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Watchfulness

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. "1 Thessalonians 5:8



Once upon a time there was a lonely ninety year old man with no family or friends who lived in a house on a cliff next to the sea. His house was 50 feet above sea level. One day a group of climate activists were staging a loud demonstration at the beach near his house. They warned that sea levels were rising *rapidly* and that he should watch for signs of the levels rising. The man was alarmed and took their message very seriously as he feared his house might soon be swept into the sea. He decided to watch the sea levels every day so that he would know when it was time for him to leave. Every day at both high and low tides he would descend the steep and treacherous path down the cliff to take measurements of the water levels, and then he would slowly struggle back up the cliff.

His twice daily trips left him exhausted each time, and he had no energy left to keep his house in order. One year later the man's house had fallen into an unsanitary condition and he died from food poisoning. Tragically, the man was a little deaf and not so bright. He had failed to understand that the activists, by saying the sea levels were rising *rapidly*, had meant only one inch in the last 100 years.

Of course this is not a true story. However, its lessons are apparent when we look at the true scriptural meaning of *watching*. Consider the following texts.

Eph 6:18: Being watchful in this verse relates to persevering in prayer and perhaps to the preparedness of having on the full armour of God in the previous verses.

Luke 12:35-46: Verses 35-37 warn the servants to have their waists girded and their lamps burning so that they can get up immediately and open the door when their master knocks. It's talking about being prepared. To be *found watching* (v37) is to be ready for the unexpected. Note verse 40. In the following parable on the same theme in v42-46 the faithful and wise steward is also the one who is ready for his master's return because he is doing the things he should be doing, as opposed to mistreating the servants and getting drunk.

Rev 3:1-4: The message here to the Sardis church of the first century to *be watchful* related to their need to watch their ways. Their works were not perfect before God. They needed to repent, or Christ would come upon them in judgment *as a thief*.

Matthew 24:42-44: Are we to be watching so we can find out the hour, or are we to be watching ourselves? Again here, to *watch* seems to relate to watching our own readiness.

Mark 13:32-37: Again the *watch and pray* message is a message to take heed to ourselves. We are not

to be found sleeping while about the Lord's business.

How many times so far have men been right who have predicted the second coming of the Lord based upon the commonly understood signs of scripture? The answer is a big fat ZERO. Watching for signs of Jesus' coming may well be an unnecessary diversion from the main form of *watching* the scriptures instruct us in. Just like the old man in the story above, do we need to re-adjust our focus? Is it time we moved from being spectators of the world to being *made a spectacle to the world ... to angels and to men* (1 Corinthians 4:8-21) as the true apostles were? They were turning the world upside down and it did not go unnoticed. Their spiritual house was seen to be in order as they glorified God by the mighty works they were doing through the Holy Spirit.



Is our spiritual house in order?

Written by David Kidd



Test Your Knowledge
Answers 1.B 2.B 3.C 4.C

Moses Made a Mistake

Sin in our lives is the most serious sign of a Christian's unpreparedness for the Lord's coming. It is therefore helpful to understand one of the key causes of sin. Why do we sin? I want to suggest sin is usually bound up in our emotions. By recognizing this truth, and by responding to it, we can be spared from many of the serious consequences of sin.

Hot under the collar in the wilderness

One day in the wilderness, the Israelites complained bitterly against Moses and Aaron because they lacked water. They griped it would have been better to have remained in Egypt than to have been brought into the wilderness to die. Moses and Aaron therefore fell on their faces before the Lord and the glory of the Lord appeared to them (Numbers 20:6). God then instructed Moses to bring water from a rock for the people by speaking to it.

However, Moses made a mistake. Rather than speaking to the rock in the presence of the assembly, he said to the people, *Hear now you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?* He then struck the rock twice and water flowed out abundantly for the people. His behaviour made it look like *he* brought water out of the rock rather than God. God was so displeased with Moses for not hallowing Him in the eyes of the children of Israel He did not allow Moses to take the Israelites into the Promised Land. Rather, he was to die before that glorious day (Numbers 20:12). The severity of the punishment highlighted the seriousness of Moses' mistake.

