

The Morning Watch - Part 1

by Oswald J. Smith

The morning watch is a crucial practice for obtaining and maintaining a deeply spiritual experience, and leaders must model spiritual behavior to shape their congregations.

Duration: 37:09

Scripture: Psalm 5:3, Psalm 119:105, Matthew 6:33, John 1:1, Acts 6:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 1:22

Topics: "Morning Devotions"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of the morning watch, which is a dedicated time of studying the Word of God and engaging in prayer. The speaker emphasizes that failure and weakness in the Christian life can be attributed to neglecting the morning watch. They share personal experiences of how God led them to prioritize studying the Bible and committing to prayer. The speaker encourages listeners to observe the morning watch in order to avoid losing the joy of salvation, slipping back into sinful habits, and experiencing disappointment in their Christian walk.

Transcript

Our first message this morning is entitled The Morning Watch. I'm turning to the, I'm turning to the fifth psalm, and I'm going to base what I have to say this morning on this one verse. The fifth psalm, the third verse.

Now there's something very, very peculiar about this verse, something you'll not find in any other verse in the Bible. Notice the way it reads. The fifth psalm, the third verse.

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord. In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. What is it that makes this verse different from any other verse in the Bible? The fact that the word morning occurs twice in this one verse, and that never happens in any other verse in the Bible.

This is the only verse in the entire Bible in which the word morning occurs twice. And if you remember that, your attention will be drawn definitely to the fifth psalm and the third verse. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord.

And you'll see in a moment why I emphasize the word morning. In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. So I want to talk this morning for a little while about the morning watch.

Water only rises to its own level, never any higher, just to its own level. That which is born of a flesh is flesh. It always has been flesh.

It always will be flesh. It can never become anything more than flesh. That which is born of a flesh is flesh.

That which is born of a vegetable is vegetable. Never anything else. That which is born of fruit is fruit.

And it always will be fruit. There will never be a change. That which is born of fish is fish.

And it will never be animal. It will never be bird. It will always be fish.

That which is born of bird is bird. Never will there be anything else except bird. That which is born of animal is animal.

Always has been, always will be. And last of all, that which is born of man is man. In other words, you cannot cross the species.

That is something that is absolutely impossible in spite of what the evolutionists have to tell us. There is no way that the species can be crossed. But now there's another species.

There's a new species. There's a different species. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

There you have an entirely different species. Not the flesh, but the Spirit. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

What am I trying to say? Do you remember that statement in the Old Testament scriptures? Like priest, like people. Like priest, like people. Suppose we transfer that statement to the New Testament.

And suppose we say, like pastor, like people. Like minister, like people. Like teacher, like people.

In other words, you will be what your leader, your pastor, your minister, your teacher is. That's why some churches are worldly and some churches are spiritual. I never blame the people.

I always blame the pastor. I always blame the minister of the congregation. The people will be what the minister is.

What the pastor is, the people will be. You show me a carnal pastor, and I'll show you a carnal church. You show me a worldly pastor, and I'll show you a worldly church.

You show me a spiritual pastor, and I'll show you a spiritual church. The church will be what the pastor is. Given long enough, the members of the church and the adherents of the church will be gradually but definitely transformed into the image of the leader, the pastor, the minister of that congregation.

Therefore it's of paramount importance that you and I who are leaders, you and I who are missionaries, you and I who have followers, you and I who are to be examples. It's of paramount importance that you and I should be spiritual, because our people will be what we are. I say again, you show me a spiritual pastor, and I'll show you a spiritual church.

You show me a carnal pastor, and I'll show you a carnal church. You show me a worldly pastor, and I'll show you a worldly church. And the same goes for the missionary.

Your followers will be exactly what you are. If you are spiritual, they'll be spiritual. If you are worldly, they'll be worldly.

Therefore it's of paramount importance, I say, that you and I as leaders should make sure that we are living spiritual lives filled with the Holy Spirit. Our people will be what we are. Now that leads us to this question.

How can I obtain and how can I maintain a deeply spiritual experience? That's a question I put to every pastor, every minister, every missionary, every leader. How can I obtain a deeply spiritual experience, and how can I maintain that experience? It is just important to maintain it as it is to obtain it. And I'd like to answer that question, if I may.

