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**PRACTICAL PIETY.**

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THE SUBSTANCE

OF

**A SERMON,**

**PREACHED AT A WATCH-NIGHT,**

**HELD IN**

**JOHNS-TOWN, DELAWARE STATE.**

**On Nov. 18th, 1795.**

**BY JESSE LEE, Chaplain to Congress.**

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

*THIS sermon was preached extempore, without any expectation of making it public; but being solicited by several of the hearers to write it off, I undertook it, and wrote it as nearly verbatim as I could, and after the neighbours had read it over and over again for a few months, I took it, and laid it by for more than 25 years: at last I concluded, as it was the only sermon that I had ever written, I would correct, and publish it. Such as it is, I submit it to the world, as the first fruits of the kind of all my labours.*

*Petersburg, Pa. June 1. 1814*

*J L*

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SERMON, &c.

Mark, 13, 33..... *Watch and pray.*

THOUGH the text is short, there is much comprehended in it: and we shall hardly find the duty of a christian so fully expressed in so few words, in any other part of the new-testament. Our Lord, in these words, exhorts his disciples to the duty of watching, and teaches them the necessity of prayer. The text is easily remembered, and ought never to be forgotten, but at all times to be practised.

We understand by the preceding verses, that our Lord and his disciples were conversing about the temple, and the end of the world; "And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here? And Jesus answering, said unto him, seeest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down," &c. In the 5th verse Jesus said to his disciples, "Take heed lest any man deceive you." Our Lord saw that they were in danger, and therefore gave them this caution. If the disciples were in danger formerly, they are equally in danger at present, and every caution proves it. After speaking of the destruction of the temple, and of the end of the world, he says, in the 30th verse, "Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done." The word *verily*, is found in many places in the bible, but the words *verily verily*, are not found in any part of the bible except in the gospel according to St John, and in that gospel we find it in five and twenty separate places.

In the verse before the text, he says, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Seeing the time of the coming of the Lord

is not known, neither can be known by us, it is highly necessary that we should be ever on our guard, watching unto prayer. We have the words *take heed*, four times, and the word *watch*, four times in this chapter, and the word *pray*, we have twice.

*Watch and pray.* In speaking from these words, it may be necessary for me in the first place to show how we are to watch; and secondly how we are to pray. And after I have spoken in these particulars, I shall draw the subject to a close.

First, I am to show how we are to watch; and first, what we are to watch against, let the world; and let the honours of the world. What we may understand by the honours of the world, is the praise of men; to be esteemed, admired, beloved, or flattered. These you should watch against with the greatest care. For how can you be justified who seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only. A christian ought not to desire the praise of any man, but he ought to try to be profitable to all. It is evident that some men are more concerned about obtaining the honours of this world, than they are about the salvation of their souls; and would spend half their property to gain the praise and admiration of their fellow creatures. But I would say of this, as the apostle says of other evils, "Let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" *Eph* 5. 3. You are called upon to watch against it, and to pray that you may be "Crucified unto the world, and the world unto you" *Gal* 6. 14. If ye are dead to the world, how shall you live any longer therein; "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" *Col* 3. 3.

2d. Watch against the *riches* of the world. Men are apt to be bewitched by the world, and if they are not constantly on their guard, their hearts may be drawn aside after it. The Galatians were by this means turned out of the way, and they are thus rebuked by the apostle "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth; before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you" *Gal* 3. 1. Every religious man feels it a duty to labour for his

ing in some way or other: and notwithstanding some have independent fortunes, they are not excusable if they lead an indolent life. "If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." *1 Tim. 5. 8* The man who neglects to take care of his body is not likely to take care of his soul. The sentence of God is thus uttered against fallen man: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." *Gen. 3. 19.* Man is hardly ever satisfied with the things of this world: the more he gets, the more he wants. Every christian ought to learn this lesson, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." *1 Tim. 6. 8* The christian's prayer ought to be this; "Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me." *Psa. 104. 13* It is generally the case with all ranks of men to desire to be rich, and to possess more property than what is necessary for them; and they often think if they were more wealthy, they should be more useful, and more happy: but when they try it, they find that the things of this world will never make a man happy. "They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." *1 Tim. 6. 9* O! the deceitfulness of riches. They smile and betray. They kiss and they smite into hell. They put out the eyes, they harden the heart, and steal away all the life of God, and make men enemies to the whole cross of Christ, and yet all the while are eagerly desired, and vehemently pursued, even by those who believe there is a God. O brethren! guard against the world, and "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." *Heb. 12. 1.*

