

Watchful, Prayerful Saints

Luke 21:34-38

October 13, 2024

Well, we are with mixed feelings, for me anyway, coming to the end of this amazing chapter, Luke 21 and Jesus' teaching on the Olivet Discourse. This great chapter along with the parallels in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, this chapter stands with other eschatological teachings such as Luke 12, Luke 17. All these passages are seminal to the vital New Testament doctrine of last things, of what is coming in the end.

Michael Allen in his, no relation by the way, but Michael Allen in his book, *The Fear of the Lord*, he draws attention to the significance of this subject of eschatology and what he, what he draws attention to, and I really appreciate it, because it, it is out of step with many today who want to relegate end times teaching to the level of an intellectual hobby, are those who are date setters or headline watchers, on corners of the Internet.

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Michael Allen takes the subject of eschatology seriously and he writes this saying, "Appreciating what is possessed by the Christian now depends upon seeing the Kingdom of God *come*, union with Christ *achieved*, the gift of the life-giving Spirit of God *granted*... eschatology *cannot* wait to be addressed as a final topic in theology, but demands to be brought forward and to shape how other, doctrines,"-Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, ecclesiology, for example- how those doctrines, "are to be addressed." End Quote.

You hear what he's saying. He's saying eschatology should not be relegated to, oh, those matters of unimportance, those matters that are curious subjects for us to ponder, but not really serious for our everyday living. He says no, no, no, eschatology really does belong right in the mix and maybe even the forefront of even how we think about Christ, about the Spirit, about salvation, about the church itself, how we are to address those subjects.

Foregrounding eschatology is justified by just how prevalent this subject, the doctrine of last things, how prevalent this is

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in Scripture, in both, the New Testament, obviously, as we just read the last chapter of the Bible, but the Old Testament, as well; all through the prophets, even going back into Deuteronomy, going all the way back to Genesis.

Michael Allen points this out too. He says, "Eschatology involves more than that which we *await*,... it takes in... all that which God has been doing to bring creation to its fitting fulfillment. In this regard, eschatology really does predate soteriology, and even the fall, in as much as Genesis 1:28 to 30 is prior to Genesis 3." End Quote.

Genesis 1:28 to 30, Let man be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it. That's pointing to the fulfillment, to the intention of God, to the very end, to what has just been read; we read earlier in Revelation 22. In other words, the God who declared the end from the very beginning, the one who takes upon himself the name, the Alpha and the Omega, that title that also belongs, by the way, to Jesus Christ.

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Put a little footnote in your mind that that is a great connection for Jehovah's Witnesses, who deny the deity of Jesus Christ. Both the father and the son are called the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Just a footnote for you, but the God who declared the end from the beginning, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, he is the one who set the doctrine of eschatology at the forefront by including it in Creation Week.

By doing that, God has forecasted the end, his purpose for his people, that they should live in his presence and do so forever and ever. That's his intention. That's what we see in Genesis 1. That's what we see fulfilled in Genesis, in Revelation 22, 21 and 22. Think about it, in Genesis 1 and 2, to live in his presence. That's portrayed literally in the beauty and the goodness of that identic paradise, to live in his presence forever. That's also portrayed there in the beginning, literally by the endless day of Sabbath rest, a Sabbath that God blessed and God sanctified, set apart as holy, gave to us as a perpetual remembrance.

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Why is it that we have a seven-day week? Because God ordained it from the very beginning. "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, and the seventh shall be a rest holy unto God." He gave that Sabbath as a perpetual remembrance. We just confessed that this morning together. So we should treat this day as holy by prioritizing the fellowship, by prioritizing worship of God together, by setting aside all worldly things, all other pursuits, all other priorities, all other pastimes, all other hobbies, and setting this day as more important than all the rest.

What God revealed from the very first chapter of Scripture, that we should live and worship in his presence forever; that story comes to its fulfillment and its completion in the final chapter of the Bible in Revelation 22, and in all the details that God revealed that are important to the storyline of Scripture. Details about how it's all going to go down; what the end is going to look like.

And these details were certainly important to the disciples, the men that we have, kind of, tried to sit in their seat, walk in

their shoes, be there with them on the Mount of Olives as they listen to Jesus Christ teach and deliver this great address. They're listening intently to the details that pertain to the fate and the future of their own nation, the nation of Israel. They want to know when the eschatology that Jesus is predicting, when this is all going to take place, what the signs of this will be. This is, Jesus is telling them in the Olivet Discourse in Luke 21, Matthew 24, Mark 13. He's telling them what's coming.

Luke is the only synoptic author, by the way, whose account of the Olivet Discourse focuses, at least in a section of it there, on the AD70 destruction of Jerusalem. Mark and Matthew, they look ahead to the tribulation, to the Antichrist, to the abomination of desolation that happens within the temple. And that brings an end to the times of the Gentiles.

Just as, the times of the Gentiles, that's also connected to Luke 21:24. But after that, after the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, then we see the signs of Christ's return and we see the second coming. Now as Jesus predicts the triumph that's

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going to emerge from the tragedy of the temple, the tragedy in Jerusalem in AD70; the restoration that's going to come upon, that's going to come to Israel after this long season of judgment, being trampled underfoot by the Gentiles.

The disciples no doubt have a myriad of prophetic texts that are flooding their minds. And one of them, if you've been keeping up with our church's daily Bible reading and our plan, one of them we read this past week. So just to get your mind a little bit into the mind of the disciples, let's turn back to one of those texts, Jeremiah chapter 30.

As we begin this morning and just try to get into the disciples' mind and into their thinking as they hear Jesus speak about their future, I want you to see here the scope of biblical prophecy, the eschatology that shapes all these other doctrines as well. Our Christology, pneumatology, our soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, this eschatology that started in Genesis, that resolves in Revelation, and it involves this peculiar people called the Jews.

