

WATCH AND PRAY!

Sermonette by Robert Schmid

September 1992

Brethren, as one of your Festival Advisors, I have worked with many of you over the last several months to help you get prepared physically for the feast. Today, allow me to talk about spiritual preparation, for after all, as Christ said in Luke 9:25, *"What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"*

So, our spiritual preparation is obviously, and ultimately, much more important than our physical preparations, even though physical preparation is obviously very important.

Now I know that we all feel very strongly, about our conversion, our love for God the Father and our elder brother Jesus Christ, but we all have our weaknesses, just like Peter and the other apostles, who, even though Christ foretold that they would all fall away, didn't believe Him. In fact Peter said: *"Even though they all fall away, I will not."* Well, the very fact that Peter denied Christ three times shortly after he made that statement ought to give all of us something to think about.

What was it that let up to Peter (and the others) denying Christ? Now we all understand that it had to happen because prophecy had to be fulfilled, but there is a cause for every effect, a reason for everything that happens?

Lets turn to Luke and read and learn from the story why Peter was denying Christ. But more importantly lets learn how and why, you and I could fall into this trap and deny the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke 22 and we'll read verse 31-34.

But first lets consider the setting: Christ had just instituted the new Passover with His disciples. It's Tuesday evening, the beginning of Wednesday Nisan 14. Christ knew that His time had come to be crucified later that day, and so He is preparing His disciples, and He is preparing Himself for this incredibly important time that is just ahead. Let's start reading in Luke 22:31:

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren." And he said to him, " Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." He said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not grow this day, until you three times deny that you know me."

Here, Peter's denial of Christ is foretold and it happened because as it says:

"Satan demanded to have you."

Satan demanded to have Peter. Does that remind you of Job? In the book of Job Satan came to God and demanded to have Job, just as he demanded to have Peter, just as he demands to have you and me today. I Peter 5:8 says:

"Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

Well, we know that Peter fell for it and denied Christ 3 times. So let's take a look now why it happened. We pick up the story in Matt. 26 verses 36-56. You know the story, I am not going to read it all. Jesus asked the disciples and specifically Peter, James and John to watch or to keep awake with him. Well they didn't, and when He returned from praying He found them asleep and He said to Peter (last part of verse 40):

"So, could you not watch, or stay awake with me one hour?"

And Christ would admonish them again saying:

"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Well as we know from the account this happened three times. Christ said at the end, in verse 45,
"Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?"

Well, that's the question we need to ask ourselves, because as it says, temptation comes to them who are asleep.

How can we deny Christ in preparing for the Feast? And remember preparing for the Feast means preparing for the Kingdom of God, doesn't it ? The biblical answer as we have seen is that we will enter into temptation by; First of all, not watching, not staying awake, and we are talking spiritually now, and secondly by not praying, by not being diligent in our daily prayer.

Brethren, we are in the last days, if for no other reason than the fact that you and I may die tonight. Christ admonishes us to watch and stay awake. Sure you can apply this physically and not sleep the day away or not go to sleep during services, but more importantly, I believe Christ admonishes us to watch and stay awake spiritually.

Consider Matt. 24:42, where we are told to, *"Watch, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming."* We can't afford to be asleep spiritually, not discerning the signs of the time we live in. Christ says to watch and to stay awake.

What about the changes in our understanding of many doctrinal issues. How do you deal with them? Do you deal with them as a Laodicean who is not watching, who is asleep, who has a lukewarm attitude and doesn't care one way or the other, or are you a Berean *"receiving the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so,"* as it says in Acts 17:11.

Brethren, I did not understand and accept every teaching from Mr. Armstrong, and I do not understand and accept every teaching from Mr. Tkach. Remember what Christ said to the Laodiceans, *"I wish you were hot or cold,"* anything but lukewarm. The Bereans were hot, they checked the scriptures daily if these things were so. That doesn't mean they were always right. It simply means that they were awake, they were alive, they were diligent in their daily Bible study. That's how we avoid temptation, that's how we avoid denying Christ.

But of course we are no different than Peter. When Christ asked Peter to watch and pray, he fell asleep. Later when they came to arrest Jesus it was Peter who drew his sword to fight for Christ. But you know, Christ didn't ask Peter to *fight*, Christ asked Peter to "*watch and pray*" not "watch and fight." And so it is today. Many of us are quick to fight. Let's solve the problem and leave the Church, or write a book. But Christ patiently said to Peter, "*put your sword away*," I asked you to stay *awake and pray*, not fight!

And so in preparation for this fall festival season I ask you brethren to stay awake and pray. Pray that you do not deny Christ, pray for the Church of God and its leadership, pray for each other as brothers and sisters ought to do.

Let me go back to Luke 22 and show you that someone is praying for you and me. Luke 22:31 and 32. We read that scripture before. Christ said to Peter,
"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have YOU, that he might tempt YOU."

The word YOU is interesting for in the Greek it is *plural* and it is *plural* because Satan demands to tempt "*you all*," Satan wants to tempt all of us. Now in contrast in verse 32 Christ said,
"but I have prayed for YOU, that your faith may not fail."

Here the word YOU is *singular* and that is very important and very comforting because it tells me that Christ was praying for Peter specifically, and it tells me that Christ is praying for me specifically also.

Christ knows me as He knew Peter. Christ and I have a very personal relationship. It's a love affair! He knows me and He is praying for me. That gives me confidence for the future, and it should do the same for you.

Christ's high priestly prayer is recorded in the 17th Chapter of John. Please read it in its entirety. It's a very inspiring and encouraging prayer for you and me specifically, and for the Church as a whole. In verse 24 Christ prays,
"Father, I desire that they also, whom you hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which you hast given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world."

Christ is fervently praying that He desires that you and I may be with him in His Kingdom. Brethren, do you for one moment believe that His Father will deny His request? Peter fell asleep and denied Christ and you and I, in our moments of weakness, will deny Christ also. But Christ prayed for us, that our faith may not fail and I believe that His Father heard and accepted and will fulfill His prayer. Do you believe that? I hope you do!

Have a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles.