

Watchmen Upon the Walls

by James Bourne

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faithfulness and the role of the watchman in declaring the Lord's message to the people.

Scripture: Psalm 40:1, Psalm 106:4, Isaiah 40:11-62, Malachi 3:2, John 15:16, Acts 4:11, 1 Corinthians 3:11, Ephesians 6:10, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 2:6

Topics: "Faithful Ministry", "Gods Love"

Description

James Bourne preaches about the importance of faithful watchmen in guarding God's people and promoting their welfare through unceasing prayers and a faithful ministry. The prophet Isaiah emphasizes God's peculiar care over His afflicted people, assuring them of His delight in those who hope in His mercy and the everlasting name He bestows upon them. The chapter highlights the need for a tender union with Christ and preserving the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone. The faithful watchmen are called to proclaim the happy truths of salvation to a poor and afflicted people, assuring them of God's everlasting love and care.

Transcript

"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence." (Isaiah 62:6)

The prophet begins this chapter with much zeal to show the Lord's peculiar care over his afflicted people. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth" (verse 1) and he even declares that we Gentiles shall be partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and shall really see and understand the glory of the Lord's rich grace and mercy. Old things shall pass away, the old formal worship denying the power. You shall be called by a new name, no more a servant, but a son, and this the Lord, the Holy Spirit will witness in our hearts and write it there. It shall prove an everlasting name that neither men nor devils shall cut off, because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. (verse 2)

This glorious work of God is so delightful to himself. For he says he delights in all who hope in his mercy, that they are said to be a crown of glory, and a royal diadem of beauty in the hand of the Lord. Surely what safety all this denotes, and yet in trouble how hard we find it to believe.

It is further added, "Thou shall no more be termed Forsaken," (verse 4) that is, the Lord will never more leave thee, never, never forsake thee, because his delight is in thee. "For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." (verse 5) This is the reason why he sets watchmen to guard this his rich treasure night and day. All this is for the sake of his church and people who are often found in a very low place, although the security of all nations depends upon the few scattered sheep of Christ.

The Lord shows us in this text the means he chooses for the perfection of his people, is a faithful ministry. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls." Their business is to be like their Master, neither to slumber, nor sleep. We conceive that what is meant by never holding their peace, is unceasingly to seek the welfare of the people, in private prayer, and every way promoting the welfare of God's people, as faithful servants of Jesus Christ. "Ye that make mention of the LORD," of his having done any thing for you, "keep not silence," but declare it in simplicity to the afflicted, that they may be encouraged to hope for the same.

Put on the whole armour of God, and make it manifest you are a good soldier of Jesus Christ, [that ye may] be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, (Eph. 6:10-20) who watches every opportunity to destroy all profiting, by pride, prejudice, contention, or in whatever way he can enter. His is sure to give a faithful ministry no rest, therefore it follows immediately after the text, that God's people must never give the Lord rest, but by unceasing prayers call upon the Lord to establish them that they may be a praise in the earth; and not a disgrace in turning aside to folly on all occasions. "And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." (verse 7)

It is a sad sign of an hypocritical professor, when instead of growing in knowledge and understanding there is a turning aside to some foolishness that brings on darkness, and a sad reproach upon the righteous cause of God. These have no regard to the house of God, nor any feeling sense of the Lord's coming or going. To these his absence is just as good as anything else. There is no feeling sense of God's wrath against their sin, nor any fear of the destruction that awaits them for it. Some of these show a wish to retain their outward profession of religion, but are not aware that when the foundation is so removed, the outward building must of necessity fall sooner or later.

A faithful watchman will sound the alarm. offence is often taken at it, like a poor man who had turned aside, and being reprov'd for it, he said he would have no more of this. He was watched for many years and often tried to return, but the Lord took him at his word. He could find no place of repentance, and at length died. Indeed he never had any more hope or help from the Lord. And in that state he finished his course.

For men to go off from the foundation and slightly to esteem the Rock of Ages, is a sad token that their ears have never been opened to hear the report of the faithful watchmen, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus," (1 Cor. 3:11) and, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner," (Acts 4:11) again, "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." (1 Pet. 2:6) How precious and safe this foundation is to a self-despairing soul that comes with the deepest fear and sorrow, and finds he is no longer confounded. [The] hope of eternal life springs up and he cannot keep silence, they can but declare, "Oh how great is thy goodness," (Ps. 31:19) and how great is his beauty. O my friends, turn to this stronghold. The Lord is more ready to hear and to help than we are to pray. It is said, sin eats out the strength of the church of God. If allowed, it proves a distemper that presently ruins the vitals, and such will find what Saul found when he inquired of the Lord. "The Lord answered him not,

neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." (1 Sam. 28:6) This is to show how God resents an untender walk.

