when Jesus is on the earth physically, and when all the nations come

under His leadership. The kingdom is now, but there is a sense in which the kingdom of God, in its full sense, is the millennial kingdom when Jesus reigns on the earth for 1,000 years and every nation comes under His leadership. Now He goes on in Luke 21:34, and He gives that exhortation to the generation who will see the coming of the Lord. Imagine Jesus giving a tailor-made exhortation to one generation. That is what He is doing here. How dear is this! How precious is this exhortation! Let's read it, and then we are going to break it down by phrase.

He gives two exhortations: He says in Luke 21:34: "But take heed to yourself, lest your hearts be weighed down with fear"—that is exhortation one. Then, in Luke 21:36, Jesus tells them to pray always. So the two exhortations that Jesus gives is: take heed to yourself and pray always.

It says in Luke 21:34, exhortation one: "Take heed to yourself, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly." He says, "Why? Because if you do not pay attention to yourself, your heart will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the cares of this life." The net result is this: the Day of the Lord, the second coming, and the events related to it will come upon these people, even believers, unexpectedly because their hearts are weighed down, and they do not have an alert spirit. They do not know what is happening, even when the generation they are living in is the generation of the Lord's return. Their hearts are weighted down because they did not pay attention to the way they were living. We are talking about believers as well. He is talking to His people here—people who would read the Bible and believers.

JESUS PROPHESED OF A SNARE THAT WOULD CHALLENGE EVERYONE

It is as if Luke is saying, "Let me give you the bigger context" (Lk. 21:35, paraphrased). Why is it that this is so important? Luke 21:35 is a bit ominous. It is a little bit overwhelming almost. Well, it is actually hard to understand except by the Spirit of God. Luke says in 21:35: "It will come"—the Day of the Lord, the end-time events—"as a snare upon all those who dwell on the face the whole earth." The Day of the Lord events: the Day of the Lord events will be a snare, or a challenge. Put the word challenge in there for now. It will challenge believers and unbelievers. It will challenge everybody differently. It will be a challenge even for the red-hot believer. It is a challenge that they can overcome. It is a challenge that they are meant to overcome, but it is a challenge that some believers will not overcome.

When He says this very strong statement about the Day of the Lord and the events surrounding it, there will be a snare upon the entire planet. Every single human being will be challenged in a unique way, in a personal way, by the events in that generation. There is not one of us in this room who will skip, or escape that challenge. Now many of us will escape compromising in the face of the challenge. We will escape falling and stumbling, but the challenge will come to everyone. Now Jesus, in Luke 21:36, moves onto the second exhortation.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES TO THIS SNARE WILL VARY GREATLY

The first one is as if Jesus says, "Take heed to yourself. Pay attention to what you do." Now He is giving the second exhortation in Luke 21:36: "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son

of Man.” We are to watch and pray always. The reason you watch and pray is that you would be counted worthy to escape all the things that will come to pass and then to stand in victory when the Lord appears. You would be in a place of victory when the Lord comes. You would not be in a place of compromise. You would not be in a place of stumbling, but you would be standing instead of stumbling when the Lord appears. Of course, that is the goal, and that is what everybody wants. Let’s read Luke 21:36 again: “Watch therefore, and pray always.” One exhortation with two different sides to it—two sides to one coin, but one general exhortation.

Here is what you are praying: The New King James Version uses the phrase in Luke 21:36: “You would be counted worthy.” Many translations translate this Greek word instead: “You would be strengthened.” The idea of being “worthy” is being able, capable, or strengthened. That is what the Greek word means. Strengthened, able, capable, worthy. That is the feel of what Jesus is saying. Think of this phrase in how many Bible translations say it. Pray that you would be counted worthy, or that you would be supernaturally strengthened. Really this is the call to pray for Ephesians 3:16—that you would have might on the inside.

