

ADVENT SOURCE COLLECTION

General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists

WASHINGTON, D. C.

No. 123-100

REMARKS

THE DUTY OF

PRAYER AND WATCHFULNESS

IN THE

PROSPECT OF THE LORD'S COMING.

BY THE

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ADVENTIST

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## REMARKS.

WE have selected the following discourse from a new English work containing twelve sermons on the "Second Coming, the Judgment, and the Kingdom of Christ." They were delivered in London by twelve clergymen of the Church of England, in the year 1843.

The preface of the work is by the Rev. E. Bickersteth, from which we give the following extracts :

"The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is allowed by all Christians to be a subject of unspeakable importance. The CERTAINTY OF IT is with them an unquestionable fact. It comes into every creed of the church. It is continually set before us in the Scriptures as the great object of hope, and the great event to prepare for which our thoughts, and words, and works, should be constantly directed. There needs, then, no apology for this united effort to call the attention of the church of Christ to this all-important event."

In the principles, on which it is said those who preached these sermons "are entirely agreed," we also agree with them so far :

"They all expect a Millennium yet to come; they all look for the personal coming of our Lord before that Millennium. They look for the first resurrection, and glory of the saints at the coming of our Lord before the Millennium."

We have selected this as being eminently practical, and suited to the present time. We hope it may have an extensive circulation, as it will tend to dissipate worldlimindedness and scepticism, so rife among the professed people of God at the present time.

J. V. HIMES.

## SERMON.

Rev. xvi. 15.

*“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.”*

THIS remarkable sentence is taken from a part of this interesting prophecy, which many approved expositors believe to be now receiving a partial accomplishment.

The text attracts our attention by the significant word with which it commences, “Behold;” an expression which, according to the idiom of the sacred Scriptures, is usually employed to usher in an event which merits peculiar notice. Thus, the angel who addressed the shepherds said to them, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” In the same manner the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians, “Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be



changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." So the Prophet Isaiah, "BEHOLD, the Lord hath proclaimed to the end of the earth, BEHOLD, thy salvation cometh; BEHOLD, his reward is with him, and his work before him." This word, therefore, may well excite our earnest regard, since it would not have been used, unless something of more than ordinary importance were to follow.

The text is still further remarkable from its singular position. It stands as a parenthesis in the midst of the pouring out of one of the most eventful of the vials of the wrath of God. For in the prophetic description of this vial, we are told, first, of the drying up of the great river Euphrates, that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared; and we then read of the active energy of three unclean spirits like frogs; the spirits of devils working miracles, going forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

But, whilst the word by which the text is introduced, and the position in which it stands,



may make it interesting, its chief attraction consists in this, that if we may avail ourselves of such a simile, it may remind us of the shrill sound of the trumpet at the dawn of day—"la réveillée," or the morning call, to the troops—for it is a note of warning given by our blessed Saviour to awaken the slumbering members of his church, and to prepare them for his near approach. It is also a word of encouragement graciously intended to strengthen the faith, animate the hope, quicken the zeal, and dissipate the fear of his faithful people. I have, therefore, selected this striking portion of Holy Writ, as peculiarly appropriate to the subject appointed for the concluding lecture of this series of discourses, which your much-esteemed and beloved minister has requested me to deliver. The appointed subject is, "The Duty of Watchfulness and Prayer in the Prospect of the Coming of our Lord;" a subject eminently practical, and one which proves that the object of the Lord's servants who arranged the syllabus of this course, was, not to proclaim any fanciful theory or speculative opinion, but, by the Divine blessing, to impress the hearers with that deep tone of piety which the unveiling the future prospects of the Church is so well calculated to produce.