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Look at Jeremiah 30 starting in verse 1, "The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, saying, 'Thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, "Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book. For behold, days are coming," declares Yahweh, "when I will return the fortunes of my people Israel and Judah." Yahweh says, 'I will also cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.'" That is that land.

"Now these are the words which Yahweh spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah: 'For thus says Yahweh, we have heard a sound of trembling, of dread, and there is no peace. Ask now, and see if a male can give birth. Why do I see every man with his hand on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? Alas, for that day is great, and there is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, but he will be saved from it.'" "

This Jacob's distress, also in some translations, is Jacob's trouble. This refers to none other than the Great Tribulation to which Jesus referred in Matthew 24:9 to 28, and then also in

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Mark 13:14 to 23, which he revealed to John in the Revelation, Revelation 6 through 19, in which we have seen the first half of the tribulation, Luke 21:8 through 11.

Jacob's trouble in the Great Tribulation is going to come to an end at the midpoint of the seven-year, tribulation; the age of Gentile domination over Jerusalem and the Jews. This is a judgement that began back in AD70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Romans, which Jesus predicted in Luke 21:20 to 24.

Moving on in Jeremiah 30, “‘And it will be in that day,’ declares Yahweh of hosts, ‘that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and I will tear off your bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves. But they shall be a slave to Yahweh their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. Fear not, O Jacob my servant,’ declares Yahweh, ‘and do not be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. And Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease, and no one will make him tremble. For I am with you,’ declares Yahweh, ‘to save you;

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For I will make a complete destruction of all the nations where I have scattered you, only I will not make a complete destruction of you. But I will chasten you justly and will by no means leave you unpunished.'"

That's what Jesus referred to in Luke 21:22, days of vengeance to fulfill all that is written. Great distress upon the land, and upon, and wrath against this people. Why vengeance on the Jews? What is the reason for divine wrath upon the nation of Israel, upon Jerusalem and Judah? Keep reading. "But thus says Yahweh," Jeremiah 30:12. "'Your injury is incurable, and your wound is desperately sick.

"'There's no one to plead your cause; no healing for your sore, no recovery for you. All your lovers have forgotten you; they do not seek you; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the punishment of a cruel one, because your iniquity is numerous and your sins are mighty. Why do you cry out over your iniquity? Your pain is incurable. Because your iniquity is numerous and your sins are mighty, I have done these things to you.'"

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God is executing vengeance upon Israel, upon Judah, Jerusalem. He destroyed his temple in AD70 and he continues to cause that city and that people and that nation to be under the domination of the nations of the Gentiles now for 2000 years. This is why Luke 21:24 says, "They will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

All this has happened quite literally, hasn't it, starting in AD70, continuing up to this very day, as a war goes on in Israel now. But then look at the turn in Jeremiah 30, verse 16, "Therefore all who devour you will be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, will go into captivity; and those who take you as spoil will be spoil, and all who plunder you I will give as plunder. For I will restore you to health, and I will heal you of your wounds," declares Yahweh, 'because they have called you a banished one, saying: "It is Zion; no one is seeking her."'"

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Okay, so if the first part of this prophecy of judgment, and destruction, and desolation has happened quite literally on earth where everybody can see it, visible, physical, why would the restoration promises be spiritualized? Why would they not be physical, literal, visible, where all can see? Why would God not vindicate not only his promise of judgment, which he has, but also his promise of restoration, which is yet to come, before the eyes of all the earth?

Continuing, verse 18, "Thus says Yahweh, 'Behold, I will return the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwelling places; and the city will be rebuilt on its ruin, and the palace will sit on its just place.' And, 'from them we'll come forth thanksgiving, and the voice of those who celebrate; and I will multiply them, and they will not decrease; I will also honor them, and they will not be insignificant.

"Their children also will be as formerly, and their congregation should be established before Me; and I will punish all their oppressors. And their mighty one shall be one of them, and their ruler shall come forth from their midst; and I will

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bring Him near, and He shall approach me; for who would dare to give his heart as security to approach Me?' declares Yahweh.

'You shall be my people, and I will be your God.'"

"Behold the storm of Yahweh! Wrath has gone forth, a sweeping storm; it will burst on the head of the wicked. The burning anger of Yahweh will not turn back until He is done and until He has established the intent of His heart; in the last days you will understand this.'"

It is in the last days that you, Israel, Jeremiah 30, verse 4, and that you, Judah will understand this. Not until then, but then you will understand, in the last days. "Yahweh's burning anger will not turn back until he has done," and until he has accomplished, "until he has established all the intent of His heart." Or in Jesus words, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, then wrath upon the Jews, that's done. Now let's turn to the nations and fulfill all the judgement that I have prophesied against them.

Now, to be clear, we want to come back to our primary text in Luke 21. Let's connect this back to Luke 21, and we'll start

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reading where the disciples are hearing this word of hope. As we transition from verse 24 about their judgement to verse 25 and 26 about the judgement that's coming upon the nations and the rescue of Israel in keeping with the promises of Jeremiah 30 and many other places.

After the times the Gentiles are fulfilled, Jesus says Israel's redemption draws nigh, which must be predicated upon the regeneration of Israel. They must have a new heart and a new spirit, eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand and believe. God will not fulfil his promises to a nation that rejects him still, as we see, but he will bring redemption nigh to a people whom he has regenerated, and that regeneration of Israel signals the fulfillment is coming for all the restoration that God promised to Israel.