The man whose heart is set upon riches, cares but little about the honours of this world, while other men would make a sacrifice of their property if they could thereby gain honour among men. But, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" *Mark 8. 36*

3. We are to watch against the *love* of the world. Saint John says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15. We are all in danger of being entangled by the love of the world. There is no station or condition in life in which we are freed from temptations of this kind, for then the servant would be above his master. We read that Christ was tempted in the following manner, "The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." *Mat 4, 8, 9*. The devil often tries to draw the Christian aside, by offering to give him the whole or a part of the world, upon the condition of his obeying him. But we have no cause to thank him for the offer, for we know that the world is not his. The devil has no riches for himself, and none to give them that serve him. We know that "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it." *John 8:44*. It is often seen that the poor love the world as well as the rich. They are searching for, and reaching after it, although they cannot obtain it: and their hearts are glued to it, and their affections placed upon it, although they cannot enjoy it.

Those persons who are in affluent circumstances, are more likely to be drawn aside from following the Lord by the love of the world, than those persons are who are in indigent circumstances. When a rich man sees his money, or the fruits of the earth coming in daily, and plentifully, he is too apt to say with the rich man, "Soul, thou hast much goods hid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." *Luke 12:19*. It will be well for all men professing godliness, to attend to this injunction, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." *Col 3:2*. If we give way to an inordinate love of the creature we shall be most assuredly divested of the love of the Creator. Such persons as turn back from following the Lord, generally begin in the first place

to love the world, or to neglect some religious duty. But you are called to watch, and to be on your guard, lest the love of the world should find its way into your heart before you are aware of it. You should reject it when it is first presented, for an enemy once introduced, is hard to resist, and it is much easier to keep an enemy out, than to thrust him out after he has entered the house.

4. We should watch against the people of the world. It ever was, and it ever will be the case, while there are wicked men in the world, that christians will be despised. "But as then, he that was born after the spirit, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now." Gal. 4. 19. How can we expect men who are in heart opposed to God, to be fond of the Lord's servants? They always did, and they always will be opposed to them. And we shall prove the truth of these words. "And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3. 12. The devil generally attacks a christian in disguise. When he came into the garden to deceive Eve, he entered into a serpent, or formed himself into the shape of a serpent, and then began to converse with her, as if he intended to do her good. In the first place he says, "Ye shall not surely die," and secondly, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Gen. 3. 4, 5. Eve made the trial, and partook of the forbidden fruit, and thereby provoked the Lord. Then let us guard against the wicked, who are called vipers by our Lord, when he says, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Mat. 23. 33. Most men are in more danger of being injured by the flatteries of the wicked, than of being hurt by their frowns. Every christian ought to be on his guard when his presence is requested by his friends and neighbours, at any kind of feast, or entertainment, lest he should wound the cause of God, hurt his own soul, or give the people of the world cause to speak reproachfully of the ways of God. The apostle Paul says, "If any of them that believe not, bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go, whatsoever is set before you, eat." 1 Cor. 10. 27. From this we may



conclude that a religious person may attend a feast when he is invited by an unbeliever; but at such times he ought to be on his watch, otherwise he will rue it afterwards. If the people of the world become fond of faithful christians, it is a good sign; but if they are fond of us because we are conformed to the world, it is a bad sign.

We have but little persecution at present, in comparison of what the former christians had, or in comparison of what we ourselves had in former years: yet the hearts of wicked men are no better now, than they were formerly. It is quite probable, if we had more religion, and were more devoted to God, we should be more despised by those who know not God.

The second thing which we are to watch against, is the *flesh*. Watch against the lusts of the flesh: which may be considered as including these four particulars, eating, drinking, sleeping, and all uncleanness. *Eating*: here the flesh often pleads for some indulgence, in eating more than what is necessary. In eating, man should be governed more by their reason, than their appetite. When a man's reason and inclination differ; the man is called upon to deny himself; to cross his inclination, and let reason be his guide. If men are governed by their appetite, we may say of them in the language of the apostle, "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly." *Phil 3 19* Many persons by eating too much, and overcharging their stomachs, become so heavy, dull, and sleepy, that they are neither fit for their daily vocations, nor for the service of God. This is one cause why so many of our hearers are sleepy under preaching, and especially in the afternoon. Their spirits are sunk by excess in eating, and sermon after sermon is lost upon them. The rule for us to go by in this case, is laid down in the following words: "Whether therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." *1 Cor 10 31* Reason and experience will direct a person both with regard to the quantity and quality of food which is best for him. And it will always be found best both for body and soul, to use a sparing diet.

2. We should watch against the lust of the flesh in *drinking*. There is more danger of drinking to excess, than of eating to excess. The sin of drunkenness is prevalent among us, and many religious people have fallen by that crime. Other sins have slain thousands, but this sin hath slain its tens of thousands. Many people who were once happy in God, and went on valiantly like Samson when slaying the Philistines, are now, through drinking to excess, like Samson in the prison, bound by their enemies, with their eyes put out. The flesh often pleads for spirituous liquors, and the man will say, 'it is very cold, a dram would do me good; or it is very warm, a little spirit would help me; or I am not well, and have a poor appetite, and I must drink a little for my health,' &c. But every man will find more happiness in resisting a temptation, than in complying with it. Some people will quote scripture in favour of drinking spirituous liquors saying, "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." 1 Tim 4. 4. If a man is thankful for all he drinks, and is on his watch so as not to drink too much, it is well. But if he drinks spirits, and is not constantly on his guard, he will be very apt to fall thereby in some unexpected hour.

If a man has been apt to drink too much before he had religion, it will be extremely hazardous for him to drink any at all after he becomes religious. "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." Gal 2. 18.

3. We are to watch against the flesh in *sleeping*. We ought generally to be early to bed, and up by times. Some religious people will make a practice of lying in bed till the sun is an hour high; worse than that, some will seldom get up till after family prayer is over. They awake in the morning, and conscience bids them arise, but they turn over and say to themselves with the sluggard, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." Prov 6. 10. There is no time so agreeable for family prayer in the morning, as when we first get up, and can come together, before any part of the family are engaged

about their daily labour. And every person belonging to the family, ought to consider it a privilege, and a duty incumbent on him, to be present if possible, when the morning sacrifice of prayer and praise is offered up to God. Every man ought to remember these words of our blessed Lord; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." *Luke 9: 23*. But if a man is negligent, and careless about his duty, he will find to his sorrow, the truth of this text, "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing." *Prov 13: 4*.

1. Watch against the flesh as it respects all uncleanness. 1. The lusts of the *flesh*; which will include wanton behaviour, and lewd conduct. Many have fallen by the sin of adultery, or of fornication. We should be on our guard, that we may not be overcome, or drawn into evil, and so "Fall after the same example of unbelief." *Heb. 4: 11*.

2. The lust of the eye. This we should watch against; for it is often the case, that by giving way to the lust of the eye, a man is led on to evil. We see an instance of this in David, who by indulging his eyes in looking on Bathsheba, was led at last into adultery, and then led on to the murder of her husband. 2. *Sens* 11. &c. Persons giving way to the lust of the eye, while hearing the gospel preached, and by looking and gazing at the features, or the dress of the company may lose all the sermon, and when they go home, if they are asked where the text was, or what the preacher said, they cannot tell. but if you ask who were there, and how particular persons were dressed, they can tell you very readily. Some people will indulge the lust of the eye, in going ten or twelve miles to see a couple of horses run on the race field, others will go as far to see a couple of fowls fight, till one has killed the other, and will make themselves quite merry over the expiring cock. Others will go a great way to see a company of human beings, of each sex, dancing and leaping on the floor, as if they neither feared God, nor regarded man, while they are turning back to back, and face to face, as hundred dills

real cuts and turns. The sin of fiddling and dancing is great, it is included in the word revelling, and the apostle says "They which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God" Gal 5 21. If they cannot inherit the kingdom of God, they must be cast into hell, where there is neither hope nor help.

3. *The pride of life.* This we are to watch against. Pride is the image of the devil, and it cast the angels out of heaven. To be proud, is to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Where shall we find a person who is not proud? All men are naturally proud, and nothing short of the grace of God will ever make us keep them humble. Pride shews itself in various ways, and therefore ought to be guarded against. Some persons are proud of their beauty; and because they are of a better shape, or have a more handsome countenance than other people, are lifted up beyond measure. Others are proud of their riches, and look down with contempt on their poor neighbours, or poor relations. However, it is not common for a man who has obtained riches by his own industry, to be of a scornful turn. Some are proud of their learning, or knowledge, and others are proud of their fine clothes. Yet we find that their finest garments were either worn first by the sheep of the pasture, or spun by the silk-worm. People who are proud of their dress, are generally much mortified when they go into company, and find any one there with a finer dress on than theirs, and they are ready to wish themselves at home. But the most dangerous kind of pride, is what may be called spiritual pride. Would to God, there was no cause of complaint among us from that quarter. A man is in danger of being proud of his religion, to think he is more humble than other christians, and that he has more religion than they have; and that he has more patience, more faith, and more love than the rest of his brethren. He may think that he has greater gifts for his chance, and that he is more useful in the church of God than most of his acquaintances; and by giving way to pride, he may become like the boasting pharisee, saying, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are". Luke