He said, “Pray always that you would be counted worthy.” Or let me say it in another way: “Pray always that you would have strength on the inside.” Why? That you would escape. Not the snare. The snare is coming to everyone, but we must pray to escape the compromise and stumbling before the challenge of that generation. The whole generation, all the people will be challenged by these end-time events. It is not just going to be a challenge that is negative. In the end times, there will also be the greatest revival in history as well. However, in this passage, Jesus is focusing on the negative. He is telling the Church 2,000 years ago, “Church, 2,000 years later, are you listening to Me? I have a word for you. Pray always that you would be counted worthy, or that you would find strength to escape the compromise that goes along with this challenge and this snare. Pray that you would stand instead of stumbling. You would be in victory instead of compromise when I come back in the air to meet and to rapture my people. You will stand without compromise when you meet Me face to face.”

THE SNARE IS HIDDEN FROM SIGHT AND HOLDS CAPTIVE

Let’s look at paragraph A. We are going to focus in on Luke 21:35 about the snare. A snare is coming. A snare is coming to the whole earth. By the way, that snare is already beginning right now. The snare, in its fullness, is the final three and a half years before Jesus returns. That snare does not only occur then, as it is building even now. If I was guessing, I do not know by revelation, but I am guessing that we are two or three decades out— maybe more, maybe less. By all the signs that are prophesied in the Bible, we think it is soon, as there is so much happening in the nations so quickly.

Today, just now, we heard the report: Jesus promised in Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” When the gospel of the kingdom is preached as a testimony in every nation, in every tribe everywhere, Jesus will return. We heard a report from top missions organizations that within ten years, a witness of the gospel will be in every single people group. Beloved, that is a

sign in the times itself. That is an amazing reality. If it is true that we are in that hour, the gospel will be preached in every nation, then the snare is coming in that timeframe.

DEFINING A SNARE

A snare is a trap. It is the same word—snare or trap. Some Bible translations say snare. Some say trap. A trap or a snare was a very common thing in the ancient world. That is how many people obtained their food. They would go hunting. In the old days, they did not bring a shotgun when they went hunting, as they did not have shot guns. They did not have sophisticated weapons for hunting. The most practical and common way of hunting in order to get food was a trap or a snare. They would put a trap in a hidden way, and then the animal would step into the trap. It is obvious, and then they would be captured.

There is a trap: there is a snare that must be discerned. We must see it and overcome it. Jesus requires even His people to face the trap. They will see it and overcome it. Some believers would like to just skip the whole challenge. Some believers think, “Let the unbelievers face that trap, and let us skip it.” That is not going to happen. We will face it. We will see it. We will triumph over it, but it will happen on an individual basis. Some believers—actually many believers—I do not think most, but it will be hundreds of millions of believers will be caught in the snare. They will compromise, and I believe there will be that many who will deny the Lord. The great falling away will happen in the hour of the snare. I believe there will be hundreds of millions who will fall away. There are about a billion believers on the earth. I believe that there is going to be another billion in the great revival. Though the Church will increase dramatically, my guess is that potentially, tens of millions, or maybe a couple hundred million will actually deny the faith in the face of this snare. They will not see the snare, and they will not triumph over it. They will be caught by it, and they will denounce the Lord in the intensity of the hour.

THE SNARE IS INEVITABLE AND IS PRESENTLY INCREASING IN INTENSITY

The snare is inevitable. It is coming. We cannot pray the snare away. The snare is coming. However, your response to it is still in the balance. What you will do in the face of the snare as an individual is up to you. That is what He is talking about; that is what He is saying, “This snare is coming. You cannot pray the snare away, but you can pray that you escape the compromise related to the snare.” He tells them in Luke 21:36: “Pray always.” Luke 21:36 is the equivalent of what Paul is really saying in Ephesians 3:16, when Paul prays that a spirit of might would touch your inner man. Beloved, this is a prayer that you do not want to neglect or minimize. You really, really want this prayer to be a priority in your daily life. We are weak and broken people—just folk, normal people, every day people who can receive this inspiration and influence of the Holy Spirit in their inner man. It is just small measures of it, but it really will make the difference. Because it is not enough in the face of the snare to just grit our teeth and say, “I am going to obey. I am going to obey. I am going to obey.”