Look at verse 25, Luke 21, "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth anguish among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear in the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then

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they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Once those signs begin to occur, it will not take long before all else comes into fulfilment. This is what he says in the next section. "Then he told them a parable, verse 29, "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth leaves, and you see it for yourselves, know that summer is now near." And "so you also, when you see these things happening, know that the Kingdom of God is near.

"Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." As we saw last time, the certainty of Christ's assurance not only gives these disciples, who are hearing all this, such great comfort, such deep conviction in the truth. They are believing representatives of a future regenerate, believing nation of Israel, and this certainty of hope, that all of God's promises will be fulfilled.

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Jesus said it should instill a sense of urgency about how they must live now, and that's what we see in our text for this morning. Look at Luke 21, verse 34, "But be on guard so that your hearts will not be overcome with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who inhabit the face of all the earth. But keep on the alert at all times, praying earnestly that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Since the Olivet Discourse applies directly to the nation of Israel, it applies indirectly to us as believers who live in the times of the Gentiles. It applies indirectly to us, as those who live during the church age. And that means our vantage point at Christ's second coming, it's going to be from the perspective of an invading force, as we accompany Christ.

As it is invasion of the earth, which is really what the second coming is, to come back for judgment, as it says in Revelation

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19:11 to 16, particularly us, in verse 14 of that chapter.

Believers of the church age, as we've been saying, will already have been raptured, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 1 Thessalonians 5 or 4:13 to 17. We believers of the Church age, we're going to pass this seven-year tribulation that's happening on earth, we're going to pass this in heaven with Christ, the Old Testament saints, the angels.

That's where the marriage of the Lamb happens, as the bride of Christ goes to meet the bridegroom, Christ in heaven, he takes us back to the father's house, Jer, John 14:1 to 3. That's when the father gives word; the Christ returns to gather us, and we are going to be with him, never to be parted from him. And when he returns to earth, when the father gives his command, we are going to conduct the most dramatic Halo operation in history. Halo: high altitude, low opening.

We're going to come speeding in, burning into the earth, but we're safe. Evidently, in our glorified state, we're going to land safely without a parachute. I love this. We're going to meet up with the ground element, as Christ himself, our warrior,

our triumphant hero, as he decimates all the ungodly on the earth, as he rescues his people, Israel. We're going to join up with them there.

So for us as believers of the Church Age, we're not heeding Christ's call to watch and pray from the ground at that time, in this seven-year tribulation, watching the second, coming coming, come to us. We do await a rapture though, and there are no signs preceding that event. And so though these verses apply directly to believing Israel, they apply indirectly to us as Christians.

We find the principle here and we boil it down. It's very easy to see how it applies to us in view of Jesus returning to rapture his church, which is going to happen with no warning signs. Which means that the rapture event is quite imminent, isn't it? And in this we see, every generation of God's saints, every single generation, no matter where we live from the time of Christ ascension, Acts chapter 1, "as they saw him departing on the cloud, going up into heaven," Jesus leaving the earth.

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From the time of his ascension, to the time of, his, the rapture, and the time of his second coming, return, every single generation of God's saints, lives in certainty of Christ's imminent return. And this points to the doctrine, doctrine we love dearly, called the perseverance of the saints. If you're a TULIP Acronym follower, it's the P, the perseverance of the saints, or as some say, the preservation of the saints. This is how God preserves his saints; faithful to the end, as they are watchful and they're prayerful, in every single generation, in every place, and every time in history.

Now that's what this is about; this section, verses 34 to 36, is about watchfulness, about prayerfulness. With all these caveats out of the way, bit longer introduction. I hope you'll excuse it, because this is the last message on Luke 21. So I'm going to take some liberties. But with all those out of the way, let's consider this call that Jesus gives to watchfulness, watchfulness. And here's where we get into our outline.

If you're a note taker, three points for this morning. What, why, and how to watch. What to watch, why to watch, how to

watch. Here's the first point, number one: What to watch? What to watch, if we're to be watchful. Watchful for what? Look again at verse 34, Jesus says, "But be on your guard so that your hearts will not be overcome with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap."

The main verb in that sentence is the opening verb, be on your guard. Be on your guard. It's the verb, *prosechō*. It's, it's, to be on the alert, to, to kind of keep your guard up, to pay attention, or simply, we could say, be watchful. Notice, though, how the main verb on watchfulness governs not just one, but two areas of concern, first and primarily your hearts, and then secondarily, and that day.

So what are you to watch for your hearts number one and then number two, that day? Structurally, syntactically, these two points of concern are connected. It's as if we're to watch two things, the heart and that day. It's as if one eye is turned downward, or we could say, inward to the heart, and the other is turned upward, on the heavens. That's sensible for believers who

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live during that seven-year tribulation period. The generation to whom Christ is speaking, represented by the apostles here, he's speaking to them. There are many signs preceding Christ's return. The day and the hour are known only to the father, but the signs are going to prepare his people during that interval of time to be attentive to their hearts, to be attentive to their actions, to be looking inward and upward.

Now for the believers living at that time, what's coming is going to happen to them. They're passive in this. What's it gonna, it's, along with the rest of the inhabitants of the earth, Verse 35, this is coming upon them. So even though they're going to see all these signs, the key point of watchfulness for them, it's their own hearts, isn't it? That's what they can control. They can't control the events of the end of the age. That's the father's plan, that's Christ's execution, but they can attend to their own hearts.

Beloved, it's the same thing for us living today, as we live in the expectation, the imminent return of Christ, to gather his church and take us to him. Same concern as with believers in any

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and every age. It's Proverbs 4:23, "Watch over your heart with all diligence. From it flow the issues of life." Jesus says here, similarly be on your guard so that your hearts will not be overcome.

The verb, literally, it's to be burdened, *bareō*, heaviness. It's related to the verb for, heavy, weighted down. The Old Testament verb, *kāḇôḏ*. *Kāḇôḏ* is heavy, but it's also glory. So the glory is weighty. Here the word is *bareō* comes from a word that means to be weighty, to be heavy. So don't let your hearts be weighed down. It's like trying to run as fast as you can with 200 pounds strapped to your back. That's what it is to be weighted heavy. Be on your guard so your hearts will not be weighed down, what with dissipation and drunkenness and then also the worries of life.

He names three things here that weigh the heart down. The first two are connected: dissipation and drunkenness; forming one matter of concern, and they're distinguished from a second matter of concern called the worries of life. So let's just take them one at a time. First, don't let your heart be weighed down

by self-indulgent living. Don't let your heart be weighed down by self-indulgent living. That's what dissipation and drunkenness refer to. They describe the party and they also describe the unpleasant after effects of the party; the next day.

That first word dissipation, Greek scholar A.T. Robertson says, "This was," Quote, "common in medical writers for the nausea that follows a debauch." End Quote. So this is just talking about a hangover. In modern terms, the lingering effects of the previous night's corruption. The corruption is due to being under the strong influence of wine. *Methu* is the word for wine, and that gives us the word used here, *methē*, a drunkenness, to be intoxicated, to be under the influence.

Now, since Jesus addresses believers with this warning against the dulling, deadening effects of dissipation and drunkenness, there are a number of commentators who see Jesus addressing a deeper root level concern and I happen to agree with them. Looking at the rest of the New Testament, when it talks about dissipation, drunkenness, and warning the believer, it's not

just thinking that everybody in the church is going to be prone to hitting the bottle or taking drugs or whatever the intoxication substance may be.

It's actually, Yes it's that. Yes, there's a literal concern that we don't fall into or engage in those sins, but really there's a deeper concern there in intoxication and in drunkenness. One of the commentators who makes this point says, "A warning against literal drunkenness is no doubt included, but the main force here is probably metaphorical warning disciples against succumbing to the," intoxication, "intoxicating attractions of the sinful world." End Quote.

Obviously, we say this all the time, and we see this at times. Believers are not beyond committing the sin of drunkenness. They're not beyond dulling themselves in their minds and their hearts with intoxicating substances. But as it is with all sins, drunkenness is the fruit, the outward fruit of a much deeper root. There's a sinful desire at work in the heart of the one who hits substances. Just as lust is the root sin that bears the fruit of sexual sin on the outside, fornication, adultery,

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pornography, just as anger is the root sin that bears the fruit of murder and slander and malicious gossip, so also self-indulgence is the root sin that bears the fruit of dissipation and drunkenness.

Many professing Christians seem quite proud that they've never gotten drunk, have never taken drugs, have never become intoxicated, never been under the influence. And I say bravo, I commend that. I think that's great. May you stay far from that sin always, but just be careful that in avoiding that one sin, you don't commit the more subtle sin which grows from the same root of self-indulgence in the heart.

Paul says something similar in warning the Jews. He says in Romans 2:21 and following he says, "You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal?" Let me think about it. Ever cheat on your taxes? Ever download something that is not your property? All kinds of ways we can steal, right? You ever take credit for something that you don't deserve the credit for? "You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?"

In the same spirit, we might add this: You who say that one should not get drunk and become hungover, do you indulge yourself in other ways? Are you lazy? Are you a comfort seeker? You who refuse to come under, the alco, the influence of alcohol and drugs because you're pure; Well, do you allow yourself to come under the influence of worldly intoxicating pleasures that dull your senses, that dull your heart of righteousness, that dull your sensitivities? Do you become proud by avoiding the one sin and engaging in the other?

It's good to stay far from drunkenness. I can't say that enough, especially in a frankly, a drunken and drug addled culture. But we have to go after the root of drunkenness, don't we as Christians? The love of ease, the love of comfort, a self-indulgent love of pleasure, a desire to live exactly as we please, do whatever we want, follow the whims and the impulses of the autonomous self. No one binding our conscience to anything. Because after all, I have freedom in Christ to do whatever I want to do. That is the root in the heart of all who commit the sin of drunkenness.

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Let's not fool ourselves, beloved. We all have this root within ourselves, don't we? Can you admit that? And in rooting out the sin of drunkenness, it's only one side of the watchfulness over our own hearts. Putting off the root sin of self-indulgence is only half the fight. The other half of the fight is positively oriented, that we grow in grace. This is the word of Paul to the Ephesians, in Ephesians 5:18. He, he, he makes the, the parallel by a contrast. He says, "Do not get drunk with wine for that's dissipation." That's this.

That's part one of the fight. Don't get drunk with wine. Good. "But be being filled with the Spirit," be under the influence and the control of the Holy Spirit. So don't just put off the fruit, sin, drunkenness; go after the root of self-indulgence of that which intoxicates you, your pleasures, your desires, your pursuits, your aims, all the things of the world that dull your spiritual senses.

Yeah, put that off, kill that, mortify that root, root it out, pluck it up and throw it away. Yes, but then do the positive

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work, be being filled with the Spirit, be under the influence and the control of the Holy Spirit. Just as you take the substance, whatever it is, wine, alcohol, drug, whatever, you take that substance in and that substance by its chemical properties interact with the chemical properties of your body to change you, to cause you to think, say, and do what you would normally not think, say, and do were you not under that influence.

Well, look at the parallel. By contrast, take in what the Holy Spirit has written. Parallel in Colossians 3:16, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." If you take in the Word of God well, the properties of the Word of God, that eternal, perfect, powerful Word, goes into you. That which is authored by the Holy Spirit, it goes into you, and by its own power it has the ability to renew your mind and transform your life, to cause you to think and say and do, what you would not think and say and do without its influence. You see the connection.