There is a very important lesson for us to learn from Moses' sin. It behooves us to consider why Moses slipped up. Was it because he lacked knowledge? No. God filled Him with wisdom and knowledge. Was it because something was wrong with his relationship with God? No. His relationship with God was described as a very personal *face-to-face* relationship. Was it because Moses was full of pride and wanted to show off? No. Numbers 12:3 describes him as the humblest man on the face of the earth. Moses was certainly a righteous and holy

man. What then caused him to sin?

This wasn't the first time the Israelites had complained bitterly about their situation in the wilderness. Moses had had to endure their rebellion against him and God many times before. Put yourself in Moses' shoes. How would you feel if you'd been wholeheartedly serving your people around the clock and all they could do was grumble and rebel?



Moses felt angry. Perhaps he also felt betrayed and unappreciated. He may have even had righteous anger at the way the Israelites were disrespecting God. Consequently, Moses lost control of his emotions and sinned against God.

Emotions and sin

Moses is not the only person who sinned when he lost control of his emotions. Consider also the Apostle Peter who denied the Lord three times. Wasn't it the emotion of fear that caused him to sin? Consider also King David and his sin with Bathsheba. Wasn't it lust that caused the man after God's own heart to sin with Bathsheba? What about Job, another one of the most righteous men ever to live? Perhaps you are surprised to hear Job sinned! If he didn't sin, then why does Job 42:6 say he repented in dust and ashes? In the

terrible time of testing that Satan brought upon Job, indeed he kept his integrity and did not sin. However, after being worn down by the poor counsel of his so-called friends Job started to bemoan his situation so severely that God rebuked him in Job 40 saying, *He who rebukes God, let him answer it* (v. 1-2) and, *Would you condemn me that you may be justified* (v. 8). Job fell victim to the emotion of requiring vindication or justification. Praise God though that Job was a righteous man who recognized his need for repentance. He was therefore greatly blessed.

If these righteous men could let their emotions cause them to err, then obviously we can too. There are many emotions we must be careful of because of their tendency to cause us to sin. Consider disappointment for example. Perhaps you have been disappointed with the way your church is going, or the way things are in your workplace or in your relationships. Sometimes disappointment can cause us to give less than 100% and to shirk our responsibilities.

Worry can also lead us to sin. Remember how Saul was commanded to wait for Samuel, but when Samuel didn't arrive when Saul expected him and the enemy were gathering, Saul took upon himself priestly duties which were not his to perform. Worry often causes us to break God's commands. Sometimes when we can't see how our needs are going to be met we might seek to meet them in inappropriate ways, such as working on the Sabbath, or cheating on our tax. It's no wonder Jesus told us not to worry (Matthew 6:25-34). He knew how worry can cause us

to stray from His commands.

Even the powerful emotion of love can cause us to sin. If we love anything or anyone more than God we break the commandment concerning idolatry. Jesus also said if we love mother or father or anyone more than Him we are not worthy of Him. Even the beautiful emotion of joy can cause us to sin. Have you ever enjoyed something so much that you forgot where you were or who you were? Perhaps you were driving along the highway enjoying your favourite music and before you realized it you were way over the speed limit.

Many people have also experienced deep hurts caused by rejection or abuse. If these emotions are not overcome a person may treat others without love or compassion. Bitterness can cause us to be most unlike our Lord whose life we are called to imitate.

Sadness can also cause us to sin. Often when we are sad we do a variety of things to cheer ourselves up which are not appropriate in God's sight. Three obvious examples include drinking too much, spending frivolously, or engaging in unwholesome forms of entertainment. Sadly, some will even curse God when sadness causes them to sink to great depths.