We are going to need supernatural grace touching our inner man. We are going to need supernatural help. The Holy Spirit said, “I will give it to you.” Jesus said, “If you ask for it, even you will get it, but you have to ask for it.”

THE NATURE OF THE SNARE IS THAT IT IS HIDDEN FROM SIGHT

Number one, under Paragraph A. Now the nature of the snare, the nature of a snare is that it is hidden. You do not put neon lights on a snare. You do not put a trap out in the woods in order to catch the animal in the ancient world. It is not advertised. As a matter of fact, a snare is opposite. It lures the prey into the trap. The snare gives them a false sense of security. The animal walks right in to take the bait. They are lured into it, and there are several different expressions to the snare.

THE SNARE CAN HOLD THE PREY CAPTIVE

First of all, the snare is hidden. Secondly, the nature of a snare is to hold the prey captive. Many people will get captured in the snare, and they will be held captive to the lust, sin, fear, or their offense. They will be held captive to it on the inside. It will become a fixation in their life. It will become bondage, a stronghold, and a point of addiction that they cannot get free from except that they cry out in the grace of God. It is much wiser and easier to do preventive maintenance. If we pray now and avoid bondages now, it is far easier to get free and to avoid bondage, than to struggle through to get free of it.

A lot of people are really casual in the realm of drunkenness, or immorality. They get in bondage in a deep way. Then, they have to go through far more difficult trouble to get out of bondage because the bondage will get worse and worse. The bondage never takes hold of a person and stops. The bondage always increases. It becomes more and more miserable. It is far easier to stay out of the bondage, to put the work in, and to invest the effort to stay out of the snare, than to put the work and effort to get out of it after you are trapped. Staying out of it is much easier than getting out of it after you are entrapped. It is still possible to get out of a snare. It is still worth it, but beloved, this is the hour to put the effort in to avoid being ensnared. Staying out of it is much easier than getting out of it after you have been ensnared. It is very difficult to escape. Possible, but it is far more difficult.

THE SNARE HAS A UNIQUE APPLICATION AND IS INCREASING IN INTENSITY

Paragraph B. The reason that we need to pay special attention to this snare is because it has a unique application in one generation in history. This snare is not just trouble for 2,000 years in human history. It is true that there has been trouble for 2,000 years. This snare is unique to one generation. The reality of it and the challenge will reach a level never seen in history before. That is why Jesus highlights it. He is saying, “You do not really understand. There is no generation who will have the intensity of a snare in the way that one generation will.”

Paragraph C. That snare is increasing right now; this means that the snare does not just start the final three and a half years when it reaches its fullness. The snare is working for a couple decades ahead of time and building in intensity.

THE SNARE HAS DIVERSE EXPRESSIONS

Paragraph D. The snare has diverse expressions. I list four of them here in this paragraph. These four are not comprehensive. I did not set out to put out every snare I could think of. I want to give you a feel for what this snare looks like, as we are already facing it right now. It is not that

we are going to face it. We are already facing it in its early stages. It is going to get far more intense. It will surpass any other generation in history; this snare will. Number one snare is that in the final generation, sin, or lust will reach levels never known in history before. I could highlight ten different sins. There are plenty of categories of sins to look at. They are all going to increase.

Let me just point out one to give you an example: immorality. It is no guess work, it does not take special insight, particularly those who are a little older because you look back over twenty, thirty, and forty years. I am fifty-three years old, and I have been walking with the Lord for thirty-five years. I have been paying attention to this principle for thirty-five years. Where immorality is at in 2009 is significantly higher than it was twenty years ago. It is not even close. Where immorality is in the nations in the Church is increasing so rapidly right now. In ten and twenty years, immorality will be a snare for the human race that is so unimaginable.

WE MUST NOT YIELD TO INCREASING LUST AND IMMORALITY

For instance, I am thinking of two different examples of the increase of this snare of immorality: first of all, I want to look at the Internet pornography. Ten years ago, nobody was talking about Internet pornography. The Internet was just kind of getting going. I do not know when officially it was recognized as a public reality in the nations. Ten years ago, you never heard of a person stuck on Internet pornography. You heard about that one guy here and there who was involved in pornography in a deep way. That one guy, or that one preacher who said, “Wow, let’s pray for him.” There were several back then; but today, in ten short years, millions of believers are addicted to pornography. This was unheard of ten years ago. Imagine where the Internet is going in ten more years with the accessibility and the technology improvement, I cannot imagine where it is going to be globally in ten years and in twenty years. It is just unthinkable.