If there be any one topic more than another

calculated to solemnize the mind, to bring us as lowly suppliants to the Throne of Grace, and to lead to watchfulness and prayer, while at the same time it cheers and animates the spirit, filling it with that blessed hope, which led the Apostles, the army of martyrs, and we may add, our Protestant forefathers, to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord;" if there be any subject calculated to produce these blessed effects, it is "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Let me, then, entreat your silent but fervent prayers, that the aid of the Holy Spirit may be granted, while I attempt to open and improve the awakening announcement of our blessed Lord, "*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments.*"

Without entering into the other topics to which my text might give rise, allow me to call your attention, First, to THE SUDDENNESS of the advent of our Lord, "*Behold, I come as a thief;*" and, secondly, to HIS ENCOURAGING COUNSEL, "*Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.*"

I. Observe the *suddenness* with which our Lord will come.

Here we may profitably notice how frequently and how emphatically this stirring fact is de-

clared in the Word of God. It would seem, as if the Holy Spirit, being fully aware of the tendency, even in sincere Christians, to forget the future return of the Lord, were for this reason desirous to impress upon the Church, in a manner the most awakening, the important truth, that He will come at a time when he is least expected. For, if we read the Holy Scriptures with attention, we shall see, that the illustrations employed to describe the second coming of the Son of man, are those which most clearly and strikingly manifest the *suddenness* with which He will appear.

His advent is at one time compared to a flash of lightning. Thus we find, in Matt. xxiv. 27, "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." We know how suddenly a flash of lightning appears. At such a season, it may be, the clouds previously cover the heavens; there is the appearance of a gathering storm: but when and where it will burst, no one can say. In an instant, the flash is seen lighting up the heavens. Thus our Lord will come.

In another passage, the advent of our Lord is compared to a snare which suddenly entraps the prey. How unexpected is this! The unus



pecting bird, it may be, is singing among the branches, not anticipating any evil. She invites her brood to descend and take some small particle of food, which her maternal eye has discerned upon the grass. In the moment of her descent, with all her young about her, she finds, too late, that this tempting morsel was but a bait. She is taken in the snare, and thus falls into the hands of the fowler. Thus, again it is written, shall be the coming of the Son of man: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For *as a snare* shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." (Luke xxi. 34, 35.)

In a third place, the coming of our Lord is compared to the destruction of the old world and the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. How sudden were these events! "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark; and the flood came, and destroyed them all." Such was the deluge! And in the narrative of the burning of Sodom, the Holy Spirit hath, in a peculiar manner, set forth how unexpectedly this awful judgment was sent. It is written, "*The sun was risen upon the earth when*

*Lot entered into Zoar.*" Thus when the inhabitants of Sodom awoke, they perceived nothing peculiar in the morning sky. The sun appeared with his accustomed brightness, and no evil seemed to portend the city. The inhabitants went forth to buy and sell, to eat and drink, as they had done on the preceding day. "Then," it is said, at this moment of apparent calm and dazzling sunshine, "the Lord rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." "Even thus," my brethren, "shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."\*

In the passage I have chosen for our present consideration, another emblem is employed; an illustration which, if possible, ought, from its being so frequently repeated, to strike us still more forcibly. It is recorded, by the Evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke,† as used by the Saviour upon two different occasions; "If the goodman of the house had known what hour *the thief* would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through." St. Paul, too, in his first epistle to the Thesalonians, writes thus: "Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as *a thief in the night.*" St. Peter, also, in his sec-

\* Luke xvii. 30. † Matt. xxiv. 43. Luke xii. 39.

ond General Epistle, declares, that "the day of the Lord will come *as a thief in the night*; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." And we read, in the admonition of our Lord to the angel of the church in Sardis, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee *as a thief*, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." When this remarkable similitude occurs in our text, it is with this additional emphasis that the whole sentence bursts upon us with the suddenness of the midnight robber. To this point I have already directed your attention. This emphatic warning occurs, you perceive, in the midst of the description given by St. John of the pouring out of the sixth vial of the wrath of God. At the moment when "the kings of the earth and of the whole world" are being gathered together by "the spirits of devils working miracles," "to the battle of the great day of God Almighty," a cry is suddenly heard, like the voice of a trumpet, from the Bridegroom of the Church, "*Behold, I come as a thief.*" This call to his professing followers comes as unexpectedly as the entrance of a thief into the peaceful dwelling of a slumbering householder.