Realizing the strong link between our emotions and sin Jesus was wise to instruct us about the attitudes of our hearts. Remember, He stressed in chapter five of Matthew that if we have lust in our hearts we have already committed adultery, or if we are

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To Do List From God

I ran my life in search of worldly things;
My time and will were firmly in control.
I thought I had no need for what God brings;
I gave no heed to murmurs from my soul.

"You're planning, doing
all the time," it said,

"But something else is
missing deep inside.

Your mind is whirling,
but your heart is dead,

So turn to God and let
go of your pride."



I did, and God said, "Here's My plan for you:
Give your life to Me, and just let go. Have faith
and pray, and read the Bible through,
And you'll have blessings more than you can
know."

So simple, yet it brings me perfect peace,
Living life for God the way I should.
Direction, purpose, fullness and release—
Life with God is very, very good.

By Joanna Fuchs



The Second Coming of Christ

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed in
Scripture as the most dramatic and spectacular event in
history — one that will be witnessed by every human
being on earth.

*Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see
him. (Revelation 1:7a)*

There are many verses proclaiming the reality that the
last great day of the Lord is sure: Christ will come again,
and it will be awesome!

Please send for this free booklet



The Futility of New Years' Resolutions

As tradition has it for this time of year, many people will be busy making new years' resolutions to change things about themselves that they do not like. While many think about it, others will start and then quickly fall by the wayside as their strength and motivation lapses. Enter then the academics and psychologists, who are sought out to give the people greater insight and understanding about themselves. But are these the best people to take advice from? Human nature is universal. They are subject to the same weaknesses and end up as everyone else who does not understand who they are and how mankind got to be here.

What shall we plan then? Firstly, is the 1st of January the best time to be considering/attempting this change? Does it hold some significance and is it really a once in a year event?

Does God really care what month you started?

Because we like 'fresh starts' there is nothing like the 1st January to measure time by. And for the procrastinators and perfectionists, if you fail to start, or you start and fail, you can take it easy on yourself until 1st January rolls around next year.

To the Christian, the day of your baptism is the start of not a new year, but the start of a new life.

And when failure comes, you don't wait until the following year to renew your determination. You do it immediately after you get up from your prayer to God seeking forgiveness. And how many times do we forgive our brother? Have you ever thought that that scripture might also be referring to how many times God will forgive us?

An intentional habit is what we follow, either good or bad. The choice is ultimately ours. For those that change and succeed, the pain of not achieving is greater than the pain of accepting defeat.

When you want to change a bad habit, don't analyse it, just recognise it. Admit that you have a bad habit and that you want to change. *"When I am depressed I go to the fridge and..."*. You don't need to understand why. Consider Paul writing in Romans 7:24, *"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* And the struggle he had in doing the things he should, and not doing the things he should not. But in Christ Jesus he had the victory.

You do need to acknowledge your weakness and limitations. Once you admit that, you can intentionally avoid those situations where you set yourself up to fail. In the Lord's Prayer it says... *'and lead us not in to temptation'*. Not that God ever lays temptation before us. Rather, it is saying *"and don't let me walk into situations where I know I am likely to give in to the temptation that I have a weakness/attraction for."*

All habits are learnt, and all habits are built up one strand at a time; just like a steel cable strong enough to support a suspension bridge as big as San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. Each cable consists of many individual strands of wire, built one upon the other. This is how bad habits are formed. It is one lazy action or inaction at a time. It's OK. I can stop anytime I want, until...

Proverbs 24:30–34. *"I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding. And, behold, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles were covering its face, and its stone wall was broken down. Then I beheld and considered it well; I looked and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep - So shall your poverty come as a robber, and your want as an armed man."*



It takes time to build a bad habit. It will therefore take time to undo that same habit and replace it with a good habit. It's about endurance not speed. The race is not to the strong or swift. That sounds like a disaster doesn't it? But as Paul says, he faced hardship to the point of death in order to learn that it was the Lord who held him up, not Paul's own determination.

