



# Scripture in Action



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## Vol. 3 No. 1 – The Old Man in Prague – Introduction

Each instalment of *Scripture in Action* will introduce a contemporary scenario, sometimes real, sometimes based on real events, sometimes hypothetical. You then will be asked questions such as “What would you do next?” In answering these questions, reflect on how Scripture can inform and influence your response. Later in the magazine, there will be a short discussion in which I shall present possible answers and the Scriptural basis for my answers. Will we agree?

## Vol. 3 No. 1 – The Old Man in Prague – Part 1

Some years ago, I was holidaying in Central Europe with my mother, and we were enjoying a stay in Prague. Looming over the Old Town and Wenceslas Square, on the other side of the River Vlatva, the Prague Castle complex stretches up a hill, with the Castle itself, St Vitus Cathedral and many smaller structures.

Most visitors access the Castle complex from the Old Town by crossing the River Vlatva via the famous Charles Bridge. On this particular day, my mother and I were exiting the Castle complex via the rear into some residential streets to walk to a tram stop.

Just after leaving the Castle complex there was a small triangle of land formed by the street layout that had been left as a plain grass reserve. There in the middle of the reserve was an elderly man lying prostrate on the ground and not moving. We looked around, and not a single soul could be seen in any of the surrounding streets.

My mother and I were strangers in a country whose language we could not speak. The country was not much more than a decade released from the tyranny and mindset of the Soviet bloc. If the old man were dead, or if he had been physically attacked, or even if he just had suffered a medical episode, any involvement with the authorities would likely have been a fraught experience.

Situations such as these are also often used as subterfuges to prey on visitors like us. The old man could be a decoy to lure us into a distraction, only to find ourselves set upon by a gang hiding nearby. The old man himself may have been armed with a knife and seeking to rob us directly.

What would you have done?

### **Vol. 3 No. 1 – The Old Man in Prague – Part 2**

The Scripture most relevant here is obvious. My mother and I were players in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). We could have turned on our heels and gone back into the Castle complex. We could have pretended not to see the old man and hurried off down a side street. But then we would have been the priest or the Levite in the Parable. Our Christian duty was to be the Samaritan.

But Scripture encourages prudence in such matters. Proverbs 22:3 (repeated as Proverbs 27:12) advises, “The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.” I positioned my mother near whence we came, with instructions to not look at me or the old man, but instead to look at all the surrounds and to yell if any people suddenly appeared. Meanwhile, I slowly approached the man from a direction where he would see me if he were conscious.

These simple precautions do not guarantee safety, of course. But we are reminded constantly in Scripture that, when you are doing God’s Will as revealed by Jesus Christ, then he will “have your back”. Psalm 121 (‘A song of ascents’) is always worth keeping in mind. I wrote about Psalm 121 in the booklet "Psalms – Reflections for Lent" by Henley-Fulham Uniting Church 2022. Then there’s Romans 8:31, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” or Hebrews 13:6, “So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’” or Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

The old man was conscious, and through a charade of hand and arm gestures, I was able to discern that he was unhurt and had simply tumbled over and was now unable to get himself up. I assisted to right him, and with some Czech words that I hope was a thank you, he toddled off.

We too toddled off and caught our tram.

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