Let me say, first of all, you cannot obtain a deeply spiritual experience and maintain that experience by coming to an altar. You may respond to the invitation, come to the front near an altar, and receive a spiritual experience. But unless something more follows, that experience you have received at the altar will gradually fade away and disappear and be gone.

And you'll have to come back to the altar again for another experience or a similar experience or repetition of the former experience before you'll be what you want to be and what you long to be. Therefore, do not get the idea that by coming to an altar and kneeling at an altar, you can both obtain and maintain a deeply spiritual experience, an experience that will last. There must be something more than that.

What is the explanation? What is the secret? I suppose some sixty years ago now, I made the discovery that the only possible way I could obtain and maintain a deeply spiritual experience in God was by observing what I call the morning watch. And I started observing the morning watch some sixty-six years ago now. And I have maintained the morning watch morning after morning for the last sixty-six years of my life.

And if God has ever done anything through me, if he has accomplished any work of eternal value, it has been for one reason and one reason only. Not because I met Jesus Christ once when I was converted, but because I have faithfully maintained the morning watch. And everything that's ever been accomplished in my ministry, I attribute to the morning watch.

If I had my life to live over again, if I could go back sixty-six years in my life, I would again do what I started to do sixty-six years ago. And what I have continued doing from that day to this morning by morning. I would observe the morning watch.

Never in my life have I thought of going down to my office before observing the morning watch. Never have I dreamed of turning to my day's work before first observing the morning watch. That hour is more important to me than any other hour in my experience.

And therefore I want to talk to you for a little while this morning about the morning watch. But you say, Dr. Smith, I've been converted, I've met Jesus Christ. And then you wonder why every now and again you lose the joy of God's salvation, you slip back into some habit that displeases him, you even yield to some sin that brings disgrace on your profession.

And you ask the question, how can I avoid it? How can I overcome it? What is the secret? I have met a great many people I do not know. You have met a great many people you do not know. There are a lot of Christians who have met Jesus Christ, but they do not know Jesus Christ.

Our churches are filled with them. Thousands upon thousands of people in our churches today have definitely met Jesus Christ, but they do not know him. It is one thing to meet a person.

It is another thing to get to know that person. And you do not know a person just by meeting him. In order to know him, you have to spend time with him.

And unless you spend time with him, you'll never get to know him. He'll be more or less of a stranger to you all the days of your life. Sometimes you come up against a problem or a temptation suddenly, and you know not which way to turn.

Because you have only met Jesus Christ, but you do not know him, therefore you cannot suddenly turn to him and get the relief and the answer that you want. Only those who know the Lord Jesus Christ can turn to him in a moment of need, and receive the answer that they require. The question is, have you just met Jesus Christ, or do you really know him? Have you become acquainted with him? I've met a lot of people I do not know.

When I was touring in Ethiopia, I was staying at the headquarters of the Sudan Interior Mission. And one day it was announced that the Emperor of Ethiopia, Hala Selassie, was coming to visit the headquarters of the Sudan Interior Mission. I want to tell you there was some activity for a few minutes.

Presently, the Emperor drove up with his bodyguard several cars surrounding his car. I'll never forget it. Military men, policemen, guards, looking after the safety of the Emperor.

You see, he was coming to a very dangerous place. He was coming to a mission station. And he had to be carefully guarded.

Well, I'll never forget it. It's an experience that will live with me as long as life lasts. For when I was presented to the Emperor, Hala Selassie immediately, in a very friendly way, put out his hand and shook hands with me.

I can still feel the touch of the Emperor's hand. It was a soft hand like the hand of a woman. I'll never forget it, the softness of it, as I shook hands with the Emperor of Ethiopia, Hala Selassie.

After I had shaken hands with him, I happened to glance in the distance, and I saw a little boy, about nine years of age, clambering down out of a tree. He had been climbing a tree, and he was clambering down out of that tree rapidly. And he got our attention.

And suddenly he came running toward us as hard as his little feet would carry him. And he ran right up to me personally, with his royal father standing by my side, and he started tugging at my trouser leg. And I turned to Dr. Lambie, the missionary, and I said, Dr. Lambie, who is this little boy? Oh, said Dr. Lambie, he's the youngest son of the Emperor.

And I said, what does he want? He wants you to shake hands with him just as you shook hands with his royal father. And I want to tell you, when I heard that, I didn't lose any time putting out my hand and shaking hands with the little Emperor. I understand that he has gone since then.

