

Introduction (Luke 22:24-38)

How many of you remember this famous quote, “I float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. Your hands can't hit what your eyes can't see” It was made by Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr., who changed his name to Mohammed Ali. Probably the boast that he was most famous for was his claim to be the greatest. After beating Sonny Liston, the heavyweight champion of the world, Ali said, “I am the greatest! I'm the greatest thing that ever lived. I don't have a mark on my face, and I upset Sonny Liston, and I just turned twenty-two years old. I must be the greatest.” Later on, he went a step further. He said, “I'm not the greatest; I'm the double greatest. Not only do I knock 'em out, I pick the round.”

Many years ago, I read the autobiography of Gary Player. He claimed to be the world's greatest golfer. In fact, in his book he said that he would look at himself in the mirror each morning and tell himself that he was the world's greatest golfer. The quest to be the greatest is common. In golf, is it Jack Nicklaus or Tiger Woods? In football, is Payton Manning or Tom Brady the greatest quarterback? In our text today, the apostles moved from a discussion of who it was that was going to betray Jesus to who among them was the greatest. It went from who was chump to who was champ. That is the setting of our message today.

(Luke 22:23-24) “And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing. {24} And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.”

We are in our fourth message of our Easter series. In the first message, as Jesus approached Bethphage and Bethany, suburbs of Jerusalem, people threw down their coats and shouted “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” But the Pharisees and Sadducees were not happy about this. They told Jesus to rebuke His disciples. Jesus tells them that if they became silent, the stones will cry out. Jesus is affirming His identity as the Messianic King to them. But, the Pharisees refused to acknowledge that Jesus was the Messiah.

(Luke 19:36-40) “As He was going, they were spreading their coats on the road. {37} As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, {38} shouting: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" {39} Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." {40} But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!"

After arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus made one last attempt to reach out to the Sadducees and Pharisees. He confronts the Sadducees about the resurrection of the dead. He confronts the Pharisees about the Messiah being Lord. In a nutshell, to be saved, we must believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, and we must confess Him as Lord. That was the gospel message Jesus gave to these religious leaders.

Last week, Donald shared how Jesus had the last supper with His disciples. He told them that one of them was going to betray Him. Even though He knew that He was going to be betrayed, He gave His body as a sacrifice for us. As we partake of the broken bread, we are to remember that He was broken for us. As we partake of the juice, we are to remember that it was His blood that established a new covenant with us.

The passage ended with the disciples discussing among themselves who it was that was going to betray Jesus. That discussion flowed into a discussion about which one of them was regarded to be the greatest. Then, Jesus gives some final instructions to the apostles.

First, Jesus speaks to them about their position. He speaks about taking a position of humility. Second, He talks about their provision. In His previous instructions, He told them not to take a money belt. Now, He instructs them to take a money belt. Finally, He talks about their protection. He tells them to sell their coat and buy a sword. Let's read the passage together.

Jesus' Final Instructions to the Apostles

1. Position
2. Provision
3. Protection

(Luke 22:25-38) "And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' {26} But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. {27} For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves. {28} You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; {29} and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you {30} that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. {31} Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; {32} but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. {33} But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" {34} And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me." {35} And He said to them, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." {36} And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. {37} For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment." {38} They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough."

1. Position

Both discussions that the apostles had were rooted in pride. When they discussed which one it would be who was going to betray Jesus, it looked like pride. "I would never do such a thing. Who would do such a terrible thing?" They were all too proud to acknowledge that all of us have betrayed Jesus at one point or another. When they discussed who was regarded as the greatest, it revealed pride. They needed a position of humility rather than a platform of pride.

(Luke 22:23) "And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing."

Jesus tells the apostles that "the kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are called Benefactors. But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant." **The apostles needed**

to take the position of a servant or of the youngest. God was calling these future leaders of the church to be servant leaders. Leaders need to serve not Lord over God's people. It is very different than worldly leadership.

(Luke 22:25-26) "And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' {26} But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant."