Just as drunkenness produces dissipation, that throbbing headache of the morning's hangover, so it is that the influence

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of the Spirit produces brand new fruit in you; elevated Christian speech in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs that flow from a heart and is expressed to the lips as we speak to one another that way.

A continual heart of gratitude for all things. Yeah, even troubling things. Even being laid in a bed in a hospital, can't move things, even sickness things, even repeated relational turmoil and tragedy, challenge things; giving thanks for all things. And also all the joys like being able to walk around freely, being able to breathe without trouble, having those in your family that are Christians, simple things, profound things, continual heart of gratitude is one of the fruits that flows out of a heart that's being filled with the Spirit, under his control, under his influence.

And then finally in that passage in Ephesians 5:21, submission to others. If you find it hard to live in submission to others, whether it's in your role in the family or whether it's in your role in the workplace or whether it's in your place in the church. If you don't like other people telling you what to do,

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binding your conscience with good things. I'm not saying binding your conscience with worldly things, but binding your conscience, good, with good things. If you don't like that, you got a submission problem, you got an authority issue, and you need to check yourself and see: Am I really being filled, and under the influence of the Spirit? Am I submitting to one another in the fear of Christ?

So watchful against self-indulgent living, which weighs down on the heart, dulls the heart, makes it insensitive to the things of God. And then on the other hand, an opposite danger; second, don't let your heart be weighed down by self-dependent living, self-dependent living or we could just say independent living, which leads to anxious living or in Jesus words, the worries of life, the cares of life.

Anxiety over living, worries is the word, *merimna*. *Merimna* is the word; it refers to an uneasy mind, ill at ease, unsettled anxious heart, fearing about the future over what he calls here, *biotikos*, the stuff of daily life. You hear, *bios*, there. *Bios*, it's sinful concern about ordinary, mundane, common matters of

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living this biological life and taking care of all of our biological needs. They're not unimportant, they're just not the most important. And that's how self-dependent, independent people live. That's how they think.

Those who depend on themselves for provision and for protection, they act like they have no God in heaven, who watches over them, who looks after them, who cares for them and takes care of all their daily needs. Not depending on God, that's not a small sin, that's a big sin. That's a big one, because it's self-reliance, not God reliance. It may be subtle and hard for us to see, but it is a serious slander against God, when we push him to the side and say, I got this.

Jesus expressly commanded in Luke 12:22, "Do not be anxious about your life as to what you will eat, nor for your body as to what you'll put on. For life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing." Don't let the comfort of that passage dull or diminish in any way the command that begins that passage. "Do not be anxious." It's a command, not a suggestion. Instead, he

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says in verse 31, also a command, "But seek his Kingdom, all these things will be added to you."

"Do not fear." he repeats that, "Do not fear, little flock, for your father is well pleased to give you the kingdom." Will not the one who's given you his kingdom, who gave his only son to guarantee your passage into his kingdom, will he not also, along with him, freely give you all things? Romans 8, Oh yes, he will. So then Luke 12:33, he says, "Sell your possessions, give it as charity; make yourselves money belts which don't wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

What is at the root? The root sin of anxiety, worry, and fear, is it not unbelief? Is it not a weakness in believing, or even an outright failure to trust God to provide for you and to protect you? Is it not hideous pride, to rely on self, to depend on self, to turn away from God, who has a much better use for your time and your energy and your ambitions? Won't you give

yourself to his will. These are dangers Jesus repeatedly warned against all through his ministry since very early on.

Luke 8:14, he speaks of it as that which chokes out the good seed, these worries of life; stifles the fruit that the gospel ought to bear and it reveals in the end, if that continues, an unbelieving heart. Luke 8:14, "The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard." Yeah. "And," they go on their way. "As they go on their way, they're choked with worries and riches and pleasures of life, and," they, "do not bear ripe fruit."

I'm convinced that in our churches today there are many thorn choked people sitting, in our, in our chairs and in our pews. They're here, hearing the word of God, but they're choked with the worries and the riches and the pleasures of life. They're self-dependent and they're self-indulgent and yet they continue to take in the Word, week after week and year after year, and they don't bear fruit. Jesus here is reiterating in our text in Luke 21, the same teaching again for his disciples.

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He's not preaching an evangelistic sermon here; he's talking to the saints and he's warning them. These disciples who represent all future generations of disciples, whether predominantly Gentile believers in the church or predominantly Jewish believers of future Israel; believing Israel. No matter what age, at whatever time, in whatever place, Jesus calls us to watchfulness over our hearts, lest they become weighed down with self-indulgence, in whatever form, or anxiety and worry for whatever cause. Beloved, this calls for self-examination, doesn't it?

Don't let this day pass without examining your own heart, without considering what it is that keeps you from undistracted devotion to Christ and his cause, that keeps you from faithfulness to your church, to your, to the saints of your church, to gospel ministry, gospel proclamation, gospel propagation. That's our purpose here on earth, Matthew 28:18 to 20. So fulfil the Great Commission.

So what is it that has the strongest hold on your heart? I mean really be honest before God. Ask him to help you to be honest

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with yourself. Are you self-indulgent? Are you self-dependent? Do you rely on yourself and therefore succumb to worry and anxiety and fear? Or will he show you, as you call for self-examination, as you call for God to reveal to you, does he really show you, you really are at rest in him?

You really are wholly devoted to him in love, and wholly devoted not just in the privacy of your own thoughts, but wholly devoted in a way, that other people can see your zeal for the house of the Lord. As I saw Christ's, could see, others can see outside of you, independent of your input, that you're radically different because of the God you worship, and serve, and obey from the heart.

