The Watchful Christian

Scriptural watchfulness has three directions to it—upward to God, inward to our spiritual condition, and outward to our environment. It is to watch for God as David did when he said he watched for God in prayer more than they that watch for the morning (Psa. 130:6). It is to look with patient, loving attention for fresh revelations of the character of God, of new openings of His Word, of clear intimation of His will.

It is also a devout, intelligent outlook for the fulfillment of prophecy, for occasions of Divine intelligence in the affairs of men. It is to keep the telescope of holy vigilance sweeping the heavens of God's grace and providence like the wise men who were on the lookout for the star of Bethlehem. It has been said, "He that notes a special providence will never lack a special providence to note." It is wonderful how people find what they look for, and holy watchfulness toward God will find Him where foolish indifference sees only blank space.

A watchful Christian will keep guard over his own inner spirit. He will notice the uprising of every disposition, of the trend of his thoughts, and of the choice of his will, and of his words, and the tones of his voice, and of his manners. He will not only watch his actions, but under the swift and beautiful guidance of the Holy Spirit he will perceive the very essence and spirit that flow out in the actions and words. This is what the Lord means when saying, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

Holy vigilance must also guard our environment and be on the lookout for the approaches of Satan in multiplied forms, and keep on the alert for escaping all evil, and doing all the good we can, to see and seize the golden opportunities that an infinite providence brings to us. This is the range of a Bible sentinel. It may seem like a tiresome task, but if the soul is flooded with divine love it will not only be easy but a chosen occupation of the chastened and sanctified intellect.

The condition for watchfulness is that of great quietness of spirit. Flurry of heart, agitation of spirit, or gloomy, despondent foreboding, or terrified feelings of alarm, or a fatigued spirit of legalism that drags itself in the service of God—all unfit a soul for watchfulness.

Quietness Of Spirit

God's watchers in the darkness of this present age need great stillness of spirit, or they will fail to see the things they are appointed to observe. Many Christians are so filled with bustle and noise and hurry and excitement and fret and criticism and scheming and everlasting talkativeness—they cannot detect the gentle voice of God or the soft cooing of the Heavenly dove or the footsteps of the coming King. Neither can they know what is going on in their own hearts.

Once I was praying one Lord's Day morning with a congregation, and I was just about to utter a certain word in prayer. But as I was in a calm state of mind, quick as thought the Holy Spirit flashed into my mind that such a word might sound severe or inappropriate, and He gave me another word. He also prompted me to slightly drop and soften the tone of my voice as I led the prayer.

Almost immediately I felt a strong sense of God's presence, and when the "Amen" was said, and the congregation arose, I found scores of people had been melted to tears during the prayer. I learned from this that if we are still in our hearts before God and our minds are thoughtful and calm, it is the most favorable condition for receiving gentle intimations from God, and also the best conditions for being channels of grace to others.

Watchfulness is to become a heavenly habit of mind. It is not an instantaneous blessing like pardon or cleansing. It is a habitual attitude of the mind which we must choose and cultivate. It is that state of the spiritual understanding referred to by Paul (Philippians 1:9-10) where he prays that the love of God may so abound in us that our knowledge and judgment and mental senses may be flooded with holy love that we may be able to discern the things that are excellent. It is to have a mind soaked in Divine grace.

Watching For Jesus To Come

This habit of Heavenly watchfulness is the attitude of the soul for meeting Jesus when He comes. It is to a real watchful believer that Christ reveals the things concerning His second coming and millennial reign. It is watchfulness of spirit that fills its vessel with oil and trims its lamp, and keeps ready for that long expected but
swiftly hastening hour, when the cry shall ring through the earth, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him!" (Matt. 25:6)

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