The second thing is not just the Internet pornography: I want to discuss this whole issue of the same-sex marriage. This is a global reality. There are many problems with the same sex marriage, and there are several I could identify, but I am going to focus on one. When same sex marriage gets legalized like it is in various nations, it will get into the elementary curriculum by law. When same sex marriage is legalized in a more wholesale way like it is in various nations, it will affect so many and so much. It is going to be in a lot more nations. We are going to resist it in our nation. It will get in the schoolbooks for the seven-year olds to be exposed to in graphic ways. Millions and millions worldwide of six, seven, and eight-year olds will be exposed to this. The Internet will be far more sophisticated in the next ten and twenty years. They will see it in the classroom, run into it in the Internet, and I cannot imagine what billions of people will be like twenty years from now. That is a snare unique in history. That is one snare.

WE MUST NOT YIELD TO DESPAIR IN DIFFICULTY

The second snare is the despair people will feel in difficulty, like the financial crisis in the nations. The financial crisis in the nations, by the way, is going to get far worse than it is right now. I do not mean we will not solve this one in this round of financial crisis. We might not. I am talking about globally. I do not know. I know for sure that if we solve it this round of financial crisis, the next round is coming. There will be global financial crisis. There will be

difficulty in terrorism, violence, lawlessness in the streets, and ethnic clashes increasing globally. I do not mean just America; I mean globally. It is already happening, but it is going to increase. Life is going to become more difficult. Jesus called it the distress of nations. So there is one kind of guy who says, “The Internet thing does not pull on me.”

When they face mounting difficulty, they just quit. They say, “It is too hard. I do not want to press in anymore.” I have talked to people for years after being a pastor for thirty years, and I hear it regularly, “I want to quit.”

I say, “OK, what are your options? You serve the Devil or you serve God.” There is not a third option. There is not a neutral zone where just coast in complacency and can keep God happy. There is no such thing as a third option, or a neutral zone. So I ask them, “OK, you are going to quit. I appreciate that you are in pain. What are you going to join?”

They respond, “Well, nothing.”

I ask them, “You are going to join something. You are going to join personal comfort. That is the new movement you are joining.” There is no option to quit. There is nothing to join. When you quit, you cannot go into a neutral zone, and call cease-fire with the Devil. If you quit, all you do is lay down your weapons, and the Devil mows you down. You cannot quit and have a safety zone. There is no such thing. Quitting is not a rational emotion. It is an emotional thing. Many people, I think the whole human race struggles with quitting. I think everyone in this room struggles with it at various times. It is a common urge in the human spirit to say, “It is too hard. I am just going to draw back, find as much comfort as I can, not press into God, take my chances that the Devil will not get me.”

The Devil may not get you with a disease to kill you, but I guarantee your soul will end up in bondage in various ways. The only way we can keep from losing ground is to take new ground. If you do not take new ground in the spirit, you will lose the ground you have.

IF YOU ARE NOT GOING FORWARD, YOU ARE BACKSLIDING

If you do not go forward, you will go backward. There is no neutral, time out zone in the spirit realm. The snare will be the despair of wanting just to quit. They cannot quit life. What they will do is just quit pressing into God in their despair. They will give up their intensity. It is just too hard. That is a snare. That snare is on many people right now. It is on many believers, and they have to stare at that challenge. They have to look at it, and they have to resist that part of the snare.

WE MUST NOT YIELD TO THE FEAR OF STANDING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

A third one: this is very difficult one. Number three, overcoming the fear of man in standing for righteousness. Standing for righteousness is going to be far more difficult. It is far more difficult today than it was twenty years ago as a preacher. With the media, everybody knows what all the

nations are doing. I am talking about the main policies, and it is moving toward globalization very rapidly. The policy and the culture, which are two different things, are all about toleration.

The policy meaning the laws will require toleration. It is more than just laws. It will be the culture. If you are not tolerant, you will be rejected, ridiculed, called a fanatic, and considered out of touch. You will be called an unloving person. It is not just that the laws will forbid standing for righteousness, but the culture and the environment will reinforce this; in those days, we will be ostracized for standing for righteousness. This will increase more and more. As a matter of fact, it is so different now than it was ten and twenty years ago. If you stand for righteousness right now, much of the Church will call it fanaticism, legalism, and extremism.

There is this false doctrine of grace that is pervasive. It is filling the land. This false doctrine of grace emboldens us to be comfortable in our compromise. That is not what the grace of God is meant to do. More and more, old and young alike are becoming casual with immorality, drunkenness, lack of zeal and passivity, and then they claim the grace of God and celebrate it. It is a total deception. It is a significant deception. It is in the charismatic church from one end to the other. It is in the evangelicals, the main line churches, and the Catholic Churches. It is everywhere. In 2009, taking a stand for red-hot Christianity will cause you to be ostracized in the Body of Christ. In ten or twenty years, it will be far more intense. The ridicule and the mocking that will come, even from believers, if you stand for truth will be outrageous. They will say, "Man, get with it! Are you not a man of the times? There is a new toleration. There is new broad thinking."

Jesus says, "No. Stand for My truth." This will be a snare for many believers; in the face of that snare, they will compromise. Maybe the despair thing will not touch them, or the immorality, and escalating sin, but this issue of their reputation and being ostracized by their Christian family will be the snare that they have to face.

WE MUST NOT BE OFFENDED AT GOD

I will give the fourth offense. There are several other categories, but this is enough to give you a feel for what is to come. Offense towards God: people are offended at the end times. I am talking about believers: they are offended at what God does, His judgments, and at what God does not do when He does not break in and help them in the way they think He should. I have talked to Christians regularly who say, "I am giving up on God."

I ask, "Why?"

They say, "Because He is not helping me." Beloved, if things are a problem with you and the Lord, do not give up on God. Do not put Him on trial. Focus on your own responsiveness and figure out where that is deficient, not where God's character is deficient. This will be the main issue for many believers. They will get angry with God. "I have served You all these years, and this is how You are ignoring me? This is how You are treating me? This is what You are doing? This is what You are not doing to help me." This is going to be a snare across the whole earth because more and more, the gospel is being presented as "things will go well for you in your life,

if you say yes to Jesus.” We sell Jesus by saying, “Things will go better in your life in this age, if you say yes to Jesus.” That is not the gospel. There are times in our lives when things go better, circumstances improve, and you grow under the favor of God. There are many men and women of God under the favor of God who end up in situations of great suffering; Paul the apostle was a pretty anointed guy and walked in the favor of God who ended up in prison. How did that happen? He has God’s favor, heavenly visitations, and he ends up in prison three to four times in the course of his ministry.

WE MUST STAND WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Roman numeral III. Top of page two. Let’s read Luke 21:36. Now, we are going to focus in on one of the exhortations. Jesus said in Luke 21:36: “Watch therefore, and pray always.” Here is what He says: “Pray always that you would be counted worthy to escape all these things”—or pray that you would be prepared, or you would be strengthened. Many translations put the word strengthened instead of the word worthy. Pray that you would be able, you would be worthy, and you would be strengthened. That is the idea of the request Jesus is making when He is urging them to pray. It is as if Jesus is saying, “Pray always that you would be strengthened to escape all of these things and to stand.” In other words, Jesus is praying that you would stand instead of stumble and that you would have victory, instead of compromise. On the other hand, we are praying for strength to escape. We are not going to escape the snare, or the challenge. We cannot escape the challenge. The challenge will be for all nations and all people, but we what we can escape is we can escape compromising before it. We can avoid yielding to the challenge in a negative way. That is what we are praying for, strength that when the challenge comes.