It is by these repeated declarations, and by these striking emblems, that the suddenness of the advent of our blessed Lord is declared. Oh! that the Holy Spirit, of his infinite mercy and goodness, would deeply impress our minds with this important truth; so that, instead of being like those to whom the Lord shall come unawares, we may be of that happy number who are making ready for his appearing, and who, when He does come, shall be able to say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

II. Let us now attend to the counsel given by our Lord in connexion with the sudden announcement of his coming: *Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.* The first part of the description here presented, *Blessed is he that watcheth*, fully accords with the counsel which our Lord had previously given to his disciples in his remarkable prophecy delivered upon the Mount of Olives: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."\*

\* Mark xiii. 35—37. See also Matt. xxiv. 42; and xxv. 13. Luke xxi. 36.

The same counsel is given by the apostles of our Lord, St. Peter and St. Paul: "The end of all things is at hand: *be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*"\* "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; *but let us watch and be sober.*"† The word *sober* not only includes such a temperance in diet that the body be not overcharged with surfeiting or excess of wine, but it more especially refers to sobriety of mind; or to that temperament which preserves its possessor from worldly care and anxiety, from that eager desire for earthly objects which acts like an intoxicating potion. Against this the Lord would caution his followers. As he grants, so he directs them to seek after "the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind;" a discreet and chastened judgment, not elevated by temporary success, or cast down by unforeseen difficulties; but a spirit kept in a state quick to apprehend, and prompt to execute, whatever may be required in the service of the Lord.

That the mind should be so disciplined is of great moment; for it is not a sudden flash of

\* 1 Peter iv. 7.

† 1 Thess. v. 4—6.

ardor, or a hasty ebullition of fiery zeal that will suffice. A Christian soldier has counted the cost in the retirement of his closet. There he makes his calculation; and there he deliberately reckons "all things but dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." He is not surprised by difficulties, or turned aside by temporary reverses. He pursues his steady course, following the great Captain of his salvation "through evil report and good report." He does not imagine the sky will be always clear, but, like an experienced mariner, without foreboding evil, he provides for future storms.

This sobriety is the more requisite at the present time for the faithful followers of Christ to obviate the prejudice which is sometimes entertained against those who obey the command of the inspired apostle, to "take heed to the more sure word of prophecy, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." While these prejudices have, to a certain extent, been promoted by the crude, fanciful, and visionary interpretations of some rash expositors of this mysterious book, it should ever be borne in mind, that among the students of prophecy have been found the most wise and the most holy of the servants of the Lord. It was the prophet Daniel, the prime minister of the monarch of Babylon, a counsellor



whom his royal master "in all matters of wisdom and understanding found ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm;"—it was this wise man, a man of prayer, one "greatly beloved" of the Lord, who, by his diligent study of the prophetic books, understood the time when the Lord would deliver his people from captivity; and who, as a true patriot, set himself to prayer for this desirable object. In this study others, also, of the eminent servants of the Lord, both under the Old and the New Testament dispensations, have been deeply engaged. The inspired prophets of the olden time, not satisfied with delivering the heavenly oracles to the Jewish people, "inquired and searched diligently what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow."

Of these things I remind you, my beloved friends, lest any individual present should entertain the feeling to which I have referred. Let such an one be assured, that, when this study is pursued, as it was by the prophet Daniel, with earnest prayer to God for Divine teaching—and this my beloved brethren, is the mode we would most strongly recommend—there is not any

employment which has a greater tendency to enlarge the mind, to humble the spirit, to sanctify the affections, and to elevate the soul, than the careful study of the writings of the inspired prophets. These portions of Holy Writ are among the most choice gifts of God to His most honored servants, bestowed when they enjoyed the most intimate communion and fellowship with the Lord.\*

Be sober, then, my beloved brethren; let your spirit and conversation be such as to manifest that your high esteem for the prophetic Scriptures has not arisen from a momentary impression, but is the result of a diligent study of the oracles of God, with earnest prayer for Divine instruction.

