

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY Part 2: Progress in the Christian Life Chapter 5 SLEEPY SAINTS

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Transcript

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

Part 2: Progress in the Christian Life

Chapter 5

SLEEPY SAINTS

What an anomaly! Drowsing on the verge of eternity! A Christian is one who, in contrast to the unregenerate, has been awakened from the sleep of death in trespasses and sins, made to realize the unspeakable awfulness of endless misery in hell and the ineffable joy of everlasting bliss in heaven, and thereby brought to recognize the seriousness and solemnity of life. A Christian is one who has been taught experientially the worthlessness of all mundane things and the preciousness of Divine things. He has turned his back on Vanity Fair and has started out on his journey to the Celestial City. He has been quickened into newness of life and supplied with the most powerful incentives to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Nevertheless, it is sadly possible for him to suffer a relapse, for his zeal to abate, his graces to languish, for him to leave his first love, and become weary of well-doing. Yea, unless he be very much on his guard, drowsiness will steal over him, and he will fall asleep. Corruptions still indwell in him, and sin has a stupefying effect. He is yet in this evil world, and it exerts an enervating influence. Satan seeks to devour him, and unless resisted steadfastly will hypnotize him. Thus, the menace of this spiritual "sleeping sickness" is very real. Slumbering saints! What an incongruity! Taking their ease while threatened by danger. Lazing instead of fighting the good fight of faith. Trifling away opportunities to glorify their Saviour, instead of redeeming the time: rusting, instead of wearing Out in His service. We speak with wonderment and horror of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning, but far more startling and reprehensible is a careless Christian who has departed from God, bewitched by a world which is doomed to eternal destruction. Such a travesty and tragedy is far from being exceptional. Both observation and the teaching of Scripture prove it to be a common occurrence. Such passages as the following make it only too evident that the people of God are thus overcome. "It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. 13:11). "Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (1 Cor. 15:34). "Awake thou that sleepest" (Eph. 5:14). Each of those clamant calls is made to the saints. So, too, is that exhortation addressed to them, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not

sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:5,6). Our Lord gave warning of the same phenomenon in Matthew 25:1-13, which points some very searching lessons upon the subject now before us. We do not propose to give an exposition of those verses, still less waste time on canvassing the conflicting theorizing of men thereon. Instead of indulging in useless speculations upon what has been termed the "prophetic" applications of that passage, we intend to dwell upon what is of far more practical importance and profit to the Christian's walk. First, let it be duly noted that this parable of the Virgins was delivered by Christ not to a promiscuous multitude, but to His own disciples: it was to them that He said, "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (verse 13). Therein He exhorted His followers to maintain an attitude of the utmost alertness and diligence, to be on their guard against a sudden surprisal, to see to it that they were in a constant state of readiness to welcome and entertain Him at His appearing. In that thirteenth verse Christ clearly indicated the principal design of this parable, namely, to enforce the Christian duty of watchfulness, particularly against the tendency and danger of moral drowsiness and spiritual apathy in the performance of our duties. Second, we would here earnestly warn the reader against placing any restrictions on the words of Holy Writ. In the light of the Analogy of Faith, that is the general tenor of Scripture, it is quite unwarrantable for us to limit the words "wherein the Son of man cometh" to His ultimate appearing at the end of this age or world. It is our duty to make use of the Concordance and carefully observe the different senses in which the "coming" of Christ is referred to in the Word, and distinguish between them. For example, the communications of grace to God's people in the administration of His Word and ordinances is spoken of thus, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth" (Ps. 72:6, and cf. Deut. 32:2). Again, there was a judicial coming of the Lord in the destruction of Jerusalem, when He made good the threat, "What shall the Lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others" (Mark 12:9)—He came not literally in Person, but instrumentally by the Romans! Then there is also a "coming" of Christ to His people in the renewed manifestations of His love: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him" John 14:23). Christ has come to His people vicariously: as He declared unto the apostles, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18), where according to the preceding verses the principal reference is plainly to the public descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Again, Christ often visits His people in the chariot of His providence: sometimes favorably, at others adversely, as in "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick" (Rev. 2:5, and cf. verse 16). Again, He "comes" instrumentally by the ministry of the Gospel: "And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to you which were afar off" (Eph. 2:16, 17, and cf. Luke 10:16). Again, He comes spiritually to those who yearn for and seek after fellowship with Him: "I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). Finally, He will come literally and visibly (Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7). Thus it is a serious mistake to jumble together the communicative, judicial, manifestative, vicarious, providential, instrumental, and spiritual "comings" of Christ; as it also is to restrict to His second advent every verse where it speaks of His "coming" or appearing. In like manner, it is equally wrong for us to limit our Lord's "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" to a "looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Most of the other seven things mentioned above are not to be excluded therefrom. We are to be on the *qui vive* (or alert) for His approaches to us in the means of grace, attentive to His appearings before us in providence, recognize Him in the ministry of the Gospel, and expectantly wait His visits of intimate fellowship. The Christian's continuance in this world is the period of both his "watching" and his "waiting" for removal therefrom; and since he knows not

