

## Prayer and Watchfulness in the Conflict

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**W**E ARE EXHORTED TO PRAY always, to watch unto prayer, lest Satan crowd in between the soul and God, or mingle with our prayers to such a degree that God and Christ shall be shut out from our view, that the pledged word of God shall be made of no effect. He would so engage the mind that those who profess to be Christians shall have only a few stray thoughts of God, and engage in occasional, listless seasons of prayer. He would have them neglect to come to God, who is the great reservoir of power.

The great Teacher, Jesus Christ, would show us something better than anything we have yet known. He would impress upon our minds the necessity of putting forth an earnest effort, of making that sincere supplication for wisdom and grace that would be in proportion to the object that we as Christians are in pursuit of. What is the chaff to the wheat? "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Satan is constantly at work to present worldly things in so attractive a light that the Christian may be bribed to make the world his first consideration. Should he induce the Christian to seek for worldly treasures, and make the things of God of secondary importance, he could readily efface the image of God from the soul. The things that are seen are diversified in character, and they solicit the attention and crave the highest place in the thoughts, and there is continual danger that the things of this world will gain the supremacy, and cause us to neglect the things of priceless value. Jesus has brought heaven to view, and presents its glory to our eyes in order that eternity may not be dropped out of our reckoning. With warning voice he cries: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break

through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

The Lord has the interests of his creatures in view. He presents heaven before the vision, and in so doing is planning for our peace on the earth. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." We are to make investments in heavenly interests, and always work with heaven in view, laying our treasure up in the bank of heaven. As obedient children of God, we shall receive the impress of the divine image, and our anticipations cannot be exaggerated in regard to the value and security of our heavenly investments, for we are made certain of the stability of heaven. While we keep heaven in view, we are enabled to enjoy the mercies bestowed in this life with superior relish. We do not set the heart upon them, and if we lose them we have a treasure in heaven.

The Lord says, "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Those who heed this instruction will not be placing their treasure in an uncertain bank. They will be making sacrifices for Jesus; and every sacrifice and self-denial made in his name will bring its recompense of reward. Those who acquit themselves as faithful stewards of their Lord's goods, who consecrate their talents to his service, using their means and influence and ability to further his cause in the earth, have the promise that they shall be requited, not because the Lord is indebted to any human agency, but because they have the mind of Christ. They make it evident in their life that the truth has transformed their characters, that through the Spirit their souls have been sanctified. To such the Lord of heaven promises that in this life they shall have an hundred-fold, and in the world to come eternal life.

Every effort to overcome selfishness and sin, every effort to use the talents God has given, not to glorify self, but to honor God, will make us more meet to be among those who shall be

blessed in the kingdom of God. Those who deny self become partakers of the divine nature, and are one with Christ and the Father. The daily experience of this life is preparing us to become members of the royal family. Jesus came to this earth to engage in a struggle with Satan and his angels in behalf of fallen men. Jesus knows the temptations and difficulties that man will have to meet in the battle, and he knows and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. While he takes his followers to an eminence, and shows to them the vast confederacy of evil that is arrayed against them, he also shows them the crown of life. He reminds them that there is much at stake, and shows them the plan of the battle, pointing out their dangers, and bidding them count the cost. He sets before them the fact that if they are victorious in the conflict, they gain everything. He tells them that heavenly angels will cooperate with them against the hosts of evil, and that they may become workers together with God, because they are children of light and not of darkness. Their warfare will consist in pressing back the powers of darkness, in taking the strongholds of the enemy, and he shows them that they have One mightier than the angels of heaven in their ranks. The Captain of the Lord's host is with them, and gives them divine assistance. His voice is heard saying, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

The children of the heavenly King are fighting in the sight and presence of the whole universe of God, and this fact should nerve us for the conflict, leading us to go on conquering and to conquer. It is impossible for man in his own unaided strength to overcome the natural propensities to evil. There is no saving quality in the law, to save the transgressor of the law, and yet no man who has had light as to the binding claims of the law will be excused from obedience by the great Lawgiver because it is inconvenient to keep God's commandments, because it would injure man's popularity, or hurt his worldly interests. In the judgment the law will be seen to be the test of character. It is the settled purpose of Satan to deceive men today as he deceived Eve in Eden, and lead them to disregard the command of God, and accept something

beside God, something independent of God, something in opposition to God.

Those who accept of the suggestions of Satan do not live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, as did Abraham. They do not keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. They go in pursuit of riches, and are filled with desire for other things. They take upon them the care of this world. There is a care that is essential. It is a prudent forethought concerning temporal matters, and it is in harmony with reason; but the care that is condemned is that which is brought upon the soul by following the suggestions of Satan, practicing falsehoods in order to gain wealth or to procure position. This kind of care is the result of distrust and alienation from God; and the human agent, instead of being a laborer together with God, becomes a colaborer with Satan. Circumstances seem beyond the control of the one who renders allegiance to the evil one. He works at cross purposes with God. He is not pleased with himself. He has so many vain desires, so many perplexing thoughts, and does so many things that he despises. When he hears the word of God, he feels condemned, but wicked purposes master him, for he has no strength to resist Satan's suggestions, and the word of God does not find a lodgment in his heart. While his eyes and his thoughts are drawn to the earth, he cannot see eternal realities.

"No man can serve two masters." The theories of Satan continually choke the word in his mind. There is no vacuum for the Holy Spirit within in which to find room to dwell. The character on the world's side is strengthening, while the character on Christ's side is growing more and more feeble by being engrossed in inferior matters. The atom of this world becomes a world, and the eternal world becomes an atom. *Signs of the Times*, April 4, 1895.