I pass on, however, to the express language of our text—“*Blessed is he that WATCHETH.*” This admonition extends beyond sobriety of mind; the latter referring to the inward frame, the former to the outward conduct. Be vigilant. Stand upon your watch-tower. Mark the movements of the enemy. Think not you are safe because you have obtained partial success, nor vainly imagine that, having passed the day securely, the night will not have its dangers. “Let your loins be girded about and your lights

\* See Dan. ix. 20, &c.; Jer. xxxii. 16 to the end; Rev. i. 10.

burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord when he shall return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open to him *immediately.*"

This vigilant spirit, in regard to the coming of our Lord, implies *the expectation* of this great event. For men are not set to look for the arrival of a person who is not expected; nor do we watch for the coming of a friend, when no intimation has been given concerning his approach. Here, therefore, it is understood, that from the study of the sacred Scriptures, and from an assured faith in their truth as the Word of God, an expectation is wrought in the mind that this event will undoubtedly happen; that "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry;" and that "unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

There is also implied a consciousness of the *uncertainty of the hour* in which this event may happen. Although esteem for a friend we love may, long before the time, beget an earnest desire for his arrival, it is not until near the day he has fixed for coming that we expect his approach. When, therefore, it is said, "*Blessed is he that watcheth,*" it implies a consciousness of uncertainty as to the time when the event shall



come to pass. He may come in the first, or the second, or the third watch. He hath not so precisely fixed the very time that we can say at what moment He will arrive. It may be "at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning." I must therefore be watching; for I cannot say when it will be.

An *earnest longing for His appearance* is also implied; so that in the anticipation of His coming we are led to watch the movements of His Providence, and feel the time to be long while He is absent. The believer will say, "Why is His chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of His chariot?" Or he will partake of the spirit of David, when he said, "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say more than they that watch for the morning." Until the Lord shall appear it is night time with the Church; and she longs for the day; she watches for the streaks of the early dawn, and is ready to hail with gladness the first tokens of the coming of her Lord. As when some very dear friend is expected the eye almost involuntarily turns, when the hour of his arrival draws near, toward the quarter from whence it is believed he will come, so he who *watches* is longing for the advent of his Lord. He loves His "appearing." He says from his inmost

soul, "Come quickly. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Such, beloved friends, will be the state of mind of one who partakes of this blessed character. Oh! that this may be the spirit in which every one now present may be "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God."

All that I have stated is implied in the expression, "*Blessed is he that watcheth.*" But it is not the whole. The counsel given by our Lord, like an order from a great military commander, is short, but most expressive. A single word, "*Watch!*" but this one term contains a volume. For it includes not only this diligent preparation for His coming, but a spirit of constant vigilance. That we watch the providences of God, so as to meet the Lord in his ways; that we watch the first risings of sin in the heart, so as to check it in the very germ; that we watch against whatever may "grieve the Holy Spirit;" since it is by His active grace, that the spiritual life is begun, maintained, and advanced; and that we watch, in a very special manner, against the dangers with which the church of Christ is encompassed. And who, my beloved friends, can measure the extent of these dangers in these "perilous times?"