whether that will be by death or by his being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, he is to be prepared for either event—if he be so for the former, he will be for the latter. This call for him to "watch" signifies that he is to "keep his heart with all diligence" (Prov. 4:23), "Keep himself from idols" (1 John 5:2 1), "Keep himself in the love of God" (Jude 21). It bids us "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation, knowing that [though] the spirit be willing, the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). In a word, that exhortation requires us to attend to the interests of our souls with unremitting diligence and circumspection. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom" (Matt. 25:1). This is not said to be a similitude of the attitude of "the Bride" toward her Bridegroom, for the scope of it is wider, taking in the whole sphere of Christian profession. Hence in what follows the "Virgins" are divided into two groups—the regenerate and the unregenerate. Thus it would have been inaccurate to designate the whole of them "the Bride"! It is therefore a discriminating parable, like that of the wheat and tares, and that of the good and bad fish in Matthew 13. If it be asked, Why should Christ address such a parable unto the apostles, the answer is, Because there was a Judas among them! It is outside our present scope to consider the "foolish" virgins: suffice it to say that externally they differed not from the "wise" ones. They represent not the irreligious and immoral, but unsaved church members, those who have "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the [not "their"!]

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 2:20), but who have never experienced a miracle of grace in their hearts. Though having lamps in their hands, they had no oil "in their vessels" (verses 3 and 4)—no grace in their souls! This calls for writer and reader to make honest and careful examination of themselves, to "give diligence to make his calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins." Many and varied are the figures used to describe the disciples of Christ. They are spoken of as salt, as lights, as sheep, as living stones, as kings and priests. When complete, and in its corporeal capacity, the Church is referred to as the Lamb's "Wife," but individually they are termed "the virgins, her companions" (Ps. 45:14, and cf. Song of Sol. 8:13; Rev. 1:9) They are called "virgins" for the purity of their faith: for none—no matter how pleasing is his personality or irreproachable his outward conduct—who is fundamentally unsound is to be regarded as a Christian. Thus the apostle, when expostulating with a local church for giving a hearing to false teachers, told them, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have [ministerially] espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). Again; they are called "virgins" for the purity of their worship. God is a jealous God and will not brook any rival, and therefore we find, all through Scripture, that idolatry is expressed as harlotry, hence the vile and corrupt Papacy is designated "The mother of harlots" (Rev. 17:5). Once more: they are called "virgins" for the purity of their walk, refusing friendship and fellowship with the adulterous world, cleaving to Christ—"they are virgins: these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Rev. 14:4). The saints are expressly bidden to go forth to meet the Bridegroom. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals" (Song of Solomon 3:11)—an exceedingly interesting and blessed verse which we must not dwell upon. It is the antitypical Solomon, the prince of peace, who is here in view. His "mother" is the natural Israel, from whom according to the flesh He sprang—a figure of the spiritual Israel, in whose hearts He is "formed" (Gal. 4:19). The "day of his espousals" was when Israel entered into a solemn covenant with the Lord (Jer. 2:2, and see Ex. 24:3-8, for the historical reference), adumbrating our marital union with Christ, when we "gave our own selves to Him" (2 Cor. 8:5) and were "joined unto the Lord" (2 Cor 6:17), crowning Him the King of our hearts and lives. Here the "daughters of Jerusalem"—the same as the "virgins"—are bidden to "behold" their majestic and glorious King: to attentively consider the excellency of His person, to be engaged with His perfections, to admire and adore the One who is "Altogether Lovely." But in order thereto there must be active effort on their part. Not to the dilatory does Christ reveal Himself (Song of Sol.