vs. 11. The devil like an artful wrestler, gives a person a fall, before he gives him a fall, and that makes the fall the harder. Therefore watch against pride, remember this caution, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" 1 Cor. 10. 12.

3. We are to watch against the devil. "Because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5. 8.

Suppose there was a lion in the neighbourhood, that had devoured many of your acquaintances, and was seeking to devour you, how would you act? I am persuaded you would be on your guard whenever you left your houses, and you would be careful to take with you weapons of defence. Then watch against the devil. Many of your friends have been conquered, and others are almost devoured by him, and he is still seeking to devour you O brethren! be on your guard, and arm yourselves for battle. Blessed be God, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds" 2 Cor. 10. 4. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day" Ephes. 6. 13. Then you may go forth in the name of the Lord from conquering to conquer. Some one may say, this enemy is too strong for me. Never fear; remember how David went out against Goliath of Gath, 1 Sam. 17. 7. with his head bound round with brass, and the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, which was enough to make a common man fly at his first appearance. but David trusted in the Lord and did not fear his adversary. but hastened and ran to meet him, as if he was sure of the victory, and with a stone from his sling he overcame his enemy. This is the way for you to do, go forth trusting in the Lord, and he will give you the victory. For, "He shall deliver thee in all thy troubles, yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee" Job 5. 19. The devil tries the hardest at the weakest side. We may call that the weakest side of a christian where he was most easily overcome before he had religion. This may be called the besetting sin. The Apostle says, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us" Heb. 12. 1

Some people's besetting sin, or weakest side, is anger, or self-will, or pride; others are such as swearing, or lying, or drunkenness, or love of the world. Observe whatever your besetting sin may be, you must watch particularly against it. We shall never be free from the temptations of the devil while we live in the world, but through grace we may overcome when we are tempted. So much for what we are to watch against I am to consider.

2dly. What we are to watch over; which will include our words, thoughts, and actions. 1st. Our words. The scripture says, "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." *James 2. 12.* In order to do this we should watch every word, and think before we speak. Again, "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." *Phil 1. 27.* The same apostle adds, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." *Col 4. 6.* If our conversation was thus employed, we should be made a blessing to each other when in company together; but if we are not guarded in our words, we shall hurt our own souls, and distress our Christian friends. For, "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body." *James 3. 6.* And verse the 8th, "The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

We ought to say nothing for which we would afterwards be sorry; and by no means to give way to foolish talking nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks." *Ephes 5. 4.* We ought to be holy in heart and life, and in all manner of conversation. It is a great blessing to know the way wherein we should walk; but it is a greater blessing to walk in the way of duty. However, "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." *2 Peter 2. 21.* If we do not live up to the knowledge we have we may be sure of punishment, for "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not

himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." *Luke 12. 47.* Again, we are told by Jesus Christ, "That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." *Mat 12. 36.* If this be so, and I hope no one among you doubts it; how careful should we to be in all we speak and in all we do.

Are there not many among us who live as if they did not believe these things to be true? Would among us can lay his hand on his breast and say I am not guilty? For my own part, I cannot. I see there is room for me to mend. If we were all to watch over our words as we ought, there would be no more whispering, talebearing, and evil speaking among us. But for the want of this, we hear many persons telling of the faults of their neighbours, and that behind their backs. Our Lord has given us this instruction, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother." *Mat 18. 15.* But it is too common for religious people to take an easier way, and instead of going to the offending brother, they go to other people and tell them of their brother's evil deeds. And in most cases these things are related as hearsay, till they are believed, and confirmed among the people; but if you had gone to your brother in the first place, he could have satisfied you, that there was no foundation for the report. This is the language of scripture. "Speak evil of no man" *Titus 2. 2.* Again, the apostle says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." *Gal 6. 1.* Let me beg this one thing of you, that is, if you will not go and speak to your offending brother about his faults, be sure and speak to no one else about them for while you are friendly with your brother, when in his company, and are at other times circulating his faults, you are much like Job going to Amasa, and saying, "Art thou in health, my brother," and so taking him by the beard, as if he was going to kiss him, he pierced him with a secret dagger and killed him. *2 Sam. 20. 9, 10.*