He has passed on. He's no longer living. But I'll never forget the thrill of the moment when I shook hands, both with the Emperor of Ethiopia and with his youngest son, the Royal Prince.

But listen, I do not know Halasalasi. I would have to live with him in order to get to know him. I have met him.

I have shaken hands with him. But I have never lived with him. And the only way I could get to know Halasalasi, the Emperor, would be by living with him.

That I've never done. The same is true in regard to the Lord Jesus Christ. You can meet Jesus Christ and never know him because you haven't lived with him.

You haven't spent time in his presence. And because you haven't spent time in his presence, day by day, therefore, you do not yet know him. I say it's one thing to meet an individual.

It's another thing to get to know him. For one solid month, I traveled through the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada with General Sir Arthur Smith. General Sir Arthur Smith was the second-in-command in the taking of North Africa during the war.

And General Sir Arthur Smith happened to be a real Christian. And he and I traveled together in the United States of America for one solid month, going from city to city, from church to church, giving our messages. And for a month, I was in the company of the world-famous General Sir Arthur Smith.

And General Sir Arthur Smith and I went over to England. A few months later, the General invited me to come to his lovely home and spend the night. Mrs. Smith and I went.

Now, I never forget spending the night in the home of General Sir Arthur Smith, one of the heroes of North Africa during the Second World War. But I do not know General Sir Arthur Smith. True, I spent a month with him.

True, I spent a night in his palatial residence in England. But I have not lived with him sufficiently long enough to be able to say I know him. For I do not.

The same is true, I say again, in regard to the Lord Jesus Christ. You can meet him. You can spend a little time with him.

You can know that you are saved. But unless you meet him morning by morning, day by day, month out and month in, you will never get to know him. He will still be more or less than a stranger to you.

And when you are facing some serious problem, you will not be able to hurry into his presence because he will still be more or less of a stranger to you. You have to live with those you want to know. I have had that experience with many an individual.

And I know perfectly well, for I have proven it by experience, that you can meet people and not know them. When I was with Billy Graham in his great meetings in one of the services that he was holding during the days of his campaign in New York City, Richard Nixon was sitting on the platform. And Richard Nixon, who was then the Vice President of the United States of America, leaned over and started to talk to me.

Now I found it intensely interesting to talk to the Vice President of the United States of America, now the President. I enjoyed talking to him. He wanted to know all about the Bay of Quinty.

He was especially interested in that part of Canada. And he asked me a number of questions about the Bay of Quinty. I answered to the best of my ability as he sat there smiling and talking.

I'll never forget it. But I don't know Richard Nixon. I don't know the man they're writing about in the newspapers today.

I don't recognize the man they're talking about today on radio. To me, he was a lovely personality. And I enjoyed immensely talking to him.

And after I got back home, I received a letter from him. And I still have that letter. And in spite of all that has happened, I'll value it the rest of my life.

The same is true of my visit to Buckingham Palace in London, England. Will I ever forget the day I saw the doors and the gates of Buckingham Palace thronged with American tourists. Hundreds upon hundreds of them.

That's as far as they could get to the gate. And they were standing there in throngs, looking through the bars of the gates of Buckingham Palace. I came driving up in a magnificent limousine that had been obtained for me by a very, very dear personal friend of mine, the head gardener of Buckingham Palace.

I had been spending some time with him in Switzerland. He has written some fifty-two books on gardening. And he was the head gardener of Buckingham Palace.

He had innumerable gardeners working under him. I'm referring to Colonel Cooper. Colonel Cooper, the head gardener of Buckingham Palace.

And because I happened to be a personal friend of his, and we were very close together, and I was able to secure a BA, I was able to secure a degree for him from the United States of America, and I got to England on this trip. I've been there many times. He said, Is there anything you especially want? I said, Colonel, there is one thing I want.

I said, I want to visit Buckingham Palace. Well, he said, that's easy. I'm the head gardener.

I'm the gardener. I'll take you in. So he engaged the lovely limousine, and I got in it, sat beside him, the driver was on the front seat.

We drove up to the gates. The gates were thronged by hundreds of American tourists, looking through the bars, and that's as far as they could get. And as we drove up, the police shoved them aside to the right and to the left, and the colonel and I drove right through the American tourists, right through the open gate of Buckingham Palace, and right up to the front steps of the palace.

