

# Watch and Pray

---

Pentecost 2014

Just what did Jesus mean when he said, “Watch”? Most of us understand what is meant by pray, but it seems that many seem not to understand his real intentions when he tells us to watch. Jesus often used the word pray in connection with the word watch. Brethren this subject has everything to do with whether we will have the faith and courage to stand up for righteousness when we are tried, or whether we will weakly succumb to Satan and sin.

All of God’s saints know that God loves us, but he will also allow us all to be tried and tested. Like the apostle James taught; God does not tempt anyone, but we are tempted by our own carnal weakness and lust (James 1: 13-15). However, for our own good God does allow us true Christians to be tried, in order to show us our weakness, so that we may repent and struggle to draw near to God and overcome this sinful weakness in our selves; so that eventually we become strong enough to overcome these carnal and sinful weaknesses, that we may eventually be unaffected by these temptations. Then we can receive the blessing of the crown of life that James talks about in James Chapter 1, verse 12. I hope you will take the time to read these verses in James 1: 12-15.

Understand this; brethren, the trials, tests, and temptations do not just come once or twice near the end of our physical lives. These trials, tests, and temptations continue throughout our Christian lives. We either yield to sin as we did before our calling and conversion, or we yield to God and his Word. God’s Holy Spirit in us will lead us to follow Christ in righteousness, but it will not force us to do right. We still have that ultimate control over our own life, whether we will yield to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit, or whether we will allow ourselves to yield in to sin. Most of the time when we fail the test, and yield in to sin, we

have a tendency to twist our minds in to thinking that we are not actually sinning, even though we are yielding in to following our lust instead of following God's Spirit and word. After doing this, if we truly do have God's Spirit in us; then the Holy Spirit will be grieved, and appeal to our heart to show us we are wrong; and we will be grieved in our heart and mind until we do one of two things: either we will repent and be honest with ourselves and with God, and confess our sins and seek God's forgiveness, as in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Psalm that we sing; or in worse cases a person may refuse to acknowledge any wrong doing and justify self in his own mind, thus further deceiving self, and driving a wedge between self and God. Brethren we are admonished by the word of God not to grieve the Holy Spirit; but if you have done so; then wake up and don't let it continue. When we are trying to justify our actions, but we are still feeling guilty, we had better examine the situation much more closely, lest we be guilty of grieving God's Holy Spirit that is in us. Brethren, this is just the sort of thing that Jesus wants us to "Watch".

Let us examine the word "watch", and gain a better understanding of what Jesus meant when he tells us to watch and pray. Like most words, the word "watch" has many applications and forms of use in the Holy Bible. The word watch can be used as a verb, or noun. It is also used in different forms such as watched, watcheth, and watchful. When used as a noun it can refer to a person designated to do the watch or guard duty. It also can be used to refer to the location of the watch or guard. It can also refer to the time of a guard duty such as what shift the watch is taking place. However without the use of the word watch as a verb, there would be no use of it as a noun. The root of the word is an action verb, and from that it has been modified to be used as a noun also. So what is the definition of the word "watch" as it is used as a verb in the Holy Bible? In Matthew 26: 38 Jesus tells his disciples to "tarry ye here, and *watch* with me. The Greek word that was translated to watch is *gregoreno*, and in Strong's Concordance and Hebrew and Greek dictionary its number is 1127 and means to keep awake, be vigilant, wake, and be watchful. That same word is used in Matthew 24: 42 "Watch therefore for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come". In verse 43 the word watch is used as a noun describing a time period, and again in the same sentence as a past tense verb. Jesus is obviously talking of

standing guard, doing guard duty, so that we will be ready when our Lord does come. The point is; **what are we to guard?** Many of the brethren and ministers especially in the larger organizations seem to think that the main thing that Jesus meant by watching, was to watch world events as they seem to be fulfilling biblical prophecy. Brethren I would like to make it very clear that, that is not what Jesus meant when he tells us to "Watch". I do agree that it is important for us to be observant of the times that we are living in, and that we should recognize when prophecy has been and is being fulfilled. Fulfilled prophecy rewards and builds our faith, but understanding prophecy, and seeing prophecy being fulfilled will not make you ready for Christ's coming. There are many unrighteous people who understand that we are living in the end of this world. Many of them can see and understand that the Catholic Church and its Popes have been fulfilling prophecy of Mystery Babylon throughout the ages, and is now rising again to dominate this end time World Government. This knowledge may cause some to fear and tremble even as the demons do, but that does not make them Holy, nor does it develop righteous character in them. That fear does not even cause them to be willing to keep God's Sabbath or any of his Commandments. Brethren, when Jesus tells his disciples to *watch*; he has much more important things for us to watch than just watching world events happen.