To mention only a very few of them. The

danger, for instance, of self-deception. At all times we are exposed to this from the deceitful workings of the human heart. In the present day, however, there is a peculiar liability for persons to be deceived. The prejudices against the preaching of the Gospel, which existed some few years since, are, with regard at least to its general statements, much lessened. The spread of Divine truth among the higher and middle classes has given a greater respectability to an open profession of religion. The numerous societies also having a religious object in view, but not requiring any qualification in their members beside an annual subscription, have a tendency to promote this self-deception. A person constantly hearing the truths of the Gospel, attending the meetings of religious institutions, mixing with sincere Christians, to whose society he becomes attached from their mild and gentle manners, and engaging with them in their benevolent objects, will frequently entertain a certain self-approbation, which is quite consistent with the feelings of the natural man, but which the individual himself may mistake for true spirituality of mind. As, therefore, scarcely anything in the present day is more easy than to make a profession of religion, so few things are more easy than to be deceived by such a



profession. It should, therefore, be strongly borne in mind, that conversion is not a mere outward act; it is an inward change of the soul. The thoughts and desires, the hopes and fears, the pleasures and sorrows, of a converted man are all changed. Let each, then, ask himself, in what period of his course a change like this has taken place. For, excepting those who have received the grace of God in their very tender years, all who have lived according to the general course of the world will be able to trace a season, more or less distinctly marked, when such a change occurred. They will recollect, for instance, that at such a time they entered into their closets, and, with an earnestness they had never felt before, prayed to the Lord to forgive their sins, to enlighten their understandings, to give them a new heart, and to impart therewith strength to run in the ways of His commandments.

Another danger to which the hearers of the Gospel are exposed in the present day is, a departure "from the simplicity that is in Christ," or from the plain simple truth as it is in Jesus.

We find, that very early in the Christian Church there were these departures from the faith. We perceive either a Judaizing spirit,

requiring the Gentiles to observe the Mosaical ceremonies; or a philosophizing spirit, corrupting the truth with the false wisdom of men; or a sectarian spirit rending asunder the bond of peace under different leaders. To departures like these we are especially exposed in the present day. We need, therefore, to be reminded of the solemn words addressed by St. Paul to the churches in Galatia, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." The revelation that God has made to man comprises the strongest arguments and the most powerful motives that can be devised. And it is well deserving remark, that, in examining the addresses delivered by St. Paul to persons of very different stations in life and of various dispositions, namely, the prejudiced Jews, the polite Athenians, the luxuriant inhabitants of Ephesus, and the superstitious Lycaonians, we find, that, although the introductory parts of his discourses vary, the conclusion of all is the same. He calls all to repentance. He preaches the Lord Jesus Christ once crucified, but now risen from the dead, and exalted to the right

hand of God, as the only ground of salvation, the only Mediator between God and man, the only source of inward sanctification, the only hope of everlasting life.

The spirit of the age, my beloved friends, and the prevalence of false teachers, expose us in a peculiar manner, to the danger of departing from this primitive simplicity. It would, however, occupy too much of your time further to dwell upon these distressing errors. Enough has been said to show the need we have to watch. I only add therefore, what is especially included in the counsel of our Lord, the watching *unto prayer*. Without this accompaniment our vigilance would be like that of an infant watching the inroads of an army. We find these graces constantly united. Our Lord said to his disciples, "*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;*" and again, "*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*" It was the neglect of this all-important charge which led Peter to deny his Lord, and the other disciples to flee from him. It well demands our notice, that, in the night in which our Lord was betrayed, although the disciples enjoyed such privileges as none but themselves ever possessed; though they



conversed with our Lord as with a friend; though they received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, administered to them by the Saviour himself; though they united with Him when He offered up His most beautiful intercessory prayer, yet still forgetting His word, "*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,*" during that very night they all fell into sin: they either denied their Lord or forsook Him.

It would be difficult for us to set too high an estimate upon prayer. It is the great moral means that God, in his wisdom and goodness, has provided for imparting blessings to his people. It is their distinguishing grace. We read, "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?" It gives to them the strength of Omnipotence; for it contains a force which, if we may use the expression, the Almighty himself cannot resist. These were his words to his servant Moses, "*I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: NOW THEREFORE LET ME ALONE, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.*"\* "Let me alone," as if, had Moses continued in fervent supplication, he would have exercised a power which the Lord could not withstand.