Whether it is escalating sin, lust, the fear of man, the distress of difficulty in life and the urge to quit, whatever the issue is, we will have strength to see through that trap. We will see it for what it is. We will have discernment to see it like God sees it. We will see though that trap. Then, we will have strength to respond rightly. That is what Jesus meant in Luke 21:36: “Pray that you would escape. You would see the trap for what it is.” Instead of being offended at God, you trust God. Instead of yielding to the fear of man, you take a bold stand, and you endure persecution. You see the trap through God’s eyes. You have discernment. Not just that, you have strength. You have Holy Spirit inspiration on your heart to follow through and to obey the Lord in victory.

STANDING, WE ESCAPE THE SNARE AND WALK IN THE FULLNESS OF GOD

It says in Ephesians 6:13: “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” There is that phrase again: able. You would be capable. You would be strengthened to stand in the evil day. The evil day, notice it is not an evil day. It is the evil day. The evil day is a reference, not just an hour of intense attack in any hour of history on a believer. You can apply that in a secondary way. A guy 1,000 years ago could go through an intense time and say, “Boy, I have entered the evil day.” In an individualistic sense, it is OK to apply the verse in that way. However, this verse means more than that. The evil day is depicting the final three and a half years before the Lord returns when the Antichrist is in power and sin is abounding.

In a secondary way, the evil day is anytime when the intensity of the warfare increases. That is a secondary application of that phrase. Paul said, “Take up the whole armor” (Eph. 6:13). The point is that you would be able. You would have strength—that in the presence of the snare or the evil day, you would be able to stand, meaning that you would not stumble.

Revelation 6:17: “For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” This is in the midst of the Great Tribulation. The wrath of God is breaking out. Here is the question of the hour when the wrath of God is breaking out in the nation. This is the sixth seal. The number one question in the earth is this, “Who can stand?” When John saw that in Revelation 6:17, Jesus could have responded, “John, remember sixty years ago right before I went to the cross, I gave you the answer of who can stand. If you take heed, watch, and pray always, you will have strength to escape the compromise that the snare brings.”

There are actually about five verses in the Bible that ask the question, who can stand or who can endure? Who can make it without stumbling is the question? That will be one of the primary questions in the nations. Who can make it without compromising or giving in? The answer is Luke 21:36: the people who pray always and watch. They pray for strength to stand. Those are the ones who will not compromise in the intensity of the evil day.

BY STANDING, WE WALK IN THE FULLNESS OF WHAT GOD ORDAINED

Paragraph B. Standing means not yielding, or not falling away, but standing is more than that. I have a bigger vision than just to not backslide. So do you. I want the fullness of what God has for my life in this age and the fullness of what He has for me in the age to come. I want the full reward and the full assignment in the age to come that He has called me to. That assignment in the age to come is linked to my responses during this age. It is not linked to our redemption and forgiveness, but our assignment in the age to come is linked to how we live our lives today. This is a biblical concept that you do not hear much about. Some of you—this is a new idea—and you are saying, “Huh? I thought that when you get to heaven, it was all on automatic pilot.”

Yes, your forgiveness is automatic pilot. Your resurrected body is guaranteed. Your citizenship to the city is guaranteed; however, the measure of reward and glory you carry is dependent on how you live in this age. Not everyone will have the same experience of glory in the age to come. What we will receive as rewards and even the measure of glory that we carry is dynamically related to our response in this age. Jesus is not just talking about avoiding falling away; He is actually talking about being able to stand before Him in the full responsiveness in order to receive the full reward. I have no doubt that this was on Jesus’ mind when He gives this exhortation. Paul talked about a believer suffering loss. He is talking about a believer now at the judgment seat of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:15: “If anyone’s work is burned up”—they are talking about standing before Jesus. They are saved, and they are in heaven. All of that is settled. They are standing before the Lord; their works, their responsiveness to the Lord in this age is being presented to the Lord. His eyes of fire look at it. He burns it all up. Those people suffer loss, but they themselves are saved. They are still born again. They still live in the city, but they suffered loss.