From what I can gather from some brethren; is that they seem to think that we need to be sitting on the edge of our seats filled with fear about what is about to come on this earth in order to have the zeal and motivation and urgency to do those things that God requires of us, and avoid allowing our carnal sinful nature to rule in our lives. It may have been true when God first started calling us, that our first feeble steps to obey Gods law was because we feared God, and we feared the punishment that we feared God would give us if we continued in our sins and disobedience; but we should have come to believe the wonderful purpose that God has for our lives in his family and kingdom. We should have found the gospel of the Kingdom of God to be as Jesus said it is: it is like unto a treasure that a man found in a field, and he valued it so much that he went and sold all that he had that he may buy that field so that he can have that treasure. (Matt. 13: 44) Brethren the Hope that we have in Christ and his Kingdom should

motivate us to correct our selves, and submit to the lead of the Holy Spirit so that we can be striped of our unrighteous worldly and sinful ways, that we may have this true treasure in the kingdom of God. (Read 1 John 3: 1-3) “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should **be called the sons of God!** Therefore the world knows us not because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. *And every man that has **this hope** in him purifies himself, even as he is pure.” The point is brethren, this hope that we have in the true gospel is what that should motivate us to yield to God and his Holy Spirit so that we do not yield in to our carnal, sinful nature. Because of this wonderful hope we have in the *gospel*, we strive to purify our character and nature, even as our Lord is pure. This wonderful good news (*pearl of great price*) is what should motivate us who are truly converted, to obey God, and not the fear of Great Tribulation, or fear of death, or any other fear. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding have they that do his commandments ...” (Ps. 111: 10); but after we began to believe the gospel, as it reveals our incredible human potential, and receive the Holy Spirit, we should be obeying God out of deep love and respect for God and for our wonderful destiny. Fear has torment, and if we truly do know and love God and his purpose for our lives, then we should obey out of love and not just fear. “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.” (1 John 4: 18)*

Watching, or observing world news and events as they fulfill prophecy is important, but the kind of watching that Jesus was advising us to do is much more important, and necessary for us to be qualified to be in the Kingdom of God. There is another word in the New Testament that is translated to the English word *watch* which also is an action verb. The Greek word is *agrupneo* Number 69 in Strong’s Concordance and Dictionary. This word also means to be sleepless, to keep awake, watch. It is obvious from Jesus’ usage of both of these words that he is not talking about just being awake physically, but more importantly to be awake spiritually. Jesus wants us to be vigilant and stand guard in our minds and hearts and draw near to God in sincere heartfelt prayer and meditation lest we be

overcome with temptations and yield in to sin. It is when we have let down and are not staying close to God in heartfelt prayer that we are most vulnerable to deceiving ourselves into thinking that some action that we are tempted with is not really sin and that it is somehow acceptable behavior.

Brethren, Satan comes to you and me in the same way that he did to Jesus Christ our Savior. Jesus overcame Satan's attempts to tempt him, because he was always close to his and our Father in heaven, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He maintained his closeness with his and our Father, by "watching and praying". For us to overcome sin and its temptations we also must be filled with the Holy Spirit and very near to God our Father in Prayer. Brethren think about this; when Jesus had fasted forty days and nights, and Satan came to him to try tempting him into sin: There was not some physical red devil with a pitchfork in his hand standing there before Jesus trying to tempt him to sin. No Satan the devil came to Jesus the same way that he comes to the rest of us humans; invisible and to his own mind. Consider this; have you ever had a temptation since you have been baptized and started out in conversion; in which you were reasoning in your mind that it would not actually be sin if you yielded in and followed some "desire" that you have? If so, then most often in these situations, it is not just your own mind involved, but Satan or a demon. Brethren that is why we must pray and stay close to our Father in heaven, and **stand guard of our hearts and minds, Watch!** Watch and pray as Jesus taught us. Recall the account when Jesus knew that his hour had come, and that he was about to be falsely judged and condemned to death by Crucifixion. He took his disciples and went to a place called Gethsemane, and left his disciples there and told them to watch with him while he went a little farther and prayed. You can read of this account in Matthew Chapter 26. Notice what Jesus prayed in verse 39. "Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as you wilt". Notice that in this watch of Jesus before his trial and crucifixion; that he at first was still dreading it so much that he seemed to think that maybe God, his and our Father might find some other way for his purpose to be accomplished; maybe something similar as how Isaac was spared from the death by God's command to his father Abraham. Jesus admitted in verse 41 that his fleshly nature was weak,

