

Watching Unto Prayer

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2 Chronicles 23:6 (NKJV) *“But let no one come into the house of the Lord except the priests and those of the Levites who serve. They may go in, for they are holy; but all the people shall keep the watch of the Lord.”*

Matthew 26:40–41 (NKJV) *“Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, ‘What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’”*

One of the responsibilities assigned to all believers is that of being a watchman. Watchmen are those who stay awake in order to guard, protect, and preserve. They stand ready to respond as the occasion demands. Watchmen are on duty when others are asleep, busy, or distracted. If the watchman is negligent in his duties, he and those over whom he watches can suffer great consequences.

All of God’s people are commanded to keep “the watch” of the LORD. “The watch” refers to an assigned time to watch at a watch station. In a city, most watchmen were assigned to the walls or towers. The LORD said, *“I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, ⁷ And give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”* Watchmen were responsible to watch for threats coming from outside the walls and to watch for the threats arising inside the walls.

The enemy is always looking for access and ways to capitalize on vulnerabilities. If the walls of protection have been broken down, the enemy will attack while the people are vulnerable. When Nehemiah and the returning exiles were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, the adversaries tried to stop them from building: *“Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, ⁸ and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion. ⁹ Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.”*

Once the walls of Jerusalem were built, the enemies looked for access through the gates. Nehemiah said to the people, *“Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot; and while they stand guard, let them shut and bar the doors; and appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, one at his watch station and another in front of his own house.”* The survival of the city depended upon everyone watching from their particular watch station. The apostle Peter said it this way, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”*

Watchmen are responsible to watch and warn of the infiltration or instigation of apostates inside the church.

Acts 20:28–31 (NKJV) *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”*

Watchmen are responsible to watch and see what the LORD is saying. This means to wait on the LORD in prayer and to listen for His voice and direction. The prophet Habakkuk declared, “I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected.” There are things the LORD will reveal to those who will watch for Him to see what He will say. There are things the LORD would say to us in this hour.

Watchmen are responsible to watch for the approach of their King that they might be ready to let Him in. They are to be awake and at attention lest they be found negligent. Jesus gave His disciples commandments to watch for Him so that they might be ready. No one knows when the Lord will return. Consider the following passages:

Matthew 24:36–44 (NKJV) *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. ³⁷ But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰*

Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

Matthew 25:13 (NKJV) *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."*

Mark 13:32–37 (NKJV) *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. ³⁴ It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. ³⁵ Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—³⁶ lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. ³⁷ And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"*

Watchmen are responsible to watch for the unknown hour of the Lord's Second Coming. No one knows the day or the hour when Jesus will return. Therefore Jesus commands His people to watch and be ready.

Matthew 24:45–51 (NKJV) *"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ⁴⁷ Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. ⁴⁸ But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, ⁵¹ and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

For those who neglect to watch, the Lord's return will come upon them unexpectedly as a snare and as a thief.

Luke 21:34–36 (NKJV) *"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵ For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."*

Revelation 3:4 (NKJV) *"Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."*

Revelation 16:15 (NKJV) *"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."*

Faithful watchmen will receive blessing and reward from the Lord for their faithfulness.

Luke 12:35–40 (NKJV) *"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; ³⁶ and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. ³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. ³⁸ And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. ³⁹ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

It is important to recognize the special responsibility that God's leaders have as watchmen to watch over the souls of God's people.

Hebrews 13:17 (NKJV) *"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."*

Now more than ever it is time for the watchmen of the Lord to wake up and take their place at their watch stations. Now more than ever is it time for God's people to watch and pray. If we will be diligent and faithful to watch and pray, we will recognize, expose, and thwart the tactics of the enemy before they do their damage. We will see the threats inside the walls that undermine peace, unity, love, and fellowship. We will hear what the Lord is saying to the church in this hour. We will be ready and prepared for the Lord's return.