It is a great pity that christians should meet, and spend an hour in conversation about the world, and say nothing about religion. Remember, we should "give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." 1 *Tim.* 5. 14. Every christian ought to carry religion upon his tongue, as well as in his heart, and to have a word to speak for his Lord wherever he goes. Silly. We are to watch over our *thoughts*. We cannot govern our thoughts as we would. We often find them wandering to the ends of the earth, even while we are waiting upon the Lord in prayer, and in hearing his word. A wandering thought is not a sinful thought; but a man may sin against God in thought, without saying a word or doing an act. Our Lord has told us "That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." *Mat* 5. 28. A man may indulge anger in his heart against his neighbour, till he hates him, and wishes to take his life; and though he says nothing about it, and never does the deed, yet he is guilty of murder in the sight of God. "Who ever hateth his brother, is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." 1 *John*, 3. 15. If a person indulges a thought of stealing his neighbour's property and watches for an opportunity to do it, but is disappointed, and never does it, he is a thief and a robber.

What may we understand by a sinful thought? By a sinful thought we are to understand in the first place, that the thought presented to our mind is to do some wicked act: and secretly, that we consent, and are willing to do the deed. Then it becomes a wicked thought. But if we never consent to do the evil act, it cannot be termed a wicked thought, it is only a temptation. There is no sin in being tempted, for Jesus Christ was tempted. If these painful thoughts are not sent for, nor welcomed when they come, they are not sinful. St. James says, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." *James* 1. 14, 15. Most christians can sing



the following words, which agree with their own experience.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it  
Deal it for thy courts above "

3 We are to watch over our actions. This is necessary at all times, and in all places. For the Lord hath said, "I will give unto every one of you according to your works." *Rev. 2: 23*. The following reasons may be assigned for watching over our actions. 1. We are watched by the people of the world, and if they see any thing wrong in our conduct, they will be sure to reproach other christians on our account, and conclude that there is nothing in religion; and so stumbling over us, they may tumble into hell. 2. We are watched by our weak brethren; and if they see christians doing wrong, they may be led to do so likewise. "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" *1 Cor. 8: 11*. 3. The devil is watching us, if by any means he may get the advantage of us. 4. God is watching us. "For all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." *Heb. 4: 13*. If we were always sensible that the Lord was taking notice of us, we should be much more on our guard. John speaking of the giving up of the dead, says, "They were judged every man according to their works." *Rev. 20: 13*. Our present, as well as our future happiness depends on our actions; therefore, "Watch thou in all things." *2 Tim. 4: 5*.

3dly. What we are to watch for. Watch for opportunities of waiting upon God. 1. In private, you should endeavour to seclude yourselves from the business, and from the people of the world, and get into a private, or a secret place, and pour out your soul to God, and humbly implore his blessing and protection. 2. In publick. Remember the apostle enjoins it on us, "Not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhort one another and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." *Heb. 10: 25*. Some people say they have no opportunity

of hearing preaching. If they watched for an opportunity, they might prepare against the day of meeting, and attend the worship of God on the Lord's day, or on any other day where preaching was near at hand. It is good for people to hear the word of the Lord, for "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." *Rom. 10. 17.* David was glad when the time came to go up to the house of prayer. When the time comes to go to meeting, you ought to say to the world as Abraham said to the servants, "Abide ye here, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship." *Gen. 22. 5.*

1. Watch for opportunities of doing good to others, both to their souls and bodies. 1. To their souls, by reproving the wicked, and instructing the ignorant, by comforting those that are cast down, and by strengthening those that are weak and feeble, and thus teach and exhort them, "That they should earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints." *Jude. 3. 2.* To their bodies, by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those that are sick, or in prison "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." *Mat. 5. 42.*

Again, watch for death, as a bride would watch for the coming of the bridegroom, and have all things fixed and prepared, that if you are called suddenly, and unexpectedly, you may depart in peace. Though death is certain, yet it often comes at an unexpected hour; "For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." *1 Thes. 5. 3.*

Again, watch for the coming of the Son of man, "For ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh." *Mat. 25. 13.* Again our Lord says to his disciples, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." *Mark. 13. 37.* And St. Peter says, "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." *1 Peter. 4. 7.* Having gone through the first general proposition, I come now to the second part of my text.