Where men will not regard a faithful ministry it is a sign that the Lord is not with them, let their outward deportment be what it may. The beauty and strength of a people consists in preserving that tender union one with another, and with Christ as the living Head. If it pleases God to give his blessing, his presence, and to prosper his cause in any place, it will be displayed by the arm of his strength carrying on the work through all opposition. And he who has begun this will manifestly carry it on to the horrible confusion of all opposers and untender professors. (Phil. 1:6)

The Lord declares in this chapter from whence the text is taken, he will take care that the enemies shall not eat that for which the children have laboured. He adds, only mind you go through the gates of life, because many make a fair show in the flesh, and go so near to it, that you cannot discern but that they go through although they stop short and never enter.

God searches the hearts of these vain professors and when they finish their course, they will find they have nothing to rest upon. While those whom the Lord has emptied from vessel unto vessel, (Jeremiah 48:11) and put them in Ezekiel's pot for their scum to be burnt off, (Ezek. 24:11) these know what it is to be in the stripping room. These come empty, void and waste, and make their way through the gate and find a sweet and heavenly welcome. All stumbling blocks are moved out of the way, and there is nothing heard but what the Lord proclaims to the end of the world. "Say ye to (this poor and afflicted son and) daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him." (verse 11) This is what these faithful watchmen must proclaim upon the walls of spiritual Jerusalem. They must never hold their peace, but always insist upon declaring these happy truths to a poor and afflicted people, and assure them, they are the city that shall never be forsaken, redeemed of the Lord, sought out of the world. (verse 12) "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," (John 15:16) therefore take heed you make manifest my choice, by bringing forth much fruit. He will take care to feed his flock like a Shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom of everlasting love. (Isa. 40:11)

Though we are subject to many changes, yet the Lord declares he will make us a praise in the earth. Some may now be ready to say they are far enough from that, and yet they are mourning before God because of their desolate condition. The faithful watchman will show the tender pity of our Good Shepherd to such; for it is written, "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known?" I have set watchmen to declare it! "Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding." (Isa. 40:27,28) Thou canst never search his understanding.

He never faints, he it was that made thee to feel thou art one of those ends of the earth, of no value to anybody, but he has marked thee for his own. He chose these waste corners, and when he sees men brought to such a pass, [such are] sure of a welcome meeting. And while they are ready to faint, they are more delighted when he comes and pours forth the oil, and the wine.

This is said to increase their spiritual strength, and removes all faintness. With this they mount up, and see something of the glory of Christ's love and mercy and run sweetly and swiftly to every appointed ordinance to have all their tokens renewed. (Isa. 40:31) You will not see them coming in late and mocking God with such rude indifference, but you will see a very tender regard to every step taken, that we may not be a

stumbling block to any of Christ's poor flock. This sweet persuasion of the Lord's returning love, will leave no corner of the heart for either self or the world, or any created vanities. This is the day in which it is said the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of those who are divinely united to this branch will be excellent and comely. The faithful watchman will declare all this is the true effect of that washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, (Titus 3:5) that there is much filthiness to be purged away and nothing can accomplish this but the Lord sitting as the Refiner, burning off those various things in the hearts of his people which mar his work. (Mal. 3:2,3) The Lord is said in Ezekiel (chap. 33) to set watchmen over the House of Israel, that must give the people warning as he directs. They must first hear the word from the Lord, and warn them faithfully according to that.

In another place it is said, "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits," (Isa. 30:10) that we may not be so much found fault with, but sew pillows under our arm holes. (Ezek. 13:18) But the Lord says, "I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly." (Ezek. 13:20) This is the special fruit of God's distinguishing grace, given and known to God's children and none else, as it is mentioned particularly in the 106th Psalm. "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest to thy people: O visit me with thy salvation." (Ps. 106:4) This is the especial, discriminating and electing love of God particularly flowing from his eternal purpose of mercy to those whom he designs to adopt into his family. This is the first cause wherefore the faithful watchman sows the seed, and this is also the cause why it springs up and bears fruit unto eternal life.

All the comforts and privileges that the children of God know on this side of heaven, and in heaven, proceed from the Father's everlasting love to us in Christ Jesus. Whatever grace the Lord bestows upon us, it is eternal life begun. All divine grace is everlasting. This is what the faithful watchman must declare upon the walls of Zion, that all the inhabitants and citizens may know the privileges and immunities that belong to them. And in all their trials, poverty or distress of any kind, they may come boldly to obtain relief and to believe that the King of this heavenly country will never cast them off.

David tried this in his distress. He waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined his ear, and heard his cry, and brought him out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set his feet upon the Rock of Ages, and ordered his goings. It is this that puts a new song into our mouths, even praise unto our God, (Ps. 40:1-4) and we can but say, "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." (Ps. 40:5) Therefore the watchman will declare openly, "Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified," (Ps. 40:16) and,

Let him have all the glory of this great salvation now and for ever. Amen!

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