When we do work with Saudi Arabia, this principle becomes very evident. People keep passing off their work to those under them, rather than doing it themselves. Each person that is assigned the work looks for someone underneath him, and passes the work on to him. They lord over those under them, and it takes forever to get things done.

Peter writes about this same principle in his instructions to pastors. He tells pastors to shepherd the flock of God, not by lording over those allotted to their charge, but to be examples to the flock. **Pastors are to serve the flock and be examples to them.** Pastors have oversight and responsibility, and must give account to God, but they must lead by example and by serving.

(1 Pet 5:2-3) "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; {3} nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

Although, Luke does not elaborate on everything that has taken place that evening, it would be helpful to give some context to what Jesus is saying. In John 13, we find that Jesus got up from the supper, laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. Then, He poured water into the basin and began washing the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. When someone invited others over to their house, the servant of lowest rank, or the youngest person in the house would be given the dirty task of washing everyone's feet.

(John 13:3-5) "Jesus... {4} got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. {5} Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."

He tells the apostles that they were to be like the youngest and like the servant. Then, He said, "for who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves." Jesus had got up from the table and served them. He had become like the youngest and like the servant. He had not lorded over them, and demanded that they wash His feet. Instead, He humbled Himself and stripped down, girded Himself with a towel and washed their feet.

(Luke 22:26-27) "But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. {27} For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves."

Jesus set an example for His apostles to follow. In fact, Jesus said to the apostles that if He, the Lord

and Teacher, washed their feet, they ought to wash one another's feet. He concludes, "for I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you." Jesus gave all of us an example to follow. We are not to lord over people, but we are to wash one another's feet and serve one another. This was the context of our passage today where he tells them to be like the youngest and the leader like the servant.

(John 13:14-15) "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. {15} For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you."

Next, Jesus talks about their ultimate position. He said that they have stood by Him in His trials and they are going to be granted to eat and drink at His table in His kingdom. He tells them that they will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. That is a very high position. But, their position here on earth, is to take the position of the youngest, and of the servant. They will be rewarded for their service, but their focus now needs to be on humbly serving other people.

(Luke 22:28-30) "You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; {29} and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you {30} that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Next, Jesus talks to them about being sifted like wheat. In verse thirty-one that Jesus says, "Simon, Simon, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Peter replies that he is ready to go both to prison and to death. Jesus then tells him that the rooster will not crow today until he has denied that he knows Jesus three times.

(Luke 22:31-34) "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; {32} but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. {33} But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" {34} And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."

As I was studying this passage, I learned that this is written in the plural form. In English, "you" can be either plural or singular. But, in many languages, there are separate words. For example, in French, we say tu vas for "you go" singular, and vous allez for "you go" plural. The pronouns and the verbs have different forms for you singular or you plural, so it is easier to know when it is talking about singular or plural. Jesus is not saying that only Peter will be sifted like wheat. Satan has demanded permission to sift all of these apostles like wheat. Satan wanted to destroy the faith of all these future leaders. They were all going to be attacked and sifted like wheat. And, I don't believe that Peter is the only one that is going to deny Christ. He just happened to be the most outspoken one of the group. He was the group leader. He was going to be sifted and tested, but the rest were also going to be tested.

The sifting of wheat is a process. **The first step in the sifting process is to thresh the wheat.** The stalks of wheat are laid down and then beat with a flail. This loosens the kernels of wheat from the stalks. **Second, the wheat is winnowed.** In the winnowing process the stalks are shaken and thrown up into the air. With the help of a breeze or wind, the lighter chaff is blown away and the heavier wheat kernels fall to the ground or into a sieve. The purpose of sifting the wheat is to separate the

wheat from the chaff. **Sifting separates that which is useful from that which is not useful.**

Satan demanded permission to sift the apostles like wheat. His goal and objective was to destroy the future leaders. God allowed the sifting to take place because He wanted to prove the faith of the apostles, and to remove the chaff from their lives. He wanted to remove the pride and arrogance, and other chaff that would keep them from ministering effectively. God works all things together for good in our lives. **God allows and uses some difficult things in our lives to work out His character in our lives.** In this case, Satan had demanded permission to sift them like wheat, and God was going to allow it so that they could be used later on to strengthen others.