3:1). "Which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom." The taking of their lamps signifies making an open profession of their faith. They were not secret disciples, hiding their light under a bushel, but those who were unashamed to be known as the followers of Christ. Luke 12:35, serves to explain this force of the figure: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps [more literally] burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." Of His forerunner Christ said, "He was a burning and shining lamp" (John 5:35). But other thoughts are suggested and things implied by these virgins taking their lamps. It tells us they availed themselves of suitable means, making provision against the darkness which they would encounter. The principal means for the Christian is the Word, which is "a lamp [same Greek word as in Luke 12:35, and John 5:35] that shineth in a dark place" (2 Pet. 1:19). It also shows they had no intention of going to sleep, but purposed to remain vigilant; which renders more searching what follows. It also intimates they were sensible of the difficulty of their task. Only one who, after a full day's work, has sat out the night by a sick bed knows how hard it is to keep alert throughout the long hours of darkness. It needs to be clearly realized by the believer that the Word is supplied him not only as "bread" to feed upon, a "sword" for him to employ in repulsing the attacks of his enemies, but also as an illuminator: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet" (119:105), revealing those paths in which I must walk if I would meet with the eternal Lover of my soul. "And went forth to meet the Bridegroom." That must ever be our object in the use of means and attendance upon the administration of the Divine ordinances. That going forth to meet the Lord is to be understood as expressing both external and internal action. Externally, it signifies separation from the world, especially its pleasures, for Christ will not be met with while we waste our time engaging in them. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ... come out from among them" (2 Cor. 6:14-17) must be heeded if we would "meet the Bridegroom." More particularly, their going forth denoted a turning of their backs upon the apostate ecclesiastical system: Christ had informed His disciples that he had abandoned a Judaism which had rejected Him (Matt. 23:37, 38), so if they would meet with Him, they too must "go forth unto Him outside the camp" (Heb. 13:15). The same is true now. If the Christian would meet with and have blessed fellowship with Christ, he must not only walk in separation from all intimacy with the profane world, but turn his back on every section of the religious world which gives not Christ the pre-eminence. That calls for the denying of self and "bearing His reproach." Our readiness so to do will depend upon how highly we esteem Him. Internally, it signified the activity of their affections. It imports their delight in Him, that He was the Object of their desires and expectations. It connotes the exercise of their graces upon Christ, an outgoing of the whole soul after Him; such a going out after Him as David had: "One thing [supremely] have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord [the place of communion] all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord" (Ps. 27:4). There can be no soul-satisfying beholding of His excellency unless there be deep longing for and earnest seeking after Him, which is what is purported by the "went forth to meet the Bridegroom!" "Went forth to meet the Bridegroom" denotes a craving for fellowship with and a definite seeking after Him, and where they be absent it is vain to think we are among those who "love His appearing." Those words refer to the exercise of the believer's graces, so that he can say "My soul followeth hard after Thee" (Ps. 63:8). Of faith, acted upon its Object, viewing Him as His person and perfections are portrayed in the Word. Of hope, expecting to meet with Him, for Him to "manifest Himself unto us" (John 14:21), as well as being for ever with Him. Of love, which desires its Beloved and cannot be content away from Him. It is for the affections to be set upon things above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, resulting in a stranger and pilgrim character on earth. It is a going out of self, absorbed with the One who loves us and gave Himself for us. Only so can He be experientially encountered, beheld with delight, fellowshiped. That "went forth to meet the Bridegroom" is such a going forth of the affections and exercise of our graces upon Him as made Paul to say, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted

loss for Christ: yea doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8, 9). "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept" (Matt. 25:6). How pathetic! How searching and solemn! The season of His tarrying was the time of their failing. They did not continue as they began. Their graces were not kept in healthy exercise. They ceased to attend unto the great business assigned them. They grew weary of well-doing. Instead of occupying our heads with the "prophetic" fulfillment of the verse, we need to bare our hearts and suffer them to be searched by it. Instead of saying, Those words now accurately describe the present condition of Christendom as a whole, we need to inquire how far they pertain to each of us individually. Far more to the point is it to ask myself, Am I a slumbering and sleeping Christian? Nor is that question to be answered hurriedly. If on the one hand I need to beware of thinking more highly of myself than I ought, or pretend all is well with me when such is not the case; on the other, God does not require me to act the part of a hypocrite, and in order to acquire a reputation for humility claim to be worse than I am. Peter was not uttering a presumptuous boast when he said unto Christ "Thou knowest that I love Thee." But Judas was an impostor when he greeted Him with a kiss. But before we can truthfully answer the question, Am I spiritually asleep? we must first ascertain what are the marks of one who is so. Let us then, in order to assist the honest inquirer, describe some of the characteristics of sleep. And since we are not making any effort to impress the learned, we will be as simple as possible. The things which characterize the body when it is asleep will help us to determine when the soul is so. When the body is asleep it is in a state of inactivity, all its members being in repose. It is also a state of unconsciousness, when the normal exercises of the mind are suspended. It is therefore a state of insensibility to danger, of complete helplessness. Spiritual sleep is that condition wherein the faculties of the believer's soul are inoperative and when his graces no longer perform their several offices. When the mind ceases to engage itself with Divine things, and the graces be not kept in healthy exercise, a state of slothfulness and inertia ensues. When the grand truths of Scripture regarding God and Christ, sin and grace, heaven and hell, exert not a lively and effectual influence upon us, we quickly become drowsy and neglectful. A slumbering faith is an inactive one. It is not exercised upon its appointed Objects nor performing its assigned tasks. It is neither drawing upon that fullness of grace which is available in Christ for His people, nor is it acting on the precepts and promises of the Word. Though there still be a mental assent to the Truth, yet the heart is no longer suitably affected by that which concerns practical godliness. Where such be the case a Christian will be governed more by tradition, sentiment, and fancy, rather than by gratitude, the fear of the Lord, and care to please Him. So too when his hope becomes sluggish, he soon lapses into a spiritual torpor. Hope is a desirous and earnest expectation of blessedness to come. It looks away from self and this present scene and is enthralled by "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." As it eyes the goal and the prize, it is enabled to run with patience the race set before us. But when hope slumbers he becomes absorbed with the objects of time and sense, and allured and stupefied with present and perishing things. Likewise when love to God be not vigorous, there is no living to His glory; self-love and self-pity actuating us. When the love of Christ ceases to constrain us to self-denial and a following the example He has left us, the soul has gone to sleep. Where those cardinal graces be not in healthy exercise, the Christian loses his relish for the means of grace, and if he attempts to use them it is but perfunctorily. The Bible is read more from habit or to satisfy conscience than with eager delight, and then no impression is left on the heart, nor is there any sweet meditation thereon afterwards. Prayer is performed mechanically, without any conscious approach unto God or communing with Him. So in attending public worship and the hearing of the Word: the duty is performed formally and without profit. When the body sleeps it neither eats nor drinks: so it is with the soul. Faith is the hand which receives, hope the saliva which aids digestion, love the masticator and assimilator of what is partaken. But when