Beloved, I do not want to backslide. More than that, I do not want to suffer loss. I want to stand, not just with the assurance of salvation when the Lord appears. I want the assurance of my full reward, and the assurance of the full will of God for my life. The Lord says, “OK, you can have it. You have to know you are going to face an obstacle in history called ‘the snare.’ You have to face it, and respond to Me in the light of it.”

We might want to say, “Oh Lord, I am a weak man.”

Jesus might respond, “OK, that is not a problem. All of My people are weak. That is easy. If you will ask Me, I will strengthen you. If you do not ask Me, I will still strengthen you some, but I will strengthen you much more if you ask Me. If you will ask Me, you will escape yielding to the snare. You will escape stumbling before the snare.”

JESUS’ TWO-FOLD EXHORTATION: TAKE HEED, WATCH AND PRAY

Roman numeral IV: Jesus’ two-fold exhortation. Let’s read. Paragraph A: take heed to yourself. Luke 21:34: “But take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.” He gives three different categories in which to take heed: “carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life” (Lk. 21:34).

Jesus warns about our hearts getting weighed down, as then we will not be prepared. “That Day comes on you unexpectedly” (Lk. 21:34). What will happen is the Day of the Lord, or the end-time events will come upon you unexpectedly. The Lord will appear, and you will be unaware of what is happening because you are weighed down. Your spirit is dull, and your spirit is defiled as a believer. He is talking to believers here.

TAKE HEED TO YOURSELF: ACTIONS WITH OUR BODY AFFECTS OUR HEART

The thing that Jesus does first, which is obvious if you think about it, but some folks have never connected the dots when Jesus warns us that what you do with your body affects what happens in your heart. Jesus said, “take heed to yourself” (Lk. 21:34). It is as if Jesus is saying, “Understand, there is a dynamic connection.” What you do with your body determines the condition of your spirit. If you are involved in immorality or drunkenness with your body, your spirit will be defiled, and it will be weak. If you take heed to this, your spirit will not be weighed down. It will be vibrant, alive, alert, and powerful. We all know that what we do with our body affects our spirit. That is why this doctrine with the grace of God that basically says to believers, “Go out and do what you want to do. Do not be legalistic. Claim the grace of God.” It is thrusting you right into a lifestyle of a weighed down spirit that is weak and unable to stand before the great snare.

You can get a million people to vote on that doctrine and like it. It does not change the fact that you will end up with a weighed down spirit that is spiritually insensitive and spiritually dull. You will not feel the presence of God; you will not have hunger for the Word. You will not operate in the anointing of God in prayer. The Lord says, “Why? I had all those things for you. You did not pay attention to what you did with your body.”

CAROUSING (DISSIPATION), DRUNKENNESS, AND THE CARES OF THIS LIFE

He said, “Take heed to what you do.” He looks at three categories: the first one is carousing, though many translations use the word dissipation. That is a word we do not use so much. It means to dissipate your strength, or to lose your strength. Many different scholars are all in agreement with the general idea that carousing, or dissipation is the idea of being intemperate, or overindulgent with pleasure.

The translators say carousing, which is partying too much. That is not exactly. It is more than partying too much. It is an approach to life where we are intemperate, or indulgent. We are not restrained. We are just wanting to be stimulated. Some people, they want to be stimulated. They are just fixated on always being stimulated by media and entertainment. Others, it is what they put in their body. It is what they do, what they drink, or what they eat. They want to be stimulated in a way that is out of the will of God. Some of the stimulation is legitimate. It is legitimate to eat food. It is totally legitimate. To over indulge in it will weigh your spirit down. It is legitimate to have recreation. To over indulge in it will weigh your spirit down. That is what carousing is. If you read ten Bible translations, many of them will say dissipations. Others will use other words like sensual living, or over doing it in pleasure. It just means being overly stimulated. Whether it is media, what you eat, what you drink, or what you do. It is the whole realm of pleasure—low morals and standards in the way that you live.