\* Exodus xxxii. 9, 10.

How encouraging an example of the blessing of a prayerful spirit does the history of the prophet Daniel afford! "*At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved.*"\* Not only was his prayer for the deliverance of his people answered, but far more was granted to him than he had asked. The period was revealed to him at which Messiah was to come "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Time would fail me to describe the blessedness of prayer. It, more than anything else, brings man to his becoming posture as a poor, weak, needy, helpless sinner. Prayer, at the same time, especially honors God; for it manifests his omnipotence, his providential care, his beneficent goodness, and overflowing bounty; his tender sympathy and parental compassion. Prayer, we may also add, especially glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ; for it is through Him alone that our petitions find access to God. It is the merit of His one offering, the sweet savor of his intercession, the love his Father bears unto Him, and his hearing Him at all times, which cause our broken supplications to be accepted.

\* Daniel ix. 23.

Yes, it is because "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," that we have boldness in drawing nigh to the throne of grace; for we are assured, that through Him we shall "obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in every time of need."

Oh, that the Lord would grant to us, my beloved friends, "the Spirit of grace and of supplications," so as to make prayer our delight, and communion with Him our sweet employment, counting the moments we spend with our God the most choice and the most blessed of our lives.

III. I must pass on to the latter part of the counsel, "Blessed is he that watcheth, *and keepeth his garments.*"

This expression is considered to have an allusion to the service of the temple. It was customary for the Levites, during the night, to guard the different entrances of the temple; and for this purpose, twenty-four wards, or companies, were set. To see that they properly performed the service, one was appointed as the provost, called the man of the mountain of the house of God. He went round about unto every ward, during the night with torches burning before him; and every warder that did not say, "Thou man of the mountain of the house, peace be unto thee," it was known that he was



asleep, and he did beat him with his staff, and burn his garment. So that sometimes they said in Jerusalem, "What noise is in the court?" and they answered, "It is the cry of a Levite who is beaten, and has had his garments burnt, because he slept at his watch."\* We may easily conceive with what shame he would appear when morning came. He would be seen with his garments burnt, and the skirts stripped off, so that all who beheld him would know that he had neglected his duty, and slept at his post. In contrast to these slumbering Levites, our Lord pronounces a blessing upon those who, like the watchful warders, keep their garments.

The emblem is one of great force in its application to the garments of salvation. These consist, first, of the robe of righteousness which the Saviour has wrought out for our justification before God, by his obedience unto death; a garment which is freely bestowed upon all who believe in his name. The other, the robe of sanctification; the garment of an inward purification of the soul, and of that holy conversation before men which becometh the Gospel. The one robe is that which is made white by the blood of the Lamb; the other is that which is adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit.

\* See the works of Lightfoot, vol. i., p. 919.

By keeping these garments, we may understand preserving them in their purity, according to the charge given to the angel of the Church of Sardis, "Thou hast a few names, *which have not defiled their garments*, and they shall walk with me in white;" or, as this emblem is employed by St. Jude, "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating *even the garment spotted by the flesh*." Keeping the garments, therefore, includes in it a continual application to the precious blood of Christ, and to the sanctifying energy of the Holy Spirit. It implies, also, a wariness in avoiding the defilements of sin; diligence in improving the means of grace; and carefulness in walking with God. As well might any one suppose he could walk through the streets of this metropolis in the winter season and keep every part of his dress free from spots, as the Christian imagine he could mix unreservedly in the prevailing course of this world, and keep his garments white. He considers, therefore, if we may so speak, that he is attired in his court-dress; that he is wearing the robes in which he is to appear before the King; and, therefore, he walks circumspectly. He carefully shuns whatever is of a polluting nature; and while he trusts altogether in the merit of the atoning blood and perfect righteousness of his

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he remembers that it is written, "*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*"