This leads to a second point, talked about, what to watch, it's watch your heart. Number two, why to watch? Why should we watch? Because those who are self-indulgent and self-dependent are dull and deaded, deadened, weighed down, distracted, and in that dull state, they are not going to see what's coming. Again, verse 34, "Be on your guard, so your hearts will not be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life." And then

this, "and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who inhabit the face of all the earth."

It will come. What will come? "The day, suddenly like a trap; that will come on all those who inhabit the face of all the earth." Why watch? Because watchfulness over the heart is what characterizes every true believer, and it's how God preserves his saints faithful to the end. This is how the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints happens.

Set a watch over your heart. You will never be caught off guard, never taken by surprise. It's the opposite story for the unbeliever. The unbelieving world keeps on indulging the self, lives to please the self. The unbelieving world is self-reliant, does not trust in a good and kind God, but resorts to, in pride, addled by anxiety, he depends on self to provide for his own needs. He depends on himself to protect himself from danger while pursuing their pleasures.

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While tending to the cares and the affairs of everyday life, unbelievers of the world, be, will be so distracted by all those things, they will not see the end coming. "For all who inhabit the face of all the earth." It sounds pretty comprehensive to me. It's universal, it's worldwide. The only exception being the saints who are watching. But for all others, they will be caught, ensnared, trapped in judgement, which this verb speaks of. It happened suddenly and forcibly. It's forced upon them. There'll be no resistance. There will be no Iron Dome to protect. There will be no.

As I read recently in the news, we're putting together some task force to kind of send ships and bombs to blow up any asteroid that might come and destroy the Earth and wipe out all life. There'll be no resisting this. Godet, the commentator says, "The image here is that of a net which, is laying on the ground and, all at once encloses a covey of birds that are peacefully settled in a field." This flock of birds comes and rests and then chirping and biting and squawking and doing whatever birds do in a field. But they don't know, no idea, they've, they've landed on a net that's hidden in the grasses and then traps them, sudden.

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You say, how can that be that they be caught suddenly? Are there not signs popping off like fireworks in the heavens? How can it be? My answer: The Lord says so. First of all, he says they'll be taken by surprise. And that, tale, tells me that we fail to understand or appreciate the hardening, deadening power of sin, of self-indulgence and independence, self-reliance that dulls the heart, that blinds the eyes to the obvious.

Look back just a couple of chapters to Luke 17, and just to remind you of teaching that we've already been through, but it's very similar point that Jesus makes in Luke 17. Starting back in verse 22, Luke 17:22, "He said to the disciples, the days will come, when, you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man and you will not see it. And they'll say to you, 'look there! and look here!' Don't go away," don't, "do not run after them. For just as the lightning when it flashes out of one part of the sky and shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in his day.

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"But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. And just as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man. For they were eating and they were drinking, and they were marrying, and they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. And it was the same as in the days of lot. They were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building. But on the day that lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all."

Think about that. Noah's generation heard his preaching for over 120 years while he built the ark. Lot's generation heard his preaching for many years before their judgment came. All that you can read in 2 Peter chapter 2. Noah, the preacher of righteousness, Lot, whose righteous soul was tormented day after day as he saw the ungodly behavior of ungodly men and he called them to account and repent.

But just as in the days of Noah and his generation and Lot and his generation, they were self-indulgent, they were self-

dependent, their hearts are weighed down, they were dull, they were blind, they missed the obvious. There's an ark sitting there. What is that? They were dull and blind until it was too late.

Peter refers to both those judgments in the days of Noah and the days of Lot, and he speaks of those judgments not just to speak of the judgment coming upon the ungodly, but also to comfort believers by the record of God's salvation. He rescued Noah from the flood. He rescued Lot from the fire, and in the same way, Peter says the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation and keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment. How does he do that? He does that by calling us to watchfulness. Watchfulness.

You turn, if you'd like to, over to 1 Thessalonians 5, just to see this call to watchfulness from a Pauline perspective, to guard our hearts, live obediently to his will. 1 Thessalonians 5:6, "Let us not sleep as others do, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night. Those who get drunk get drunk at night, but since we're of the day, let us be sober,

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having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not appointed us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us.”

So that whether we are awake or asleep, we'll live together with him. That is awake when he comes, or have died in Christ when he comes, we'll live together with him and we're to comfort one another and build one another up with those words. So now that we know what to watch, and we know why to watch, perhaps we're ready to learn. Thirdly, number three: How to watch. Go back to Luke 21, number three: how to watch. This is verse 36 and notice the opening command, keep on the alert. Jesus is repeating himself, isn't he? It's a similar idea of the verb that begins verse 34, but it's an even more focused verb on watchfulness than that verb in verse 34, *prosechō* is.

If I was to make a distinction between *prosechō*, in verse 34 and this verb, which is *agrypneō*, which starts in verse 36, we could say the distinction is this. If the first verb pictures a guard standing watch, this second verb explains what he's doing

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in order to stand watch. He's staying awake. The verb *agrypneō*, it literally means to be on the hunt for sleep, which is kind of like a metaphor for sleeplessness. Kind of think of the idea of insomnia. He's staying up, he's staying awake.

It's what Paul spoke of in the passage we just read from Thessalonians. It's, it's not night time for us. It's a time. It's not a time for self-indulgent partying. It's not night time, a time to escape anxieties by sleeping, as the self-dependent do. We don't sleepwalk through life because it's, it's daytime for us. We're wide awake, we're watchful, we're sober minded. So verse 36, keep on the alert at all times, praying earnestly that you may have strength to escape all these things are about to take place and to stand before the Son of Man.

