

STRAIGHTWAY

"And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

The Witness Outreach of Foundations Bible College
P.O. Box 1166 · Dunn, North Carolina 28335

VOLUME 27

FEBRUARY 1999

NUMBER 2

KEEP THE WATCH

by Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, Founder & President
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And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians (Exodus 14: 24-25).

The Watch of Separation

The study of "the watch" in the Holy Scriptures is a special study, beginning with the most peculiar of all, "Mizpah"

(Genesis 31:49). The term has been inscribed on professional greeting cards as a lovely expression between close friends. However, this is a misunderstanding of the context entirely. Jacob had fled his father-in-law, Laban, because of the differences between them, and Laban fled after him. It was anything but a pleasant meeting of friends. So, Mizpah was, in reality, a heap of stones setting up a boundary between strained relationships and acquaintances so that they would never again flee and/or chase each other because of their differences. In other words, this was a separation between friends who had been obligated to each other prior to this occasion, and this heap of stones

marked a boundary that neither would impose upon the other again. This was a "watch" of separation.

Watchmen

In the beautiful Song of Solomon two other kinds of watches are identified: the night street watchmen who kept the city and dealt with the people; and, the watchmen up on the wall who also were over the people of the streets (cf. Song of Solomon 3:3 & 5:7). In the case of the Shulamite, the heroine of the Song, she found care and helpfulness in the street watchmen, but she found rebuke and intimidation from the wall watchmen. The watchmen on the wall represent the ecclesiastical claim to watch over God's people. This, too, becomes a watch of separation.

The True Watchman

Also in the Old Testament whole chapters are devoted to the "watchman" (Isaiah 21:5, 8, 11, 12, etc.). The days of this watch-

man bore "the burden of the desert of the sea" (v.1). This is a description of the plain on which Babylon was built, and the watchman was to watch this matter. His watchings also included Elam (Persia), Dumah (Edom), and other nations such as Arabia, etc. In the watchings against Dumah or Edom we see a rather different kind of watching. The word Dumah means silence. The silent watchings are most important. The watchman is asked how late is it in the night. His response was that the morning is coming, but also the night. That means there will be a brief delay or cessation of trouble, but more trouble is on the way and will surely come. But this watchman, Isaiah, does not leave them without hope. They are encouraged to ask him again of the condition for further consideration of the need of his watchings.

The New Testament continues the same general truth of the actual manner in which the watch was set forth. We find considerable watching in relationship to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 24:42-43 & Mark 13:33 & Luke 12:37-39 & 21:36 & II Timothy 4:5 & Revelation 3:2-3 & 16:15; etc.).

Just Watch

Generally speaking, all of these watchings so far have involved a non-participation in the battle. Our first acknowledged passage in Exodus was viewed with the Israelites simply watching the gathering of Pharaoh with his

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Published 10 months of the year

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Foundations Bible College
P.O. Box 1166
Dunn, NC 28335

Annual Subscription

USA - \$4.00

Foreign - \$5.00

**CPF Members Excluded*

army towards the Red Sea. They were to simply “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord,” without fear (Exodus 14:13-14). “The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” through it all.

It is impossible to be more encouraged than this in the watchings and battles we face. We are to just watch—simply watch. We are to watch with the viewpoint of our Lord in mind through all things. Of course, there are times we are directly in the battle itself. However, there are many, many battles in which we simply “watch it through.” Whether battle or not, we must watch!

As some of our readers may remember, my life was spared from being on the *USS Indianapolis* in the closing days of World War II. By a margin of two hours a mate in the U. S. Navy Hospital in California came in to muster at almost the last hour, and I was saved by a substitute. His recovery at that time was not expected, and I was to go in his place as an alternate. I knew he was in sick bay, and I proceeded to pack my navy bag and gained my orders for boarding the cruiser. However, my mate came in at the last minute and boarded in my place. The *Indianapolis* carried the atomic bomb to the Tinian air base, near Guam, and the B-29 bomber, named the *Enola Gay*, took it over Hiroshima and Nagasaki and dropped it August 6, 1945.

In the aftermath of that event I

was selected to be a part of a crew to participate in the Bomb Test at the Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands. After all the electronic plans were settled in the arrangement of the above-, below-, and in-the-water tests, we departed to the nearby island of Kwajalein also in the Marshall Islands. I was one of a number of those who stayed on Kwajalein in the days immediately before the bomb test itself. In those days of waiting before the actual test, as an electrician’s mate, I was peculiarly assigned to “Keep the Watch.” This was scheduled for me nightly along with several others. There was also a watch schedule for the days. I was given a jeep, a carbine, and a 45-pistol to patrol my section of one of the few roads there on that small island. It was indeed a peculiar assignment for me—a strange one—non-electrical at all. Everyone now was to be a part of the “watch.”