they cease to function the soul is starved, and it becomes weak and languid. The more undernourished be the body the less strength and ability has it for its tasks. In like manner, a neglected soul is unfit for holy duties, and the most sacred exercises become burdensome. Thus, when a saint finds his use of the means of grace wearisome and the discharge of spiritual privileges irksome, he may know that his soul is slumbering Godwards. In the parable itself four causes of spiritual sleep are indicated. 1. Failure to remain watchful. In its wider sense "watching" signifies an earnest taking heed unto ourselves and our ways, realizing how prone we are to "turn again to folly" (Psa. 85:8). So long as the saint be left in this world, he is in constant danger of bringing reproach upon the holy Name he bears, and becoming a stumbling-block to his brethren. Watchfulness (the opposite of carelessness) is exercising a diligent concern and care for our souls, avoiding all occasions to sin, resisting temptation (Matt. 26:41). It is to "stand fast in the faith, quit you like men" (1 Cor. 16:13)—be regular in our duties. When we be lax in serving the Lord, in mortifying our lusts, and less fervent and frequent in prayer, then slumber has begun to steal over us. Ultimately, it respects "looking for that blessed hope," which is a very different thing from awaiting the fulfillment of prophecy or the accomplishing of an item in God's "dispensational program." It is far more than expecting an important event, namely, the second advent of Christ Himself, and that implies delight in Him, yearning after Him, practical readiness for His appearing: Luke 12:35, 36. 2. The Bridegroom's delay resulted in lack of perseverance on their part. Since we know not how soon or how long deferred will be our call to depart from this world, we need to be unremitting in duty, in a state of constant readiness. Not only a desirous expectation but a "patient waiting for Christ" (2 Thess. 3:5) is required of us. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching. . . . If he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not have suffered his house to be broken through" (Luke 12:37, 38). It was because Moses tarried so long in the mount that Israel grew weary of waiting and gave way to their lusts—a warning to us not to relax our vigilance. How long had the Old Testament saints to wait for His first advent! "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it . . . be ye also patient: stablish your hearts" (James 5:7, 8), exercising faith and hope. See Luke 21:36. 3. Intimacy with graceless professors. The wise virgins failed because they were in too close contact and fellowship with the foolish ones. That is confirmed by the Divine warning "Be not deceived: evil companionships [the verbal form of that Greek word is rendered "communed with" in Acts 24:26] corrupt good manners," which is immediately followed by "Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (1 Cor. 15:33,34), showing us that intimacy with the Christless produces lethargy. "We are more susceptible of evil than good: we catch a disease from one another, but we do not get health from one another. The conversations of the wicked have more power to corrupt than the good to excite virtue. A man that would keep himself awake unto God, and mind the saving of his soul, must shake off evil company" (Manton). See Psalm 119:115. It is not the openly profane, but the loose and careless professor who is the greatest menace to the Christian. Hence "having a form of godliness but denying [inaction] the power thereof, from such turn away" (2 Tim. 3:5). 4. Inattention to the initial danger: they "slumbered" (a lighter form) before they slept! How that shows the need for taking solemn and earnest heed to the beginnings of spiritual decline! If we yield to a spirit of languor we shall soon lapse into a sound sleep. One degree of slackness and carelessness leads to another: "Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep" (Prov. 19:15), Once our zeal abates and our love cools, we become remiss and heedless. If we do not fight against a cold formality when engaged in sacred exercises, we shall ultimately cease them entirely. All backsliding begins in the heart! Sin stupefies before it hardens. If we cease to heed the gentle strivings of the Spirit, conscience will become calloused. "David, when he fell into adultery and blood, he was like one in a swoon. . . . We have need to stand always upon our watch. Great mischiefs would not