Peter wrote about this sifting process. He said that we are distressed by various trials so that the proof of our faith, which is more precious than gold which is perishable, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Peter had been distressed by various trials, and his faith had been proved. He was writing from experience.

(1 Pet 1:6-7) “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, {7} so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Jesus tells Peter that after he returns, he will strengthen the brethren. They were all discussing who this chump was that was going to deny Christ. Something like this was beneath any of them; they would never do such a thing. And Jesus plainly tells Peter that he will deny Christ three times before a cock crows. Jesus was going to allow them to be beaten, shaken, and sifted so that this chaff was removed from the wheat in their lives.

Jesus tells Peter that once he returns, he will strengthen the brethren. Before Peter could strengthen others, he had to have a spirit of humility, gentleness, and know that he too could be tempted. Look at what Paul says in Galatians 6:1. “If anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.” If Peter was going to be able to strengthen the brethren, he had to do it in a spirit of gentleness and humility. He had to come to grips with the fact that he too could be tempted. **Jesus allowed Peter to be sifted like wheat because He wanted the humility and brokenness that was going to be produced in Peter through this experience.** Peter was going to be far more usable as a result of this sifting.

(Gal 6:1) “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”

In December 1999, Bob Brown, the pastor of Zion Hills Baptist Church, gave me a book called *Preaching Through The Storm*. At that same time, I did a message out of Acts 27 on the storm and shipwreck that Paul experienced. Within a very short time, we had lots of things happen. My oldest son was delivering a pizza and he was using my Ford F-150 pickup. He looked down at the address and before he could look up, he had a head on collision with a lady driving a Jeep Cherokee. They were both going 45 mph and somehow they both survived. My F-150 did not survive. It was towed to the car graveyard. Two hours after my son called me to come pick him up, my second oldest daughter called me. She had taken our family car to south Georgia and was on her way home. As she

came over a hill, and Georgia is quite hilly, there was a line of cars piled up. She and six other vehicles behind her all crashed into the line of cars. Our Buick LeSabre was also totaled, and got towed to the car graveyard. I did not have collision on either vehicle, so it was a big blow.

In that same time period, but not that day, our the brother of our worship leader, who said he was a prophet, sowed rebellion in our flock. He spread false teachings. He gave slanderous reports to the leaders of the network we were a part of. He, along with our worship leader, decided that the church needed a new pastor. They called a secret meeting and decided to hire another pastor. They tried to hire a pastor named Craig Torell, who was a friend of mine. Craig told me of what was going on.

That same week, I was driving home from the prison where I served as a Chaplain. I called Karen on my cell phone to let her know I was on my way home. It was Friday night, and we had a date planned that night. She told me that she had taken the children to Kaiser Permanente to have their school physicals done, and that the doctor wanted us to come in that evening and discuss one of the results. So, instead of going on a date, we went to the Kaiser Medical facility on Chastain Road.

The doctor did not waste any time telling us that the blood work for Kathleen showed that she had leukemia. He wanted us to take her to the hospital immediately. I told him that we would have a family meeting that night and take her in first thing Saturday morning. The test results showed that she had AML leukemia, and at that time they did not have a cure for it. They gave her three to eight weeks to live.

Karen was pregnant with Chad and could not be around the chemo-therapy that Kathleen began taking. So, I stayed in the Children's Hospital with Kathleen. The rest of the family came there in the evening and we shared meals together, but I spent the nights with her. I kept preaching on Sundays for a few more weeks, but then I told our church that I was going to have to step down from being the pastor. We belonged to a network of churches called Kingdomquest. They offered to have a pastor come weekly and preach, counsel, and pastor the congregation until I was able to return. Our congregation rejected this offer. We ended up closing down the church and helping many of the members find new church homes. We went to the Cobb Vineyard. I also resigned from Cobb County Adult Detention Center. They were sad to have me leave. The other chaplains and the inmates all loved and appreciated my ministry. I had worked so hard planting the church, and my prison ministry was very fruitful. We were seeing so many men receive Christ and being transformed. Shutting down both my ministries was death to a vision.

We had lots of judgment and condemnation from church folks. They judged us for our eating habits, even though they did not know that we grew a lot of our own fruits and vegetables. They judged us without realizing that Karen baked our bread from scratch. They judged us for sins, but they could not name any. They accused us of lacking faith and other things. But, through this sifting we learned how to better minister to others who are suffering.

There were financial misfortunes. My Merrill Lynch broker told me to sell some of my stocks and put it into Intel. I followed his counsel and lost 50% of my investment within a few weeks. Later on, Merrill Lynch lost a law suit over this. They were telling their clients to buy the stocks that they themselves were selling. It was a major scandal, and Merrill Lynch never recovered from it. The major funds received some compensation from Merrill Lynch, but individuals like me did not recoup any of our losses. In addition to these, our expenses went up astronomically. The first month of Kathleen's treatment, I had three thousand dollars of prescription costs that the insurance did not

cover. Our cash and money market accounts went down quickly. Then, the financial markets collapsed, and when I cashed out many of our investments, we got pennies on the dollars. We were being shaken in every way possible.

We were not alone. The presence of God was very strong. I was hearing from the Lord. I was writing updates on Kathleen and teaching articles that were being circulated around the world. The Lord was with us in the storm. And, He spoke many things to me. He told me that this was not a sickness unto death, but was for His glory. He gave me a promise out of Psalm 41 that He was going to restore Kathleen. He gave me a lot of revelation about many things. His presence was so dear. And, He also spoke to me out of our passage today, that Satan had demanded permission to sift me like wheat, and that after I had returned, He would use me to strengthen the brethren. Wow. I did not know how long it would last or when I would be used again, but I held fast to His promise that He was going to use me again to strengthen the brethren. Over the next ten years, I was faithful to serve in many ways in several congregations. People thought I was doing a lot, but I felt like I was on the shelf. It was not until God called us to plant the East Mountain Vineyard that I felt the promise had been fulfilled.

If you and I are going to be used to restore people, we must have a spirit of gentleness and humility. The pride that arrogantly says, who would do such a thing, will repel people from being ministered to by them. The pride that arrogantly denies that they too can be tempted will end up falling into sin and will do more harm than good. You and I must have a spirit of gentleness and humility if we are going to minister to other people. We must have the position of a servant or the youngest.

2. Provision

The second thing that Jesus spoke to His disciples was about their provision. He said to them, "when I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one." Jesus is referring back to when He sent them out in Luke 9. Why did He give them a new set of instructions? As I prayed and meditated on this passage, I came up with four reasons to take a money belt.

(Luke 22:35-36) "And He said to them, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." {36} And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one."

Four Reasons To Take A Money Belt

1. **Training Program.** Jesus taught them through the earlier ministry trips to trust God as they went, rather than their own resources. God has taken me through some circumstances where He has taught me to trust Him with my finances. He is reminding me of His provision right now as our company that I manage is going through a very difficult season. When my son went through survival training in the Marines, he was taught how to get along without anything. But, that training was for emergency purposes. They took rations (MREs) with them, but they knew how to survive without them. The training program for the apostles was over and they are now to take their MREs with them.

2. Cultural Differences. When Jesus sent out the apostles in Luke 9, they were ministering to Jews. The Jewish culture was to bring strangers into their home. Now, they were going to both the Jews and the Gentiles. In the Gentile world, this culture of hospitality did not exist. The apostles needed to have money for their provision.
3. Pure Motives. Third, in their ministries, it was important for people to know that they were not there for money or other selfish motives. In the passage to pastors in 1 Peter t, Peter tells pastors not to shepherd the flock for sordid gain. Pastors should not pastor for the sake of financial gain. We are not in the ministry for money. We are in ministry to see lives changed. We should pastor because we are passionate and eager to pastor.

(1 Pet 5:2) “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;”

4. Example. Fourth, I believe that they to take their money bags with them so that they would not be a burden to those that they ministered to. Paul said that he ate nobody’s bread without paying for it. He worked day and night in order to be an example to the Thessalonians. But Paul did receive contributions from churches. He thanked the Philippians for helping him preach the gospel in other places. He specifically mentions how they supported him while he was in Thessalonica. He preached it for free to the Thessolonicians, but it was not free. He was being supported by the Philippians. We support John Dean, Colt Prehm, and other ministers doing God’s work. The Philippians had a bigger vision than just the local church; they were kingdom minded.