How do we watch? Just give the bottom line here in the Christian life, watchfulness always accompanied by prayerfulness.

Watchfulness accompanied by prayerfulness. Jesus said to his disciples as they, as their eyes were, eyelids were heavy as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, taking Peter, James, and John with him. He went away from the other disciples and, and

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then went away from them just a little ways further to pray on his own. He said stay here, keep awake, keep watch while I go over there and pray. Came back, found them sleeping. He said, what, you couldn't watch with me for one hour. Watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation. Same thing here.

When we pray, we're praying for strength, Jesus says. Strength for what? Strength to accomplish two things. First, we pray for strength to escape, strength to escape. This is obviously negatively oriented, as we're watchful over our hearts, as we're mortifying any sin that would provoke the wrath of God. We pray that God would keep us diligent to repent from sin and turn from our sin, so we escape the retributive justice that is coming when the Son of Man will return to execute his judgment. And now as believers, we're not praying that prayer in craven fear, worrying all the time, and wringing our hands that we're only one step away from becoming crushed under the hammer of God's justice.

We trust, don't we, in the once for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, that perfect all sufficient substitutionary

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atonement that paid the penalty for all of our sins. And yet because of that, we pray in an attitude of filial fear, meaning brotherly or, or family fear, a relational sense. We never want to displease our father in heaven. We don't want to bring any reproach to his name. We never want to, to be identified in any way with the world, because those aren't our people.

God, his church, Christ, his church, those are our people and so we pray for strength to escape all that's coming on the world. This is a call to pray for strength, for self-control; self-control, to handle yourself with self-control, to turn away from temptation, so we don't commit sins. So we pray for strength first to escape. It's negative in its orientation. That's what provokes self-examination, regular self-examination. It provokes the exercise of self-control. It provokes that daily duty of practicing mortification of sin.

Then having done that, second, now, we pray for strength to stand. First strength to escape, negatively oriented, now strength to stand. And this prayer is positively oriented. First call to prayer is preventative, it's prophylactic. So we have

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strength to put off anything and everything that offends God; it's called, a self-control. The second aspect of prayer is about self-discipline. Self-control, keeping yourself from what you, in your sin nature, want to do; self-discipline, pushing yourself to do what you don't naturally feel inclined to do in your sin nature. So we need strength for that. Strength to pursue, and to do, and obey, all that pleases God, so we're ready to face him with confidence when he comes.

I've read this before, I'm going to read it again, because it's so precious. John says in 1 John 2:28, "Now little children, abide in Him, so that when He is manifested, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone also who does righteousness has been born of Him." We'll, "see how great a love the Father has given us, so we should be called children of God; and we are. And for this reason, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not been manifested as yet, what we will be. We know that when he is

manifested, we'll be like him, because we will see him just as he is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

We discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness. We discipline ourselves for purity, for holiness, to live righteously, to live obediently. Why? So we can stand in confidence at the day of his coming. So we never shrink away, we never cower. We're not ashamed of His coming. Isn't that how you want it to happen? Don't you want it to go down that way? Don't you want his coming to find you doing the things of God and not pursuing your own pursuits, whims, fulfilling your own pleasures? Man, I do. I do.

The next section in 1 John chapter 3 verse 4 to verse 10 starts out, "Everyone who does sin also does lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. He was manifest in order to take away sins. In him there is no sin. No one who abides," him, "in him continues sinning. No one who has sinned sees him or has come to know him. Little children let no one deceive you. The one who does righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

"But the one who does sin," isn't just weak, isn't just struggling with issues, isn't just dealing with past hurts, it's, it's not some psychological therapeutic issue. No, "the one who does sin is of the devil because the devils' been sinning from the beginning, and the Son of God was manifested for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. Everyone who's been born of God doesn't sin, because His seed abides in him; he can't sin, because he's been born of God. And this is how the children of God and the children of the devil are manifested; everyone who does not do righteousness is not of God, as well as the one who does not love his brother."

Powerful section. And it's preceded by a call to Christian self-discipline. Who would stand before him, in confidence. Jesus is telling us how to purify ourselves for his coming; how to watch and pray and have confidence when he comes; praying for strength to escape and strength to stand. So we pray for strength to practice self-control, mortify sin, all sinful impulses. We also pray for strength to practice self-discipline, to pursue what is true, and good, and right, and truly beautiful.

Now I admit here at the outset of this final sub point here, this may be a bit forced, but let me add just one more brief point to wrap this up, about how to watch. To be watchful, praying for strength to escape, praying for strength to stand, so the third thing we need to see here, we'll be watchful, prayerful, when we're devoted to the truth, when we're devoted to the truth.

Take a quick look at the final verses of the chapter. "Now, during the day He was teaching in the temple, but," at the evening he would, "in the evening he would go out and spend the night on the mount that's called Olivet." What Luke is doing in the narrative here, as the narrator, he is connecting us, reconnecting us to where this section started all the way back in Luke 19:47, where Luke told us he was teaching daily in the temple. This is like a bookend. It's called inclusio. If you like the, the fancy word for it; inclusio, just basically bookend.

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Here's the start, here's the finish and that kind of joins together a section. That's what Luke's doing here again in, verse, chapter 20, verse 1, he was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, that's connected very closely to Luke 19:47. Jesus' teaching was so popular among the common people, not only the residents of Jerusalem and Judea, but also the festive pilgrims who were coming into Jerusalem during this feast time, during the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

He was so popular among the people and his teachings so riveting; the murderous plans of the scribes and Pharisees were thwarted by this popularity. They couldn't get to him without making a scene, without making themselves look like the bad guys that they were. Luke, reminds us about this in verse 38. All the people would get up early in the morning to come to him in the temple and listen to him.