ensue if we took notice of the beginnings of those distempers which afterwards settle upon us" (Manton). Other causes of spiritual sleepiness which are not directly indicated in this parable are specified in or may be deduced from other passages. For example: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; quicken Thou me in Thy way" (Ps. 119:37). The apposition of those two petitions clearly connotes that an undue occupation with worldly things has a deadening effect upon the heart. Nothing has a more enervating influence on the affections of a believer than for him to allow himself an inordinate liberty in carnal vanities. Again, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares . . . Watch ye therefore, and pray always" (Luke 21 :34..36). Gluttony not only dulls the senses of the body but renders the mind sluggish too, and thereby the whole man is unfitted for the discharge of spiritual duties, which call for the engaging and putting forth of "all that is within us" (Ps. 103:1); equally so do carking (burdened) cares which engross the attention and stupefy the understanding and render the affections torpid. Yet more searching is it to observe that "be sober" precedes "be vigilant" in 1 Peter 5:8. Sobriety is freedom from excesses, particularly a sparing use made of the lawful comforts of this life. Any form of intemperance breeds inertia. If, then, we are able to keep wide awake, we must be "temperate in all things" (1 Cor. 9:25). The consequences of spiritual sloth are inevitable and obvious. Space allows us to do little more than name some of the chief ones. (1) Grace becomes inoperative. When faith be not exercised upon Christ, it nods and ceases to produce good works. When hope languishes and becomes inactive, the heart is no longer lifted above the things of time and sense by a desirous expectation of good things to come. Then love declines and is no longer engaged in pleasing and glorifying God. Zeal slumbers and instead of fervour there is heartless formality in the use of means and performance of duties. (2) We are deprived of spiritual discernment, and no longer able to experientially perceive the vanity of earthly things and value of heavenly, and the need of pressing forward unto them. (3) A drowsy inattention to God's providences. Eyes closed in sleep take no notice of His dealings with us, weigh not the things which befall us. Mercies are received as a matter of course, and signs of God's displeasure are disregarded (Isa. 42:25). (4) Unconcernedness in the commission of sin, so that we cease mortifying our lusts and resisting the Devil. Spiritual stupidity makes us insensible to our danger. It was while David was taking his ease that he yielded to the Devil (2 Sam. 11:1, 2). (5) The Holy Spirit is grieved and His gracious operations are suspended and His comforts withheld. (6) So far from us overcoming the world, when our spiritual senses be dulled, we are absorbed with its attractions or weighted down by its cares. (7) We are robbed by our enemies (Luke 12:39)—of God's providential smile, of our peace and joy. (8) Fruitlessness: see Proverbs 24:30, 31. (9) Carnal complacency: peace and joy being derived from pleasant circumstances and earthly possessions, rather than Christ and our heritage in Him. (10) Spiritual poverty: see Proverbs 24:33, 34. (11) Indifference to the cause and interests of Christ: it was while men slept Satan sowed his tares, and abuses creep into the church. (12) A practical unpreparedness for Christ's coming: Luke 21:36; Revelation 16:15. Let us now point out some of the correctives. 1. Spiritual sleepiness is best prevented by our faith being engaged with the person and perfections of Christ; it is not monastic retirement, nor the relinquishment of our lawful connection with the world, but the fixing of our minds and affections upon the transcendent excellency of the Saviour, which will most effectually preserve us from being hypnotized by the baits of Satan. A believing and adoring view of Him who is "Fairer than the children of men" will dim the luster of the most attractive objects in this world. When the One who is "altogether lovely" is beheld by anointed eyes the flowery paths of this scene become a dreary wilderness, and the soul is quickened to press forward unto Him, until it sees the King in his beauty face to face. 2. Especially will a keeping fresh in our hearts the unspeakable sufferings of the Saviour draw us away from threatened rivals, and inspire grateful obedience to Him. "For the love of Christ [particularly His dying love] constraineth us" (2 Cor.

5:14). 3. By praying daily for God to quicken and revive us. 4. By being doubly on our guard when things are going smoothly and easily. 5. By maintaining a lively expectation of Christ's appearing (Heb. 9:28). 6. By attending to such exhortations as Hebrews 12:2, 3, allowing no abatement of our vigor. 7. By putting on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:13-18).

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