A sub category of carousing is drunkenness. Jesus took that sub category and made it its own category. It is as if Jesus said, “I am going to take part of carousing and shine a light on it.” Drunkenness is a major problem in the earth today. It is a growing problem, equal only to the growth of pornography in the Church. Drunkenness and pornography is exploding in the Church. Jesus prophesied this 2,000 years ago by highlighting drunkenness as a major issue, telling you His opinion of this. Everybody who goes there has the logic, “I was not really drunk.” You cannot talk the Holy Spirit into something that the Holy Spirit does not believe. You can talk your friends into it, but the Holy Spirit does not buy it.

Jesus says, “Your spirit will be weighed down, if you go there. You will be dull, you will not have hunger, you will not connect to the Word, and you will not feel His presence in prayer.” It will get worse and worse instead of stronger and stronger. Jesus says, “Go the other way!” The other area was just the anxieties of life.

THE DAY MAY COME UNEXPECTEDLY LIKE A THEIF

Paragraph B. It is as if Jesus said, “If your heart gets weighed down, you lose your ability to perceive clearly. You will lose insight.” We will miss the Day of the Lord events, not just the Lord appearing in the sky, but all that is related to it, you will not be aware of it. It will not make sense to you. You will think, “That is just crazy fanaticism.” Even in the generation when it is clearly mounting up, people will not understand what is going on; their spirit is weighed down because of the way they live. Even though they love Jesus, they will miss the Day of the Lord.

JESUS' CALL TO WATCH AND PRAY IS THE MOST PRACTICAL THING TO DO

Paragraph C. We will end with this: the second exhortation. Jesus said in Luke 21:36: "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." I first read this command years ago to watch and pray. I think it is true that every single time Jesus talks about the end times as a subject, not just a brief reference, He says, "Pray and watch." Sometimes it is "watch and pray." Over the years, I have read that, and it really sticks out because of the calamity of the snare. You might say, "Jesus, You are really smart, and You are really a good pastor. What should I do?"

Jesus says back, "Watch and pray."

We would respond, "That is cool. What should I really do?"

Jesus would respond, "Watch and pray."

We would say, "OK, Lord. I have that. Come on. What practically should I do?" I have heard it for years, "What should we really do?"

In the number of times Jesus talked about the end times, that is what He said. He did not say store up guns. He did not say store up food. He did not say find your escape route ahead of time if trouble comes. He said that we must watch and pray. I remember years ago, when I connected with this, I said, "What is this about?" Then I tried to preach a message exhorting the people to "watch and pray." The congregation said, "Mike, be practical."

I said, "Hey, I am only quoting Him. He is the best pastor and that is what He said. That is what Jesus said to do." I was so surprised after I preached this how the vast majority of the people said, "That is pie in the sky stuff. I need something real."

It is as if Jesus would say, "You get connected to me. When the snare comes, you will have insight, you will have courage and strength sufficient to escape stumbling. If you do not get connected to Me, you can stock pile your guns, your food, and have your escape route all planned out. You will not be able to stand without falling."

The most practical thing Jesus could tell us, "Build a history of connectedness. If you watch and pray, you will build connectedness to Me. You will be alert, and the urgency will grow in you. Strength will grow in you, and you will be ready to stand."

The best thing you can do for another person is actually for you to watch and pray. What that person needs, that person whom you love, they do not just need you. They need you with courage and discernment. Because if they have good old you, filled with fear, backslidden in sin, with no discernment, you are going to be a more of a problem to them, rather than an answer. You are going to be convincing them what they should not be doing instead of telling them what the Spirit is doing. If you really love them, put yourself aside a minute. You do this for yourself, just put that aside.

If you really want to walk out love for people, get a burning heart and a heart of discernment. You will have the compass in the storm. You will have the map. You will have the compass in the storm. You will have clarity that the multitudes will need. Not just the clarity, as they will need your strength and your resolve. This is not just the most practical thing for you from Jesus. This is the most practical way for you to love other people. Build a bond fire in your spirit. When somebody tells you, “Give me something practical. That prayer thing—whatever. I want something practical.” I tell you that Noah’s wife was really glad Noah had that boat ready! “Noah, I thought it was a little odd! But praise God that you stayed with the boat.”

Amen, let’s stand.