

The Watch of the Lord

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By Dave Butts

In May of 1995, I had the wonderful opportunity to spend several weeks in South Korea for a missions conference. One of the highlights of my time there was to worship at the world's largest church. Pastor David Yonggi Cho's Yoido Full Gospel Church with its 800,000 members is an amazing thing to see. The role of prayer in its establishment and growth is well-known. What may not be so known is the role of the Lord's Watch, or continual prayer.

Yoido Full Gospel has several prayer mountains that are full, day and night with Christians praying. I spent several days on one of the Korean prayer mountains and was amazed at the passion and intensity of the prayer that was ongoing. Even for those who do not go to the prayer mountain, there are opportunities to spend the night in prayer. Every Friday night, the 25,000 seat sanctuary is filled with Christians who spend the night together in prayer. God has honored that kind of "all-out" praying by blessing that congregation in ways beyond the imagining of most churches.

Day and night prayer...continual prayer...24 hours, 7 days a week prayer...God seems to be calling the Church back to that sort of desperate dependency upon Himself. Far from being merely a fad or an emotional response, this type of prayer movement is simply a return to Scripture. God's word is full of both command and example concerning the Lord's Watch...not using that term necessarily, but certainly demonstrating the concept of day and night prayer.

It is Jesus who clearly ties together the concept of watching, with that of praying. In the Matthew 26 account of His betrayal in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asks three of His disciples to “keep watch with me” (vs.38). Then in verse 39 He goes and begins to pray. After His prayer time, He returns to where He had left the disciples, only to find them sleeping. “Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?” (vs.40). “Watch and pray” He continued in verse 41 and then He left them to return to His own prayer time. When Jesus asked them to watch with Him, and then He began to pray, He was showing them (and us) that to watch meant to pray.

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What is exciting for us is to realize that this is just the culmination of many Scriptures that point the people of God to the power of the Lord’s Watch. There are many passages that speak of this. Isaiah 62:6-7 is perhaps one of the best known: “I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.”

Look at the emphasis on praying during the night in the following passages:

Joel 1:13 – “Put on sackcloth, O priests, and mourn; wail, you who minister before the altar. Come, spend the night in sackcloth, you who minister before my God.”

Psalms 134:1 – “Praise the Lord, all you servants of the Lord who minister by night in the house of the Lord.”

Psalms 63:6 – “On my bed I remember you; I think of you through

the watches of the night.”

Psalm 22:2 – “O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night but I find no rest.”

Genesis 32:22-28 – This is the story of Jacob wrestling at night with God.

Exodus 12:42 – The Passover remembrance was to be a nighttime prayer vigil before the Lord. “Because the Lord kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the Lord for the generations to come.”

Nehemiah 4:9 – “But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.”

This list could continue with inferences from the New Testament of this pattern of prayer at night, even looking at Acts 1:14 which speaks of the early believers before Pentecost praying constantly together. Paul spoke in several places of sleepless nights and wrestling in prayer.

Brothers and sisters, those who have gone before us had taken prayer to a whole new level. Day and night they poured out their hearts to God and He heard! Power was poured out from on high in response to the prayers of His people. And He still desires to do that today. We will not change our homes, our cities, our nation, or this world by our plans and programs, but only by the power of God that comes in response to the prayers of the Church.

In the 1700’s Charles Wesley wrote a hymn entitled, “Hymns for the Watch-Night”:

Oft have we pass’d the guilty night,
In revellings and frantic mirth:
The creature was our sole delight,
Our happiness the things of earth:
But O! suffice the season past,
We choose the better part at last.

We will not close our wakeful eyes,
We will not let our eyelids sleep,
But humbly lift them to the skies,
And all a solemn vigil keep:
So many years on sin bestow'd
Can we not watch one night for God?

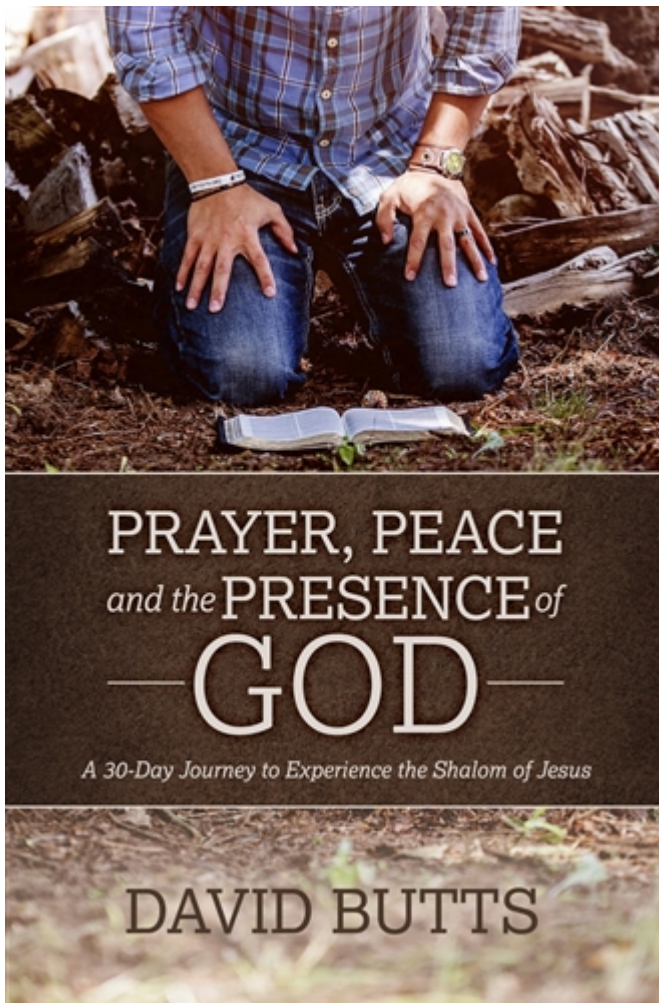
For ever let th' Archangel's voice
Be sounding in our ears
The solemn midnight cry,
"Ye dead, the Judge is Come!
Arise and meet him in the sky,
And meet your instant doom!"

O may we thus be found,
Obedient to his word,
Attentive to the trumpet's sound,
And looking for our Lord!
O may we thus ensure
Our lot among the blest,
And watch a moment to secure
An everlasting rest!

Mahesh Chavda, in his book, *Watch of the Lord*, reminds us that
"above all, remember that God is the premier Watchman."

"I will lift up my eyes to the hills – from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved. He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:1-3).

Let's join the Lord of the Watch!



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