No specifics were outlined—just “Keep the Watch.” Everyone on that island was a part of the Bikini test force. However, everything now was reduced to just “Keep the Watch.” Whatever your other duties had been, you were now assigned to “Keep the Watch.” I never did realize exactly what we were watching for in the duty. We were informed to be responsible for any irregularity we saw. We were to call central MP. Of course, after those days, and the passing of the Bikini test, we were lifted by airplane and taken to Hawaii—and then home for a discharge.

But I shall never forget it; my last duty was to "Keep the Watch." I was not a Christian then. I came home and was dis-charged June 1, 1946, at the age of 19. In January of 1947 I was en-rolled at Bob Jones University and became a Christian in April of that year. But I long remember that in the final analysis and action of that test we were to simply "keep the watch" – all of us. The details of such an assign-ment I have never truly known.

The Unknown of Our Watch

There was a secret which God held in the exodus of the Israelites. God led them out of Egypt towards the Red Sea. When they were in the direction of approach to the Sea, God led them to back-track to Baal Zephon – the area of "the lord of the house of the goddess Heret." This was a place instrumental to the construction for Egypt of which Israel had been slaves. Pharaoh, evidently, thought that the Children of Israel were floundering about in confusion because they had faced the waters of the Red Sea. Therefore, he sought to finally destroy the Israelites in bloody revenge, if not force them back to bondage. With the headlong rush with his entire army, Pharaoh pursued them to the Red Sea. Apparently God caused the wheels of their chariots to be clogged with the sand and mud, and it may also mean that their wheels were broken off in the process. But the Children of Israel had gone across the Red Sea on dry ground and were safe watching the after-

math of Pharaoh's destruction along with his army's.

Thus, the Israelites simply watched the matter completely unfold. They watched – "the morning watch" – which went from 2:00 AM to dawn. They simply watched.

We, too, in our own time must watch through all the things that are happening in our country from the White House to the House of God. We must watch! If the Christian practice and fellowship of our church or school or family become extinct to those we thought we could help, we must watch. If all else fails, we must watch. If we do not see the results we wished and prayed for, we must watch. Historic, Biblical Christianity is beginning to become an endangered species in some quarters, but that people must still watch.

"Occupy till I come..."

Jesus spoke of a very important truth for us in our time. He couched his words in a parable in response to the crowd who were displeased with Him because he went to the house of Zacchaeus to eat. The crowd accused Jesus of eating with "a sinner." They could not understand what Jesus declared to Zacchaeus: "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:9-10).

The parable centered around the truth which dealt with Jesus' coming into the world and then returning back to heaven. The assignment was:

And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come" (verse 13).

The ten servants were entrusted with a considerable amount of money, equivalent to laborer's wages for about three years. They were commanded to "occupy," to "do business" or "trade" until He returned. The believer is put in trust with the Gospel and needs to share his treasure with others until Jesus comes back (cf. I Thessalonians 2:4; I Timothy 1:11).

Occupy and Watch

Keeping busy for Jesus and keeping your ministry in business is very important now. Every practicing separatist fundamentalist church must stay in business, with the lights on, with the grass around that ministry cut, with punctuality and joy and worship. No matter what happens, "occupy." If the attendance increases or falls, occupy. If some leave that church, occupy. If things are said against the pulpit, occupy. Do not allow discouragement to follow; choose never to live and minister without hope. Keep the spirit right; keep the family together; keep the marriage; occupy in the area God has assigned you. Occupy! If they do

not like your choice of the historic hymns and classical and traditional music, you must still occupy and watch faithfully through the tried music of the church.

But watch, too! If you think you suffer loss—watch! You must watch when it appears nothing is happening to your dream or vision. You must watch if what you do is rejected. You must watch whether there is a battle going on, or peace, or indifference. You must watch! When I patrolled on Kwajalein each night, nothing happened. We must always watch if nothing or something happens. Remember: watching is only watching—being faithful to what you see. Watchmen never sleep. Watchmen must always be awake, alert, and careful.

Occupy, Watch, and Prepare

There is a place in our beloved Authorized King James Version of the Holy Scriptures where we have the word "watch" with an unusual placement.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh (Matthew 25:13).

In this article our New Testament word studies have led us into two distinct and different words for "watch." First, there is the most used word "watch" (**phulake**), which means actively guarding—especially the scheduled

watches of the night.

However, in the verse before us Jesus had given the parable of the "ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." In the verse before us, "Watch," is not the more familiar New Testament word. We can see that this word must be different because instead of the regular night watch, guarding things, etc., this is watching for the unknown time of the coming of the bridegroom to take the bride and the virgins from the chamber of the bride to the chamber of the bridegroom for the marriage. There was even a period of slumbering and sleeping which was not condemned. This word "watch" must be understood in a different way, and indeed, it is. This word "watch" (**agrupnia**) deals with "sleeplessness"; a meaning taken from "to chase sleep," like driving sleep from the watcher. In other words, "watch," in this context, is "be prepared, awake, ready." This, too, is very much needed in our time.

As you occupy and stand your watch, be prepared, too.

In these dark times, get ready, be prepared for the sudden "shout," "voice," and "trump" announcing the Lord's call for the transport to the clouds of His glory.