All this, my Christian friends, is included in watching and keeping the garments; and blessed, yea, truly blessed, is that believer who is thus waiting for his Lord. So our text declares, "**BLESSED** is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments;" for he is delivered from those fears and anxieties which often fill the minds of the worldly; sources of distress, which will more and more increase as the coming of our Lord draweth nigh. For, while men who have cast off all restraint may "have their consciences seared as with a hot iron," so that, like the unjust judge, they "fear not God nor regard man," those who attend the services of the Church, who occasionally read the Holy Bible, and who meet from time to time with truly consistent Christians, cannot but have inward misgivings. They will say to themselves at times, How will it be with me when He who once appeared in our nature and tabernacled on earth, shall come again as He hath promised, "to be glorified in his saints," and, "to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of the



Lord Jesus Christ?" How can I meet him? My principles and my conduct proclaim that I am not among his friends. It must, therefore, be a dreadful meeting to me. These thoughts oppress the mind, and produce much inward distress. It is not very long since a nobleman of high rank, surrounded by apparent gaiety and external splendor, took the opportunity of a momentary absence of his usual acquaintances to confess to a casual godly visiter, "I have the forebodings of death upon me, and I am, at this moment, miserable beyond expression. Can you tell me how to obtain any consolation?"

From these agitating fears, those who are watching for the coming of their Lord, and keeping their garments, are graciously delivered. For why should they fear? Have they not fled for refuge to their coming Saviour? Is He not their friend and their Redeemer? Has He not engaged never to leave them nor forsake them? And hath he not promised, that they shall "sit with Him upon his throne, even as He is set down with his Father in his throne?"

This, however, is only a part of the blessedness of the true followers of our Lord. They have the delightful anticipation of the "glory to be revealed" frequently presented to their minds. For, if he who is watching for the arrival of a

friend, not only looks toward the place from whence he is coming, but refreshes his spirit with thoughts of the pleasure of the meeting, of the sight of his friend, of the joy of his countenance, of the sweet communion and fellowship to be possessed in his society; so it is with those who are waiting for the coming of their Lord. They are often meditating upon the blessedness of that day. They frequently revolve in their minds such declarations as these: "*When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory;*" and again, "*It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.*" We shall be *like Him* in our outward frames; for He "will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." We shall be *like Him* also, in the inner man, being entirely conformed to his image, in knowledge and righteousness and true holiness; loving God with our whole souls, and delighting in Him as our God; yea, our Father and our friend forever and ever.

Thus, ere the blessed day actually comes, a true Christian hath a foretaste of its joy: "for as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." To him, therefore, the sweet promise is, in a measure, fulfilled, that his days shall be "*as the days of*

*heaven upon earth.*" Filled with bright hope, his joyful soul speeds on its heavenly way; and while the Redeemer sitteth upon his throne, expecting till all his enemies be made his footstool, He longs to see Him, and be with Him for evermore.

Hence it is, my beloved friends, that you will generally see those Christians who are most watchful, and most prayerful, and whose eyes are most frequently directed toward their home, men of cheerful spirits. For they know by experience the truth of the Word, "*Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.*"

Permit me, then, in conclusion, especially to recommend the established believer deeply to ponder and to pray over the words of the text. Far be it from me to wish to occupy your thoughts with vain or fanciful speculations; but I would earnestly entreat you to be of that blessed company who are "*watching, and keeping their garments.*" I desire it for your own present happiness, being convinced that there is an indescribable force in that word in the text, "*Blessed.*" Watchfulness is the very state in which the true followers of our Lord have been, when they have enjoyed most of the consolations of the Holy Spirit. Thus favored, they feel they re-



quire but one thing, the presence of their Lord. The frowns of the world distress them not; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. The cares of the world disturb them not; for He who is coming to put an end to every care hath said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The pleasures of the world tempt them not; for "in thy presence is fulness of joy; and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Oh! then, my beloved Christian brethren, as the early believers were those who had their conversation in heaven, who were "looking for the coming,"\* "praying for the coming,"† "hoping for the coming,"‡ "waiting for the coming,"§ of the Lord Jesus; so, in these latter days, let it be your care especially to take heed to his warning, "*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.*"

