

# "You Better Watch Out!"

Dee Bowman

It didn't take any time at all to know where that came from, did it? If you grew up in this country and know anything about the season of the year we call "Christmas," you know that lyric by heart. Gene Autry wrote it. Right? Well, sort of.

I was thinking about that the other night and I thought what kind of significance there is to that enjoinder, not just at Christmas time, but all year long. In fact, all life long. "You better watch out!" Good advice.

Let me take you to the Bible to look at some of the imperatives assigned there and the reasons for them.

First one that comes to mind is in 1 Pet. 5:8. "Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." The word vigilant here is a Greek word which means "be watchful," or "be on guard." What it says is "you better watch out." The advice is as needed today as it was before Peter's pen dried from having written it. The devil is still as active as ever, still has his clever ways, is still as wily as in the first record we have of him in the garden with mother Eve. He never sleeps and he only retires from the battle long enough to develop some new strategy and attack with a renewed ferocity. So, at the very beginning, it's necessary that we recognize him as the enemy and be watching for him. You better watch out.

I'll tell you how clever he is. He can even disguise himself as "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). Can you believe that? He can make himself seem to be someone who is a messenger of good stuff. Think about that. That's how clever he is. Now, that means that we have to be especially watchful, because he can deceive us and lead us somewhere we ought not go, all the while making us feel like it's good to go there.

Need I remind you, too, that vigilance is a planned activity? You have to be aware of his various disguises and be able to recognize his different kinds of appeals and be ready to do something about it. The best way I know to do that is to have a strong connection to the word of God. "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer..." (1 Pet. 3:15). When you apply His word to anything or anybody, it reveals the real person or the real thing. It contains both descriptions of the enemy and

plans for overcoming his various ploys.

And vigilance requires consistent alertness; there's no time to relax, no time when you can look away or neglect to note his whereabouts. Few people surrender to the enemy; mostly, they are captured because of neglect. They just aren't looking, so they don't see him coming.

Elders are special watchmen. Having warned the Elders of impending disaster from men "who shall arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them," Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "Therefore watch..." (Acts 20:31). Elders are said to be those who "watch for our souls" (Heb. 13:17). Their two primary responsibilities are to: 1) tend the flock, and 2) watch for their souls. They should receive our sincere appreciation for such diligence and care for our eternal welfare.

Paul told the Corinthians, "watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men" (1 Cor. 16:13). It seems to me that there is a sequence in this warning. By that, I mean that the first results in the second, the second in the third. If we begin by watching (and that begins, as we said, with a close connection to the word of God,) then, by faith, we can stand fast when the time comes. Then, because of both those things, we will be disinclined to give up easily; in fact, we just won't quit. That's how men quit. They don't.

"Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:6). There is no time when we can let down our guard. We dare not sleep, lest we be found vulnerable and fall—and not only fall ourselves, but allow the enemy to penetrate our ranks so that others fall as well. Paul concludes, "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8). It's not enough to just sort of look around, there has to be a deliberate seriousness about the matter at hand. All that is part of being a watchman.

In Matthew 25:13, after having painted a disturbing picture of the coming judgment, and warned us of its inevitability and individuality, Jesus concludes by saying, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." The vigilance, brethren, must be continual. There can be no letting down, no lapsing into indifference, no apathy, no inattention. We dare not forget the seriousness of watching cautiously; our eternal destiny that is at stake.

And so, we better,

Watch where we're going.

Watch who we're with.

Watch what we say and how we say it.

Watch our priorities.

Watch our attitudes.

I suppose I could sum all this up by saying, "You better watch out!" Me, too.