



Sanctified Thought: Debunking A Video Hoax

Applying Biblical
Principles to Theology
of Risk and Safety and
Security

Scott Brawner
Concilium President

Sanctified Thought:

Debunking A Video Hoax-- Applying Biblical Principles to Theology of Risk and Safety and Security

I was sent this [video](#) by a person saying: “Look at God’s faithfulness!” (direct video link here: <https://www.facebook.com/shaun.nel.927/videos/625968134170247/?pnref=story>).

Well, there is a problem with this video: It is FAKE!

Analysis:

To be clear, I do not know the hearts –or the intent—of those who made this video. But if the makers of this video are attempting to glorify God by showing His faithfulness toward His people through a manufactured production of a near-death experience, they are failing miserably. Why? Because the video is a lie. From fake guns to fake gunshots, the entire scene is fabricated.

The truth is God can, and often does, protect his people in deadly encounters. However, the makers of this video are setting up a false expectation for God’s protection. I am afraid that videos like these are encouraging reckless behavior by blindly walking into dangerous situations expecting God to protect them. Sadly, this is often when terrible things happen—in the name of Jesus no less.

I have no doubt that God can rescue His people--and He does so in diverse ways every day. However, God is not the author of confusion, and videos like these can cause confusion portraying God working in a way that He may not intend to work. Worse, the confusion caused by these kinds of videos may well cause naive brothers and sisters to take unnecessary risks that God never intended them to take.

What Does Jesus Say?

Jesus Himself made it clear that we are to not only count the cost of discipleship spiritually; Jesus also expects us to shrewdly gauge the risks involved with service to our Lord. In Matthew 10:16-23, Jesus gave at least six broad guidelines in developing strategies for mitigating risk; both for individuals and organizations. Let us look at the principles Jesus himself laid down in Matthew 10 for mitigating risk and juxtapose often spiritualized (yet misguided) security philosophies of Christians who often misunderstand God’s intentions for making His name known in the nations through His people.

1. Matthew 10:16a

- a. **What Jesus Said:** “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.”
- b. **What Jesus DID NOT Say:** “I am sending you as sheep to the wolves.”
- c. **Godly Guidance:** Being sent as sheep to the wolves would have an entirely different contextual meaning. It would mean that God intentionally sent them out to be obliterated for His glory. That is not the case at all. Christians are likened to sheep in their service for the purpose of love, humility, mercy, and meekness. But, as the rest of

this passage will reveal, being sent with the perspective of a sheep is different from thinking like a sheep...

2. Matthew 10:16b

- a. **What Jesus Said:** “Therefore, be as shrewd as serpents but innocent as doves.”
- b. **What Jesus DID NOT Say:** “Therefore, blindly trust and go with no concern for your lives.”
- c. **Godly Guidance:** Undoubtedly Jesus has called us to go! But in that call, He commands us to be wise in how we go. Moreover, we are to be wise in our dealings as we “count the cost” (Luke 14:28) so that we can indeed finish what we start in our service to the Lord. This includes counting the cost of the risk to ourselves as well as the Gospel message. It also means knowing the difference between martyrdom and dying as collateral damage...

3. Matthew 10:17

- a. **What Jesus Said:** “Be on your guard.”
- b. **What Jesus DID NOT Say:** “Ignore your circumstances and situation and just “trust Me.”
- c. **Godly Guidance:** Jesus expects us to use the wisdom and common sense He has given us to protect ourselves through the use of such godly principles like preparation, anticipation, and inclination to mitigate and abate tangible threats to ourselves and others. Jesus never tells us to blindly enter a situation with our “eyes wide shut” and walk into a vulnerable situation. It is good to remember that “be on your guard” today could well be translated as “use good situational awareness.” Jesus was right!

4. Matthew 10:22

- a. **Jesus Said:** “Stand firm to the end.”
- b. **What Jesus DID NOT Say:** “Follow your heart...”
- c. **Godly Guidance:** In a world today where Christians are so often driven by their desire of their “hearts,” God calls us to practice the principles of the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) and stand firm in our faith by building godly resilience both spiritually and practically. Spiritually, we are called to love God with not just our hearts (our emotions), but also in our soul, and our strength (the practical side of building a strong orthodoxy and orthopraxy). This resilience allows us as Christians to bear up under the pressure of the enemy and the world. Similarly, in our service to God, we must build measures of principled resilience based on wisdom, intelligence, security collaboration, and acumen as we serve the Lord in locations that are challenging the presence of God’s people.

5. Matthew 10:23

- a. **What Jesus Said:** “When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another.”
- b. **What Jesus DID NOT Say:** “Stay put until the end.”
- c. **Godly Guidance:** Jesus’ guidance here is one of stewardship. When believers face persecution, Jesus tells them to be good stewards of the Gospel and seek to carry the Good News to a place where it can flourish. This is actually a very pragmatic and intentionally practical. Remember the Gospel goes forward because of persecution; not in spite of it! Sadly, sometimes WCEs confuse what it means to “stand firm to the end” (Matthew 24:13) with “staying put to the end.” These two are not equal! When persecution (or even the threat of persecution) comes, often it is better for WCEs to leave an area for a season and let the threat pass over. Then they can return and continue their ministry in power. Sadly, sometimes the words of the spiritual “I shall not be moved” are taken way out of context to the detriment of the Gospel and God’s people. Remember, be shrewd as a serpent in these matters and be a good steward of what God has given you!

6. Matthew 10:26:

- a. **What Jesus said:** “Do not be afraid.”
- b. **What Jesus DID NOT Say:** “Ignore the article of your fear.”
- c. **Godly Guidance:** You cannot have courage without fear. If you have no fear, there is no reason for courage! When God appointed Joshua leader of the Jewish nation by God after the death of Moses, God repeatedly told Joshua “be strong and courageous” (Joshua 1:6-7). Why would God tell Joshua twice to have courage? Because Joshua had much fear for the job ahead! God does not tell us to ignore our fear; He tells us to be strong trust Him through our fear. Remember, fear is not necessarily a dreadful thing; fear can save your life. That is why we do not ignore fear; we acknowledge it and lay our fear at the feet of the Lord and seek His guidance. God NEVER tells us to ignore our fears or be blind to the article causing of our fear. This is where we trust God, count the cost (often that means a risk/threat assessment or cost/benefit analysis) and move only in obedience trusting in the sovereignty of God as we go.

Conclusion

Can God save His people? YES! God is sovereign and he is faithful. But God, through His word, lets us know that there is a very real and tangible place where eternal sovereignty meets personal responsibility. EVERY believer needs to understand this based on the guidance of the Savior in Matthew 10. The Lord gave us these scriptures for a reason. Remember the admonition of Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16 that: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” The Lord intends for these maxims to be both spiritual AND practical. What does this

mean for the sanctified watchman on the wall of their respective organization? It means that YOU can speak with biblical authority into the lives of those you are charged to protect, as God has appointed you the responsibility of the sanctified watchman (Ezekiel 33:1-6).

Finally, please allow me to leave you with other key scripture verses that speak to God's protection from evil. May they strengthen and encourage you as they have me:

- Isaiah 41:10, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."
- Isaiah 54:17, "No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD."
- Psalm 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."
- Psalm 91:1-3, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence."
- Psalm 121:7-8, "The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. 8 The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore."
- 2 Timothy 4:18, "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."