Luke is preparing us here for what's coming, to see the satanically inspired plot of Judas Iscariot, who conspires with the religious leaders to have Jesus arrested, but not in public

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where everybody can see, where everybody's going to have a big outcry and protest, where a riot will start. No, but to do it secretly. So Luke is preparing us for what's coming in the narrative.

Well, I want us to pause here and reflect on how instructive this is for us. He knows exactly what's going to happen, when it's going to happen. He's anticipating not only great shame, and pain, and suffering, the entire nation turning on him, he's anticipating the very wrath of God poured out on him in his own body as he hangs on a cross. And look how he's spending his time.

If he counted it to be a wise use of time, that his final days, he spends his days in the temple teaching the people. He leaves for rest in the nights on the Mount of Olives. He comes back and he spends all day, of every day, teaching, investing, pouring into people. It's an example for us, isn't it?

He went out at nighttime to Mount Olivet and Luke uses a word, you outdoorsman will like this, he uses a word for camping here.

It's inescapable. It's a word that can mean, to lie in an open courtyard, but, or to bivouac, to camp out among the stars. And I, I think it's interesting because we see our Lord camping out underneath the trees and the stars and he's, he's not comfortable. I mean, he's in his 30s.

I remember in my 30s, I even then, I was starting to not like camping at all. Now I abhor it. I mean, we exercise dominion enough to build beds, cushions, pillows, blankets. I really like those things and those who go camping, I don't understand you, but that's what he did, close proximity to the temple. He's not here for his comfort. He's not on vacation.

And in spite of Luke's clarity here, I never fail to find commentators who say that Jesus didn't spend the night on Mount Olivet, but rather they stayed in Bethany, presumably at the home of his friends Lazarus, Martha, Mary, because staying in, in homes was quite common for pilgrims visiting Jerusalem at feast time.

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Okay, pardon me for disagreeing, but I have to do so on two counts. First, Luke tells us plainly he did camp out. That's what he says. The second reason being the reason that we discern and he camped out and didn't stay in the home in Bethany. It's not that he loved camping, it's that he loved people and he loved his father.

He loved God and his word and he didn't want any normal hospitality that would take place in the home in Bethany to slow him down. That final cup of coffee, that last croissant or whatever it is, I guess pita bread and hummus in the context. He didn't want anything to slow him down from getting back to his beloved duty. He loved the mission that God sent him to accomplish. With every remaining moment that was left of his life, he wanted to invest it well, invest it wisely, invest it eternally.

So, beloved, knowing and seeing the Lord's love of getting the truth into his people, can you let that encourage you to meet the Lord early in the morning as these people did, that you might match his enthusiasm, to teach you with your own

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enthusiasm to hear from him, to listen to his teaching, to learn from him.

Beloved, reciprocate. I know it won't be in, in, corresponding measure, but even in some small measure, learn to reciprocate his love for you just by being his disciples, by rejoicing as disciples, as learners, those who are being trained. As the Lord walked with people in the temple complex here before, just days before his death, as he ministered the word of God to him or to them, so that he might draw some into fellowship with him and draw them by fellowship with him into fellowship with his Father.

He was a far cry in that temple complex from the identic garden temple where he walked with Adam and Eve at the beginning, in the cool of the day, to fellowship with them in the beauty of God's creation and the goodness, resting in the goodness of his provision. And what he intended in that garden paradise, now lost, is regained and restored at the very end, isn't it?

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We read this earlier. "They showed me a river of the water of life, brightest crystal, coming down from the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of the street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding fruit every month, and the leaves of that tree for the healing of the nations."

No longer be any curse and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his slaves will serve him. They'll see his face; his name will be on their foreheads. No longer be any night. They'll not have any need of the light of a lamp, nor of the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them, and they'll reign forever and ever.

Skipping ahead says, "Behold, I'm coming quickly. My reward is with me to render to every man according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the authority to the tree of life, may enter by the gates into the city."

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It is the well read, well studied, doctrinally informed Christians who are the most watchful Christians and who are the most prayerful Christians. By reading, studying, learning, we're shaped by the Bible's eschatology and all of its doctrines, our minds being renewed, our habits being changed, our priorities adjusted, our lives transformed, so that we can escape what's coming, but also, more importantly, stand in his presence in confidence at his return.

Let's pray. Our Father. That's what we long for so much, is to stand in confidence and not shy away at all at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I trust that for every single heart here, there is something that pricks, provokes, stirs, confronts, corrects, encourages, comforts, strengthens, edifies, brings assurance, and hope. And I pray, Father, that you would deploy the Holy Spirit under the shepherding guidance of the Lord Jesus Christ to minister this good word of Luke 21 to every single heart here, that you would visit each one in his or her place of need, that you would minister them in a special way unique to everyone.

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For every text, there's one and only one meaning of the text. There's several implications of every meaning of every text. There are a myriad, thousands upon thousands of applications of ways people can put this into practice. Only you know every situation, every heart, every stage of maturity and growth and need. Oh Father, do your good purpose. Lord Jesus, do your, as the Good Shepherd, do your good shepherding work in us, among us.

Holy Spirit, attend to every heart, to convict some of sin, and righteousness, and judgment, and bring them to salvation by faith in Christ and repentance of their sins. And for those who do know Christ, Holy Spirit, please sanctify us in the truth. Please let us live differently as a result of what we've heard today and all these weeks in studying the Olivet Discourse.

Thank you for your work of inspiration that we received a faithful, inerrant, infallible text, one that we can trust. It gives us certainty, and in that certainty, help us to live with an urgency, knowing that the days are short and the time is near. It's in Jesus name we pray, Amen.