

True Vigils

by Horatius Bonar

The sermon emphasizes the importance of watching and being ready for the Lord's coming, despite not knowing the hour.

Scripture: Matthew 24:42

Topics: "Readiness for Christ's Return", "Vigilance"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the urgency of being vigilant and prepared for the return of the Lord, reminding us that while we know He will come, we do not know the hour of His arrival. He urges believers to remain watchful and ready, likening our state to that of a watchman or a soldier, and warns against the dangers of slothfulness and indifference. Bonar calls for a readiness that encompasses our spiritual state, our hearts, and our actions, encouraging both the undecided and the careless to awaken to the reality of Christ's imminent return. The sermon serves as a clarion call to live in anticipation and holiness, as the time of His coming is unknown but certain.

Transcript

"Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."--Matthew 24:42, 44.

We take this warning as meant for us, as truly as for the early church; we might say more truly, or at least, more forcibly; for eighteen centuries have brought us so much nearer the consummation. It is the Master's own warning. It is very explicit; very practical; very searching. Let us take it in the following order:--

I. Our Lord will come. (1.) His name is Lord; Master; Ruler; the very word applied to Jehovah. (2.) His name is our, or your, Lord,--"Your Lord." He is thus connected with us and we with Him, as friend, master, teacher, king. Our Lord will come! This is one of the great certainties of the unknown future. He may tarry; but He will come at last. Many obstacles may seem to rise up, but He will come. Men may not desire Him but He will come. The Church may be cold; but He will come. Earth may think she has no need of Him; but He will come! The scoffer may say, Where is the promise of his coming? but He will come. Satan may do his utmost to oppose; but He will come. This is the great future certainty which Christ and his apostles have proclaimed to us. Our Lord will come!

II. We know not at what hour. The Father knows, but we know not; no man nor angel; nor the church, nor any saint; nay, it is said, "not the Son." This is one of the great secrets of God. That it should be made so

to man is easily accounted for; why it is so to angels, and why it was so to the Son, is not for us to say. It must be an important one, when thus restricted to the Father himself. It must have some peculiar purpose to serve. What that is we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. The hour is, no doubt, fixed in God's purpose, but the knowledge of that time is kept from us. They do wrong, then, who try to fix the hour, thus seeking to extract a secret from God. They do wrong who neglect the whole subject because this secret is connected with it. They do wrong who scoff at the whole subject because of the rash attempts or wretched failures of some pretended interpreters of prophecy. Thus, "we know," and "we know not;" we know that He will come; we know not when.

III. Watch. Like the watchman on his tower; like the soldier with the enemy in view; like the pilot with rocks and straits on every side; like the householder with the dread of the midnight robber,--"watch"! (1.) Do not fall asleep; (2.) do not grow slothful; (3.) be ever on the outlook. The reason given, then, is that the Lord is coming, and we do not know the hour. He illustrates the warning thus,--If a householder knew that the thief was coming at a particular hour, he would have watched; much more if He did not know the hour, but simply that He was coming sometime. So with us; the simple knowledge that the Lord is to come, is to make us watchful,--even if we knew when; how much more when we do not know when. Let us beware of being thrown off our guard by self, or the flesh, or Satan, or the world. Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober!

IV. Be ready. We may watch and yet not be ready. Our Lord insists on both. Ye are my disciples, be ready! Ye are saints, be ready! What is the readiness? There is (1.) readiness of standing,--"complete in Him,"--"by grace ye stand ;" (2.) readiness of raiment,--we are to have on the fine linen, clean and white,--Christ's righteousness; (3.) readiness of heart and soul. We must love Him and love his appearing. Our longings must be towards Him; we must have the Spirit dwelling in us and sealing us. (4.) Readiness of spiritual state,--oil not only in our lamps, but in our vessels,--even the Holy Ghost himself. Be ready! The Master still cries.

The message here is thus a warning,--

(1.) To the slothful saint. Sleep not. Awake! Beware of falling under any influences that would make you indifferent to the Lord's appearing. Beware of worldly arguments; beware of pretended spiritual arguments; beware of confounding death and Christ's coming; beware of the errors and seductions of the age.

(2.) To the undecided. You are anxious, but you are not decided. You would fain be a Christian, but not just yet. You wish to be a follower of Jesus, but you wish to compromise,--or delay. Be not deceived; God is not mocked. Be decided at once; lest the Lord come and end your wavering.

(3.) To the careless. The world at large is thoroughly careless,--sleeping sound,--dreaming its dreams of vanity;--enjoying sin, vanity, luxury, pleasure, gaiety. Christ speaks: Awake; sleep no more! Awake, lest the Master be upon you. Awake, lest the flash of his avenging sword be the first thing that awakens you!

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