(1 Thess 2:9) “For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.”

(2 Thess 3:7-9) “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, {8 nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; {9} not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.”

(Phil 4:15-18) “You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; {16} for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. {17} Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. {18} But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.”

So, Jesus gives new instructions to the apostles. Now, they are to take a money belt with them, and He also tells them to take a bag. That bag would include a change of clothes, shoes, etc. They were to take along their necessary provisions. **The apostles understood that God was the source of all their needs, but they needed to make financial preparations for their ministry work.**

3. Protection

The third and final thing that Jesus speaks to the apostles about is their protection. He tells them that they were to sell their coat and buy a sword. The traditional view of this verse is that Jesus was telling them that they were going to be in a hostile environment and needed to be on guard. He was going to be arrested, beaten, and killed. They were going to be martyred also. While I believe it is true that they were going into a hostile environment, I do not believe they were to get swords. I do not believe He is speaking of literal swords. I believe Jesus is speaking of spiritual swords. **Jesus was speaking to the apostles about spiritual protection and armor.**

(Luke 22:36b-38) "...and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. {37} For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment." {38} They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough."

Notice that a little later, the chief priests and soldiers come to arrest Him. Peter drew his sword and cut the ear off of Malchus, the slave of the high priest.

(John 18:10) "Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus."

Luke records that Jesus puts the ear back on the slave and heals him. I think that this is remarkable. They have come with soldiers to arrest Jesus and put Him to death. The high priest's slave has his ear cut off, and Jesus touches his ear and heals it. To me, if that was my slave, I would have to wonder what in the world am I doing having this man arrested and put to death. He has just miraculously healed my servant. He has just confirmed His identity as the Messiah with a sign and wonder, and the High Priest is not even phased by this. It is remarkable.

(Luke 22:51) "But Jesus answered and said, "Stop! No more of this." And He touched his ear and healed him."

In Matthew's account, Jesus said to Peter, "put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword." I believe this supports my view that Jesus was not instructing them to take up swords and defend themselves. He was talking figuratively about swords.

(Matt 26:52-53) "Then Jesus *said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. {53} "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

A coat is for physical protection from the elements. Jesus was using the physical to describe the spiritual. He was not telling them to literally get swords. They needed to put on spiritual armor for spiritual protection. The apostles were to put on the full armor of God, which included a two-edged sword. The word of God is a two-edged sword, a very sharp sword at that. People in the ministry need to be men and women of the word. Notice in Ephesians 6 that Paul instructs us to put on the full armor of God, so that we will be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. He says that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Jesus was not concerned about physical protection from physical enemies. He was trying to get the apostles to understand that they are in spiritual warfare and need to have spiritual armor on for spiritual

protection. Jesus has been the one sweating drops of blood as He prayed intensely. While the disciples have been sleeping, Jesus is the one who has been praying. When He sent them out to minister, they were watching Satan fall like lightning, but Jesus is the one who was getting up early and going to a lonely place and praying. Now, they need to take up their full armor and begin to wage spiritual warfare.

(Eph 6:11-13) “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. {12} For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. {13} Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”

The spiritual armor included the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. I believe that this is the sword that Jesus is instructing His disciples to arm themselves with.

(Eph 6:17) “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

The war that we are in is not according to the flesh, and **the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses**. The sword that Jesus was referring to was not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. It was the word of God.

(2 Cor 10:3-4) “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, {4} for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”

When I left professional golf, the Lord told me to trade in my old tools for new tools. Therefore, I took all my golf clubs to a local golf shop. I was able to sell much of it. I gave away the rest of it. I took the proceeds, several thousand dollars, and invested them in Bible study tools. There was an apostle in Dallas named Thurlow Switzer, and I went to him and asked him to make recommendations for me. Thurlow’s house was literally a library. He had rooms full of bookcases with study tools. He gave me a priority list of tools to purchase, which I did. Now, most of my study tools are contained in my Bible software. Jesus was telling the apostles to trade in their coats for swords. They needed to be men of the word if they were going to effectively minister to people.