We got out, went into the palace, and while I was waiting to be conducted to the interior, I saw a table, and I saw a very large guest book on the table. The colonel turned to me and whispered, I said, Dr. Smith, if you'd like to sign the guest book in Buckingham Palace, you'd better do it quickly, before somebody comes around and makes it impossible. I lost no time.

I got over to that table, I signed that guest book, and then I stepped back to wait for the one who was to conduct us through the palace. And if you, the next time you go to Buckingham Palace, I suggest that you take a look at the guest book and see if you can find my name in that guest book, because I signed it and it's there. And then our conductor came along, and we were conducted all through that palace.

I'll never forget talking to the different ones living in the palace, some with royal blood, those who were taking care of the palace, those who were in the office. It was a wonderful privilege to sit there and talk to

the different ones who lived in the palace and made Buckingham Palace their home. Princess Anne was in the room just above us.

She was just a little girl at that time, and the one we were talking to informed us that she was just in the room above at her play. She didn't come down, so I never saw her, not that time. Now then, I have met a lot of people I do not know, and you have met a lot of people you do not know.

And I've discovered as I've traveled around this world that there are thousands upon thousands of people who have met the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet they do not know Jesus Christ. They are Christians, they have been saved, but in a moment of emergency and need, they do not know how to turn to him because they've never come to know him, they've never spent time with him. Now the only way you can ever get to know people is to spend time with them, visit with them.

And the more time you spend with them, the better you'll get to know them. Susanna Wesley wasn't especially busy. The wife of John Wesley, mother of John Wesley I mean.

She wasn't especially busy. She only had nineteen children. I suppose she would have something to do in order to take care of that little family of hers, but not very much.

There were only nineteen of them. In those days they had no restaurants. She couldn't send her children out to the restaurant.

She had to cook all the food that they ate. Now that wouldn't keep her very busy, but it would keep her occupied, to say the least. Then of course they had no stores in which they sold ready-made suits and ready-made clothes and clothing.

She had to make all the clothing for her little family of nineteen children. Again I say that wouldn't keep her especially busy, but to say the least she'd be occupied. She'd have something to do.

And then having no schools, public schools, in those days to which she could send her children to get an education, she had to set aside certain hours and teach her entire family in her own home every day, hour after hour. I say again that might not keep her very busy, but to say the least she would be occupied. Susanna Wesley, in spite of the fact that she had nineteen children, and in spite of the fact that she had to sew for them and cook for them and teach them, every day of her life, from one o'clock until two o'clock, would leave those children, go into her bedroom, shut the door, kneel down beside her bed with her open Bible lying on the bed, and spend one solid hour in fellowship and in communion with God.

No matter how busy she was, no matter what the children were doing, she would spend that hour, sixty minutes, with God. Do you wonder that she gave the world John Wesley and Charles Wesley? If it had not been for the dedication of the mother of John Wesley and the mother of Charles Wesley, there might have been no Methodist church. It might never have been born.

And thousands upon thousands of souls might never have been saved. But because that one mother, faithful to God, in spite of the fact that she had to cook for her children and sew for her children and teach her children, in spite of all her household duties, thought it important enough to leave her children, go to her bedroom, shut the door, and spend one solid hour alone with God. And as she did, God heard her prayer.

God answered her prayers, and God gave the world John Wesley and Charles Wesley, and John Wesley, under God, gave the world the Methodist church. Which, for the first two hundred years, was absolutely sound and evangelical, and soul-winning. And Charles Wesley gave the world six thousand hymns, some of which are still to be found in our hymn books and are still being sung.

And Great Britain was saved from the French Revolution because God raised up a prophet in John Wesley. And he was called John Wesley to stem the tide of infidelity that might otherwise have resulted in a bloody revolution similar to the one across the Channel in France. Now, I've said all this in order to lead up to the heart of the message.

And the two things I'm going to talk about tomorrow morning will be the study of the word of God and the life of prayer. And I'm going back into my own personal experiences. I'm going to tell you how God led me to study his word and how God led me to give myself to prayer.

I'll talk about that tomorrow morning as we continue this message on the morning watch. But let me say this in closing. If you have never learned to observe the morning watch, you may now know the reason for your weakness and your failure and your disappointment as a Christian.

Before I get through with these next two points tomorrow morning, you'll know exactly where you stand in the presence of God, why you have failed if you have failed, and why you have not accomplished what you started out to accomplish. You've had the introduction. Tomorrow morning at 11 we'll get into the heart of the message.

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