This is analogous to the Christian way of life – transforming ourselves daily. Not by our actions, but by our very thoughts: the source of our motivation and desire – which God can read. By changing our thoughts we can change our actions. Change our actions and we change the out-

come. Change our outcome and we change our future circumstances.

Ephesians 4:22-24 (Amplified) *"Strip yourselves of your former nature [put off and discard your old unrenewed self] which characterised your previous manner of life and becomes corrupt through lusts and desires that spring from delusion; And be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind [having a fresh mental and spiritual attitude]; And put on the new nature [the regenerate self], created in God's image, [Godlike] in true righteousness and holiness."*

Written by Richard Todd

Continued from page three

angry with our brother without cause we have committed murder. The Apostle Paul exhorted us in Ephesians to *be angry and sin not*.

If such a humble, obedient and self-controlled man as Moses could get carried away and err through emotion then we need to be very careful when it comes to our emotions. Let me suggest three positive steps we can take.

Reigning over our emotions

Firstly, we need to be very careful what we say or do when our emotions are stirred. It is at these times we must be extra cautious or extra vigilant. We must check ourselves and call upon the Lord when we feel our hearts burning or our emotions welling up.

Secondly, we must keep sowing to

the Spirit and building up our minds in Christ. The more we are filled with the Spirit and growing in knowledge and spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting and praise, the more stable we will be. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of love, power and soundness of mind. If we sow to the flesh we will reap corruption, but if we sow to the Spirit we will reap everlasting life. The more we set our minds on spiritual things, the more God will build His loving and disciplined character in us.

Thirdly, if we have been having trouble with the same emotion for a long while it's important we get help in overcoming it. We might need help from a professional counsellor and we certainly need help from God our Counsellor too. 1 Peter 5:6-7 instructs us to cast all our care upon Him, for He cares for us. We can bring our bitterness, anxiety, fear, jealousy, loneliness, despair and hopelessness to Him and tell Him all about it.



He's listening. He will refresh us with the mind of Christ. I encourage you to read the Psalms and see how the Psalm writers expressed their feelings to God in the Psalms. Let Him hear your cries. He is the God of all comfort.

Written by David Kidd

Youth Vibe



The Bible is filled with young faithful believers who stepped out, despite their age, with a desire to serve God. The Lord used them, not because of their age, but because of their hearts.

Such as: David, Jeremiah, Mary, Joseph, Ruth and Timothy to name a few.

Search the Scriptures to learn the heart of the young faithful believers.

David (1 Samuel 17 & 18)

Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1)

Mary (Luke 1)

Joseph (Genesis 37; 39; 40; 41)

Ruth (Ruth 1; 2; 3; 4.)

Timothy (1 Timothy 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6.)



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Moses died in this country:

- A. Sinai
- B. Moab
- C. Canaan
- D. Jericho

2. The story of Samson is found in this book of the Bible:

- A. Joshua
- B. Judges
- C. 1 Samuel
- D. 2 Kings

3. Barnabas was a native of this place:

- A. Tarsus
- B. Pontus
- C. Cyprus
- D. Lystra

4. The chapter in the Scriptures often referred to as the 'love chapter' is:

- A. Romans 13
- B. Hebrews 13
- C. 1 Corinthians 13
- D. 2 Corinthians 13



The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper. Also called *communion*,

illustrates our fellowship with Christ, and reminds us that we are members of the body of Christ — the church — and that our Lord is coming back again.

This booklet will examine the origin and significance of the Lord's Supper, how it symbolizes our participation in the body and blood of Christ, the importance of our fellowship with other believers, the meaning of the bread and the fruit of the vine used in its observance, and its time, frequency and perpetual nature.

The Church of God (Seventh Day) will hold the Lord's Supper on Thursday evening the 21st of April, 2016.

Please send for the free booklet

For further information regarding The Lord's Supper, please call 1800 622 721 (Australia only)

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