Be prepared for a different kind of people or individual who is observing your endeavor to occupy and watch. There remains

a people for the Lord out there, unevangelized, who have become weary with the contemporary church music, the charismatic clowns and fevers, the ecumenical universalism of Billy Graham, the message of the World Council of Churches, the Promise Keepers, the Social Gospel, and who are positive candidates for a church where there is the Word and a Welcome. They do not want to go back to Rome and Roman Catholicism. There are not millions awaiting this message, but there is a considerable remnant.

Be prepared to welcome some disillusioned religionists, atheists, agnostics, who have tried many things from sociology to science, so-called; from healing lines to decision lines; from crusades to their own crucibles of life.

Be prepared to welcome an honest soul floundering in the shoals of despair and hopelessness.

Be prepared: keep your lamp burning; keep a source of oil; speak in the streets; go to the prisons; take time for the children; and, prepare your own heart, mind and soul with the resources of God's great grace. Not everyone believes in worldliness, ecumenism, and gospel rock and the contemporary arrangement of song.

To the end of our days, in the actions of all of our ways—we must occupy; we must watch; and we must be prepared!

The 1999 Foundations Schedule

"The Hope of Revival"

January 6-10

The Spring Semester

The
Twenty-Fifth
Annual Bible Conference

March 28-April 4

The
Seventeenth
Men's Prayer Conference

June 10-12

The
Third
Congress of Fundamentalists

September 29-October 1

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“The Hope of Revival”

The Spring Semester

Theme:

*“Study to shew thyself approved
unto God.”*

January 6-10

Sermons by:

The President
The Vice President

For Four Nights

The Twenty-fifth Annual Bible Conference

Theme:

*“Forever, O Lord, thy word is
settled in heaven...settle it therefore in your hearts.”*
(Psalm 119:89 & Luke 21:14)

March 28-April 4

Palm Sunday through Easter
Morning & Evening Services

Twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebration (all day)

Good Friday, April 2, 8:00 AM

The Seventeenth Annual Men's Prayer Conference

Theme:

"The Soil of the Soul in the Word of the Lord"

Forty Hours of Prayer

June 10-12

Begins at Prayer Supper, Thursday, June 10, 5:00 PM

Concludes at Prayer Breakfast, Saturday, June 12

Morning Brush Arbor Services

Morning, Afternoon, & Evening Periods

Foundations Day - June 6 - Noon Meal on Campus

Third Congress of Fundamentalists

Theme:

"Keep the Watch; Keep Prepared."

(cf. Matthew 25:13 & Mark 13:35)

Begins: September 29, Wednesday 7:00 PM

Concludes: October 1, Friday, 7:00 PM

Founder's Day - September 29

Wednesday, 8:00 AM

Dr. Alan Cairns

Alan Cairns has been a pastor for thirty-eight years, first in Northern Ireland and since 1980 in Faith Free Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina. For thirty-three years he has been a lecturer in Systematic Theology in the Theological Hall of the Free Presbyterian Church. The first edition of his *Dictionary of Theological Terms* was published in 1982. He has also written *Apostles of Error* (a defense of Biblical infallibility), *A Sure Foundation* (a book-by-book examination of the central themes of the New Testament), and *Throned in Highest Bliss* (a study of the Beatitudes).

Dr. Cairns is our guest speaker for Palm Sunday, 10:30 AM and 7:00 PM.

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"Human History"

All human history is the result of what appears as driftings, trends, catastrophes, and climaxes in time. Even the Bible records such tendencies. However, the Bible Christian believes that behind all of these appearances remains God. He is the primary will and force behind either the permission or the action of that which history gives and the mercy God extends. Only a Biblical faith in the God of the Holy Scriptures includes such comfort and victory for man in his time.

In the beginning, "before the foundation of the world," God drew a straight line when He created time out of eternity. That straight line represents the sovereign will of Almighty God, as well as the protection and mercy needed for all men. Man was created by God on that straight line, in the precious will of God, in the image and likeness of God. Man fell into sin from that line, away from the original will of God for man. Man zigzags on that line. However, this is still the very best world possible for the workings of God's ultimate will for fallen man, extending providence, prevenient grace, and saving grace to mankind.

All of man's sins fall either to the right or the left of that line, and until this very day all fallen men live in the sin of either the work systems of Legalism or the licentious deeds of Libertinism.

However, this legalism and libertinism only represent the fruit of man's rejection and not believing in God's Son for his redemption. Immediately after the fall of man, God commenced His own revelation through His Holy Word, and man was invited back to Paradise and the Tree of Life through the Incarnation and Virgin Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His death on the Cross of Calvary's Tree. Man now could only be saved by God's free grace through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means man is brought back to the sovereign line of God's will. Only redemption can place man back in the will of God. All the fruit of sin—whether Legalism or Libertinism—is the direct result, since the fall, "because they believe not on me," saith the teachings of Jesus (John 16:9). The Gospel continues to make this call: "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."