Conclusion

This was not the first time that Jesus had given His disciples this message. This was not the first time the apostles had argued about which one of them was the greatest. In Luke 9, He gave them the same message. He told them to be like a child. He told them to be the least. Jesus was reminding them that they needed to humbly serve as the future leaders of the church. Jesus was reminding them about bringing their own provision, and not to depend on others for their provision. This was not their first exposure to spiritual warfare. This was simply a reminder of His instructions to them about position, provision, and protection.

What about you and I this morning? What is your position? Are you concerned about being the greatest, or double greatest, or have you taken the position of a servant? Have you found a place of

ministry in the church? God has given each of us unique gifts and has called all of us to humbly serve one another. What area of ministry are you humbly serving in? God tells us in His word that we will not come to maturity until every joint supplies. Find a place to serve and begin to serve.

(Eph 4:15-16) “but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, {16} from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

What about provision? How is your provision? Do you need prayer for provision? Do you need a job? Or, are you working and need God’s blessings on your work? If you want someone to join with you in praying for your provision, we would love to pray for you in this area.

What about protection? Have you been under attack? Let me say just a couple more remarks about spiritual warfare. First, spend some time reading and meditating on the passage in Ephesians 6 on the armor of God. I just touched on it today. You will find that **prayer is a big part of spiritual warfare**. We need to pray and petition at all times. We need to pray with our minds, and we need to pray in the Spirit.

(Eph 6:18) “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,”

Second, spend some time meditating on James 4:7. Personally, I believe that submission to authority is a real problem in our culture today. I also believe that it is a problem in the church. James tells us that we need to submit therefore to God, resist the devil and he will flee from us. If you believe you are under spiritual attack, take cover in God. Make sure that you are properly submitted to God in every area of your life. Are you submitted to the spiritual authorities in your life? Make sure that you are submitted to the authorities he has put in your life. Then, begin to resist the devil with prayer and the word of God.

(James 4:7) “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Part of church membership is committing yourself to a local body. It is committing yourself to take the position of a servant and to serve. Part of it is receiving spiritual provision and nurturing. Part of it is submitting to the body and to the leaders in a church, and coming under proper spiritual protection. If God has led you to be a part of this body, let me encourage you to become a functioning member of this body.

Let’s pray.

Introduction (Luke 22:23-38, 19:36-40)**1. Position** (Luke 22:23-34)

- The apostles needed to take the position of a _____ or of the youngest. (Luke 22:25-26)
- Pastors are to serve the flock and be _____ to them. (1 Pet 5:2-3, John 13:3-5, Luke 22:26-27, John 13:14-15)
- The apostles will be rewarded for their service, but their focus needed to be on humbly _____ others. (Luke 22:28-30)
- The apostles were going to be _____ like wheat.
- The first step in the sifting process is to _____ the wheat.
- The second step is for the wheat to be _____.
- Sifting separates that which is _____ from that which is not _____.
- God allows and uses some difficult things in our lives to work out His _____ in our lives. (1 Pet 1:6-7)
- Jesus allowed Peter to be sifted like wheat because He wanted the _____ and _____ that was going to be produced in Peter through this experience. (Gal 6:1)

2. Provision (Luke 22:35-36, 1 Thess 2:9, 2 Thess 3:7-9, Phil 4:15-18)

- The apostles understood that God was the source of all their needs, but they needed to make financial _____ for their ministry work.

3. Protection (Luke 22:36-38, 22:51, John 18:10, Matt 26:52-53)

- Jesus was speaking to the apostles about _____ protection and armor. (Eph 6:11-13)
- The spiritual armor included the sword of the Spirit, which is the _____ . (Eph 6:17)
- The _____ of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. (2 Cor 10:3-4)

Conclusion and Applications (Eph 4:15-16, James 4:7, Heb 13:17)

- _____ is a big part of spiritual warfare. (Eph 6:18)

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