even though his Spirit was indeed willing to suffer this for us, and for the entire family of God. Brethren if Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior needed to “watch” and pray to avoid temptation; how much more do we need to always watch and pray guarding our heart and mind from allowing temptations to enter. Jesus had commanded the disciples in verse 41 to watch and pray so that they would not enter not into temptation. What did they do during that hour? They went to sleep physically; and this caused them to go to sleep spiritually also, because they were not watching and praying as Jesus advised them to do. When the temptation came they were not prepared in their hearts and minds. Remember the results? They were all overcome by temptations to save their flesh, and they forsook Christ their Lord in his time of greatest trial. Brethren Jesus advises us to watch and pray, standing guard in our hearts and minds against the devils temptations and deceptions, and against our own weak carnal nature. Notice that after Jesus had *watched* and prayed for one hour, he was stronger and even more mentally resolved. Read his later words to his Father near the end of that one hour of watching and praying. “Oh my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, your will be done”. (Matt. 26: 42)

Brethren, we need to watch and pray in every temptation, until we are completely resolved in our own heart and mind to completely resist the wrong and do the will of our Father in heaven.

Jesus admonished the Sardis Church to be “watchful” and strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die. (Rev. 3: 2) He wasn’t just talking of watching world events; He was talking of guarding our minds and hearts against all manner of unrighteousness, lest we die spiritually. Jesus showed us by his own life example that the best way to guard our hearts and minds against temptations and sin; is to draw near to our Father in heaven in sincere heartfelt prayer, and thus magnifying God in our hearts and minds and re-orienting our minds to be more concerned with what is most important in our lives. In Revelation 16, verse 15 Jesus warned again that he will come as a thief in the night, and reminded us that those of us who “Watcheth” and keeps our garments are blessed; otherwise they will walk naked and their shame will be seen. Again there we see that it is

necessary to stand guard in our hearts and minds, in order to keep our spiritual garments of righteousness.

Brethren this watching has much more to do with being on guard spiritually so that we may be found worthy to be in Gods Kingdom and family, than just keeping up with world events. You can't change the world and its evils but you can watch your own heart and mind, and pray a lot to our Father so that he becomes more real in your personal perception, and thereby draw near to him, and become filled with the Holy Spirit, so that you can better avoid falling prey to your own lusts and temptations of the devil. Read what Luke wrote quoting our Lord: "Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the son of man." (Luke 21: 36) Understand this statement of Christ: Jesus is not just saying to watch world events and catastrophes, and pray to God asking to be accounted worthy to escape these evils, and asking him to allow you to stand before the Son of man. No, Jesus is telling us to watch, standing guard duty of our minds and hearts to avoid temptations, and to always pray to our Father in heaven, so that we have such a close relationship with him that we will be less likely to yield in to temptations and self deceptions, but we will be filled with the Holy Spirit and letting it lead us into righteousness so that we will be accounted worthy to escape much of the evils that is going to come upon the rest of the world; and that we will therefore be accounted worthy also to stand before, or be accepted of our Lord at his coming.

Brethren, I hope you will find this article informative and helpful. Again I don't try to make myself to be some authority over God's saints, but I do care deeply about God and his people. I know that it is an uphill struggle to overcome our own carnal human nature, and to overcome the devils temptations, traps, and deceptions. Satan uses people of this world, and even false brethren to lay traps to try and get us off course. Our only hope is to stay close to God our Father in watching and constant prayer. That is why Jesus our high priest admonishes us to do so throughout the scriptures.

God bless all brethren who love God and his Son in truth;

Gary Stowers