



40.DAY 2023

40.DAYS 40.VOICES 40.PRAYERS

DAY 3 | JULY 3

Keep Watch and Pray

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BIBLE READING

1 PETER 5:8-11 | Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.
⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. ¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.
¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

It's my great joy and true honour to share God's word with you. Allow me to read from a poignant moment in our Lord Jesus' life. It is taken from Mark 14:32:

They went to a place called Gethsemane and Jesus said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with Him, and He began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

If I were to ask us: What do you think is one weakness of modern-day Christians and the Church collectively?

It could be we are weak in our preaching, weak in our evangelism, weak in our discipleship, weak in missiology. It could be so many things. But I want to suggest to you that my observation

of our weakness is that we are weak in following Jesus in these last moments of His life.

For Jesus, in coming to fulfil God's will to destroy the devil's work, taught His inner circle of Peter, James and John to simply watch and pray.

If we were to do a survey among churches, among leaders, among the average member, among our youth as to what percentage of us actually do our Quiet Time, really practise the spiritual discipline of watching and praying, reading God's Word, praying to God, listening to His voice for 15 minutes a day, half an hour a day or more than that, very few churches would cross the mark at 50%.

That has been the survey around the world. So the instruction and encouragement for us is to watch and pray. Against what and who?

Watch and pray firstly against Satan. So how seriously do you take Satan? He is the arch-enemy of God and His people and His purposes. From the Old to New Testament, this has been the way. Jesus has come to destroy the devil's work.

Secondly, we are to watch and pray against sin. The sin of the world, the sin of our own hearts.

What if God highlights to you that you have a problem with lust, with pornography – that your eyes are fixed on the wrong things, that you're stealing with your eyes, that you have a problem with your anger, you have a problem with your unforgiveness, you have a problem with your envy, your ambition, you have a problem with your dissatisfaction, or you have a problem with entitlement.

If God were to put upon your heart those things, would you confess them or would you rationalise them away?

Thirdly, we must watch and pray – not just against Satan and sin – but watch and pray for our sanctification.

Jesus comes to save us. At the heart of saving us, He comes to sanctify us, He gives us a new mind and a new heart. Has there been any difference since you've come to believe in Jesus? In your thoughts, in your words, in your deeds?

A writer said, Jesus' "watch and pray" is complete, it is finished. The Church's watch and pray has begun.

We look at Peter who was part of this inner circle. He didn't take this seriously, he fell asleep. But by the time he wrote 1 Peter and 2 Peter, he finished 1 Peter 5 by saying: "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." (:8)

What does that teach you? That years later, after the resurrection of Jesus and the pouring out of the Spirit, Peter, as the leader of the Church, took watching and praying against Satan seriously.

He took watching and praying against himself, his self-sufficiency, seriously. He took belonging to Jesus and a new beginning seriously.

My prayer and my heart is that we will do this. If each of us does this seriously – every day, every week, whether you're single or married or have families – we have our Quiet Time, we have our time of watching and praying, we will be stronger individually and stronger collectively.

May the Lord bless us and keep us.

Let us pray: *Almighty God, You tell us to listen to Your Son. We confess that we are always slow. But quickened by Your Spirit, may we not just listen to the Lord Jesus, but emulate the Lord Jesus in watching and praying against the evil one, in watching and praying against the deceitfulness of sin in our own hearts. But, above all, in watching and praying that the Lord Jesus will become the consuming passion of our lives.*

In His mighty name, we pray for His eternal glory. Amen.

REFLECT

- 1 Why is Jesus' instruction to keep watch and pray so important for yourself and the Church?
- 2 What area in your life is the Holy Spirit convicting you of a need to repent?
- 3 What are some daily habits you can institute in order to keep watch and pray and remain spiritually awake?

PRAY

- 1 Pray for vigilance and the ability to recognise the insidious schemes of Satan, particularly in your thought life. Ask God to help you discern thoughts, inclinations and world views that are contrary to His Word. Seek wisdom, discernment, clarification and the mind of Christ.
- 2 Surrender what you consume with your eyes and ears to God, seeking only to imbibe and share what is true, noble, right and praiseworthy. Pray for the blood of the Lamb to cover your mind and sanctify your thoughts.
- 3 Ask God to reign in your emotions so that you desire only things that He desires, that you might love like He does – patiently, kindly, selflessly.