2dly I am to shew how we are to pray. In considering this part of my text, I shall take notice of four things, as follows. how, where, and when, we are to

pray and what we are to pray for. 1. *How* we are to pray, our Lord has taught us, saying, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our father, which art in heaven." *Mat. 6. 9.* Some persons use this prayer when they are frightened by a thunder cloud: and at other times, after they get to bed they will begin, "Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come." By that time they fall asleep; and think no more of their prayers that night. But if you pray in no other way than this, you will find yourselves wanting in the last day. This prayer is proper for a public congregation, and ministers of the gospel would do well to use it, and the congregation should join in the prayer. It is not said, when ye pray, think our Father &c. but *say* our Father. Again we are exhorted to "pray with all prayer and supplication in the spirit." *Ephes. 6. 18.* Then we are to use publick prayer, and private prayer, family prayer, and mental prayer. The Lord help you so to do.

Again, Paul says, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." *1. Cor. 14. 15.* It is not enough for a person to go through a form of prayer, or to have set hours for prayer, but he must pray in the spirit, and with the spirit. When we pray, we should exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe that God will answer our prayer. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." *Heb. 4. 16.* Are not our hearts too often wandering about the world, while we are on our knees before the Lord? if we did but walk humbly with God at all times, it would make a great difference in our prayers, and we might expect an answer before we left the throne of grace.

2. *Where* we are to pray. "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." *Mat. 6. 6.* By a closet we are to understand a private place where the eye of God alone beholds us. If our closets were to bear witness, what an account of neglect would be brought against us. Whole days have passed away, and the closet has not been visited. Jesus Christ left

his disciples, and when "He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, he kneeled down and prayed" *Luke* 22. 41. Let us follow his example, and when duty calls us, let us leave our best friends, and get by ourselves and fall upon our knees before the Lord, and we shall find him to be to us "A friend that sticketh closer than a brother" *Prov.* 18. 24.

Again, it is written, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." *1. Tim.* 2. 8. By this we are taught to pray every where, and in every place; when we walk by the way, sit in our houses, or lie on our beds: if so, we ought to double our diligence, and be in earnest: for we are to pray without doubting. We should never doubt of the willingness, or ability of the Lord, to hear and answer our prayers. For "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear" *Isaiah* 59. 1. If this be so, we need doubt no more.

3. *When* we are to pray. We are directed to "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." *Colos.* 4. 2. By this we are taught to persevere in praying and never give it out. It is a duty in which a faithful man will ever be delighted while he lives; and a work, which will be finished when he dies. In this work let us never stop, and from it, let us never turn back. Be sure of this, that "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." *Luke* 9. 62. Praying will make a man leave off sinning, and sinning will make a man leave off praying.

Again it is said, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, or all ways." *Luke* 21. 36. If we are to pray always, or all ways to be in a praying frame, then there is no time to be idle or trilling, but we should be diligent in calling upon the name of the Lord.

Again we should "Pray without ceasing." *1. Thes.* 5. 17. This is a positive command, and it must be attended to. All people agree that we ought to pray, but the manner how, the place where, or the time when, we should pray, is a thing in which they sometimes disagree. I would advise you to consult the different texts which are quoted above, and they will di-

rect you in the way wherein you should go. Our Lord "Spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint." *Luke 18. 1.* "The beginning of this work is good, the continuation of it is good, and the end of it is good. If so, "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." *Gal. 6. 9.*

*What we are to pray for.* "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. For kings, and for all that are in authority." *1 Tim. 2. 1, 2.* From this we may see the necessity of praying for the rulers of the nation. If half as much time was spent in praying to God to direct the rulers of the people in the right way, and in governing the nation, as is spent in complaining of, and abusing them, it would be much better for them, and better for us. We are also to pray for all men. Then we should pray for wicked men. The Lord have mercy upon them. Many of them do not pray for themselves, and if no one else prays for them, what will become of them? Let us look around us, and we shall see many poor souls in the way to eternal misery. Can we sit still, and be quiet, while we see them suspended by the brittle thread of life over the bottomless pit, and not feel for them? Surely, if we have the feelings of men, we cannot give them up to be lost for ever.