That this may become, more and more, the habit of your mind, let me recommend to you a *sober study* of the Word of God. I say, *sober*, meaning by this, that we should take his word in its proper character, as that book which can alone guide our feet into the way of peace. Oh! my friends, how ought we to value the Bible in

\* Titus ii. 13.

† Rev. xxii. 20.

‡ 1 John iii. 1-3.

§ 1 Thess. i. 10.

the present day! It is the only volume which can impart true wisdom to the mind, and real consolation to the heart. Sometimes we are asked, what book we would recommend an inquirer after truth to peruse. We answer, **THE BIBLE**. Read more of **THE WORD OF GOD**, and less of the word of man. Read the Bible, soberly, constantly, patiently, diligently. Read the Bible with earnest prayer for divine teaching. Read it as that book of which our Saviour saith, "*The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you at the last day.*" The more attentively it is thus perused, the more will its matchless excellence be seen.

What adoring wonder should this blessed book inspire! In the prophecies of Daniel, we have a scheme unfolded, which has already embraced a period of above two thousand four hundred years, including in it the great empires of the world. It takes in shorter and more lengthened periods; some already fulfilled, and others which appear on the eve of accomplishment. When the mind traces the different links of this vast chain, and beholds them all interwoven with one glorious purpose, surely we must admire the wisdom, the power, the goodness, and the faithfulness of God. The soul rises with the survey, and is ready to exclaim, How happy is that man whose faith is built on so sure a rock! Again,

therefore, would I recommend a sober study of the word of God, and with it a sober attention to passing events: not yielding to ardent feelings, or to the hasty conclusions of a lively imagination; nor construing trivial occurrences as the direct fulfilment of the prophecies regarding the latter days; but coolly and deliberately to exercise a prayerful judgment upon the events the providence of God brings before us. To be like the prophet Habakkuk, who said, "I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved."

How delightful it is, my beloved friends, to refresh our spirits by reflecting upon the perfect confidence and quiet composure of mind with which the true Christian may watch the steps of the Great Ruler of the universe. All the events set forth in prophecy are ordered to promote the advancement of the kingdom of God, and the final happiness of his people. At the coming of the Son of man, there were, indeed, to "be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." But



this awful period is the season concerning which our Lord hath said, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." The very events which will bring dismay to the hearts of scoffers and infidels, and mere time-serving professors, are the occurrences which will bring joy and gladness to the faithful followers of our Lord.

Yes, my beloved Christian friends, we have no cause for fear; for "greater is He that is for us, than they that are against us." "Our Redeemer is mighty: the Lord of Hosts is his name." He is "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." And "He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under his feet."

Let me, further, with the authority of a father, and the affection of a friend, the desire of whose heart is your salvation, who would not see one individual in this large assembly in danger, without stretching out his hand, if possible, to rescue him,—Let me, I say, should there be any present who have not yet sincerely cast themselves at the feet of our Lord, now persuade you to flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel. It is not yet too late; but still the Lord waiteth to be gracious. His word still is "*Who-soever will, let him take the water of life freely.*"

Oh, then, "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near."

To all present I would say, view this lecture as a response from the servants of the Lord on earth, to the awakening warning which He is at this time giving by his Word, by his Spirit, and by his Providence, from Heaven: "*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.*" Oh! that the Lord may thus incline every heart! May there not be an individual present hardy enough to neglect the warning; but, touched in his inmost soul by the love of Christ in sending the message, animated by the hope that it has not come too late, and earnestly desiring to partake of the blessings the saints will enjoy on that great day, may each for himself, say, "*Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation.*"

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy: to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

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