Let us look nearer home, and it may be we shall see our poor old parents just ready to leave the world, and as yet they have not made their peace with God. If they had been as careless about our bodies when we were young, as we have been about their souls, we might not have been alive at this time. If we feel ourselves to be under any obligation to our parents, let it teach us to pray earnestly for them. When we look them in the face, and think of their condition, we ought to grieve for them. Again, some of your husbands or wives may be still unconverted. I would not can you bear the thought of having your wife taken from your arms, and sent down, down, down to hell? If not, the thought is too painful to bear. I would ask the fond wife, if she thinks she could bear

to see her poor wicked husband torn from her arms, and given up to be tormented in everlasting fire? Methinks she cries out no, I cannot bear the thought. If you think you cannot bear the separation, then pray, O pray for your companions, and your friends, and give them no rest till their souls are born again. If your companion is from home, and tarries a few hours or days longer than was expected, you are rest less and uneasy, and can hardly eat or sleep with pleasure; but if you are separated at the last day, you will never, never meet again. O my friends! feel concerned for the souls of your companions. Shew your love to them, by praying for them, or else it may soon be known by you, as our Lord has expressed it, "In that night there shall be two in one bed, the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left." *Luke 17. 34*

Again, look at your dear children, and see how many of them are yet in their sins. You may say of them as Adam said of Eve, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." *Gen 2. 23* I may add their life is derived from your life, and their soul from your soul.

Suppose the Lord was to call your children from you as they are, in their sins and unconverted, would not many of them lay the cause of their destruction to your neglect? Will not many say in the day of judgment, O my parents! if you had taught me as you ought to have done, and prayed for me, and taught me to pray, I might have been happy now. But you never prayed for me nor with me, and let me go on in my sins, and now, O now I am undone, undone to all eternity! O that I had never been born! O that I had never been born of such parents! for they never taught me how to serve the Lord. What soul piercing groans will those parents hear from their neglected children, what screams from their tormented offspring! If it could now be heard, I am ready to believe that the parents would cry out with David, "O my son Absalom my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee. O Absalom my son, my son!" *2 Sam 18. 36* Your lives seem to be wrapt up in the lives of

your children, and why are not your souls engaged in prayer for their souls?

Again, some of you have brothers or sisters who have not yet made their peace with God. How this must pain the heart of every christian to look at them and say, there is my poor brother or sister, whom I dearly love, who is not prepared to die. How could I bear to see them standing on the left hand of the Lord in the day of judgment? and to hear the sentence passed against them - "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." *Mat 25. 41* Praying for them after they are dead will do no good. now your prayers may be heard and answered, therefore pray for them; and forget not your servants and your neighbours when you call up on the Lord. Again, it is said, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another." *James 5. 16* Look into your own societies, and perhaps you will find some who are mourning beneath the burden of sin, and have never been converted. In such a situation many are led to think the Lord has cast them off, and will be merciful unto them no more. O brethren! can you see persons in such distress, and not pray for them? How was it with you when you were under conviction? did you not wish every christian to pray for you? certainly you did. "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them" *Luke 6. 31* If you saw them falling into a pit, you would try to save them from it; and ought you not to take more pains in trying to save them from the bottomless pit?

Again, you see (it may be) some feeble christians almost ready to tire and faint by the way; they have so many temptations, and so much opposition and persecution, that they are ready to give up and strive no more. O my friends! pray for them, pray for your suffering brethren for if "One member suffer, all the members suffer with it" *1 Cor 12. 26* It is said, "We are members one of another" *Ephes 4. 25* We ought to help and support each other, and pray, "That they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works." *Titus 3. 8*

Again, the apostle says, "Brethren, pray for us" *1 Thes. 5. 25. 2 Thes. 3. 1. Heb. 13. 18*. Paul seemed to beg it as a favour, that the saints of God would pray for him; and he considered them as his own children when he says, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." *1 Cor. 4. 15*. He felt the need of their prayers, for he saw that he was in danger; which caused him to say, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away." *1 Cor. 9. 27*. Then brethren, you ought to pray for us, who are sent among you to preach the gospel to you, that we may "Expound unto you the way of God more perfectly." *Acts 18. 26*. If you expect to be profited by us, I hope you will pray to God, to bless our labours among you. We have left all that was dear and dear to us, and have come into a strange place, and among a strange people, to direct them in the way wherein they should go.

I suppose many of you think that the travelling preachers must live the most agreeable life in the world. I was once of that opinion myself, but since I have borne a part of the ministry, I have been of another mind. I am sure that the burdens and trials of ministers are unknown to all but God and themselves. And certainly if I only looked for comfort in this life, I would go home and seek it. Each one of you have to bear your own burdens; but we have to bear our own burdens, and the burden of the souls committed to our charge. When I feel the weight of the work of the ministry, I am constrained to cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" *2 Cor. 2. 16*. You will be ready to ask, what have you to try you? Oh my friends! our trials are from various quarters, tempted by the devil, opposed by a wicked world, and often forsaken of, and grieved by our brethren; and after we have laboured among them for a long time, we have the pain of seeing them turning from us, and becoming enemies to religion, and thus we are grieved and wounded in the house of our friends.

Again, it is said, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." *Mat. 9. 38*. Here is matter for prayer.



What a large number of people there are in this world, who know not their right hand from their left in religious matters, and have no one to teach them? You who have preaching regularly, don't feel the want of it: but if you were to have no more preaching for twelve months, you would begin to pray earnestly for it.

Last winter, when I was in South-Carolina, in Georgetown, and Charleston, and some other places, and in many desolate parts of North-Carolina, the people would beg and pray that we would come and preach among them; and would offer us large sums of money if we would engage to preach with them. Some of them had not an opportunity of hearing a sermon once in three months, and others not once in six months, from any preacher, of any denomination. But money is not what we labour for: we labour for the salvation of souls. I wept over the people and left them, and have often wept on their account since; but we have no labourers to send among them at present. O brethren, help! and pray the Lord to send forth more labourers. If the people in the desolate parts of the country could have the gospel preached among them, I have no doubt but many of them would embrace it thankfully. It often pains me to the heart, when I think of the many precious souls that are perishing for the lack of knowledge, and have no shepherd to lead them, or give them warning. What shall be done? are you willing they should perish in their ignorance and in their sins? If you are christians, you cannot be willing. Are you willing for us to go and leave you without preaching, in order that they may have the gospel preached among them? I am persuaded you are not. If I was to assure you that this was to be the last sermon you were ever to hear from any of our preachers, and that you should see our faces no more, you would feel like the christians in former days when Paul was about to leave them. It is said of them, that "They all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more" Acts 20: 37, 38. You are not willing that

to. — should be without preaching, and you are not willing that we should leave you to serve them. I ask again, what shall be done? I answer, pray the Lord to send forth more labourers into his harvest. And cry out with Moses, "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." *Exodus* 8. 13. If you thus pray to the Lord, I am well persuaded that the Lord will raise up some one among you, who will say, "Here am I, and me." *Isaiah* 6. 8.

I have now gone through my subject, and must draw to a close; I have taught you as well as I was able, and now I may add, "This is the way, walk ye in it." *Isaiah* 30. 21.

In the first place, I shewed you how we are to watch; what we are to watch against, what we are to watch over, and what we are to watch for. Here is a great work for you to do; no less than to "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." *Phil* 2. 12. I hope that every attentive christian, who has heard for himself alone, is fully convinced of the utility of watching, and that they will practise the things which they have heard. An unwatchful professor is a burden to himself, and a burden to a religious society.

He may have religion enough to make himself miserable, but not enough to make him happy. For he has so much religion, that he cannot enjoy the world; and he is so much conformer to the world, that he cannot enjoy *heaven*.

O my brethren! if you wish to be happy, be sure and be watchful; for holiness and happiness are inseparably connected, and in proportion to the former, we enjoy the latter.

There is a material difference between those who watch and pray, and those who do it not, for the former in this life, "shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." *Mat* 19. 29. And when these are exalted to heaven, to joys sublime, the others will be dejected to hell, with horror replete.

In the second place, I have shewed you how we are to pray, where we are to pray, when we are to pray, and what we are to pray for. Who among you will

make use of, and practise this duty? If you follow these directions fully, you will not repent it in time nor eternity. As the people said when they caught Paul, so would I say to you, "Men of Israel, help." *Acts 21. 38.*

I am sure there is a cause for inculcating this duty, at this time. If this command is from the Lord, who will dare to disobey it? not him who expects the Lord to say to him in the day of judgment, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." *Mat. 25. 31.* I hope no one will wish to fly from the cross. Christ died on the cross, and we must die under it, if we ever get to heaven. Then let us "Be instant in season, and out of season." *1 Tim. 4. 2.* Blessed be God there is comfort in bearing the cross; for Jesus says, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." *Mat 11. 30.* The Lord grant that we may find it so, and at last finish our course with joy, and be saved eternally, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**B I N I S.**

