

# SPIRITUAL VIGILANCE

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I'm happy to see everybody who's here this morning. I'm happy to see James and Lucas. We know when young people get to a certain age, there are different pulls. So we thank the Lord that they've been coming and that they are present in the services. Amen.

I'd like to go back to First Peter chapter 5 and verse 8. I know I've been reading this verse quite a bit over the past couple weeks but I believe it's important.

So verse 8 says:

1 Peter 5:8

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

In the past few services we've been looking specifically at sin. Before that, we also touched on the spiritual side even though, of course, the struggle with the flesh is still a spiritual battle. This morning I'd like to go a little bit above that.

Also I want to say: I thank the Lord for His guidance and His leadership. Different ones – not just the young people – but different ones have expressed their appreciation for the last few services. As we said from the beginning: this is for everybody. The enemy is coming after everybody the Lord would allow him to.

So Peter says here:

1 Peter 5:8

*Be sober, be vigilant;*

This morning, I want to look specifically at what I would call: *spiritual vigilance*. And that's actually the title of the message.

If we could go back to the previous chapter, First Peter chapter 4 and verse 18.

Peter says here:

1 Peter 4:18

*And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

Modern Christianity or professing Christianity today, in general, they really want to *sugar coat* everything and make this spiritual walk something that's pleasing to the flesh because if they don't, they're going to have a congregation about the size of this one. [Laugh]

People today have *itching ears*. They have *itching ears* to hear *what they want to hear*. [2Timothy 4:3] And one thing they want to be told is that *they're saved*. Above everything else, they want to know that *they're saved*.

I will say: yes, that's absolutely of the utmost importance.

But you're *not* saved because I tell you: *you're saved*. You're *not* saved because you sing a song that says: Praise God, I'm saved. You're saved *if you're saved according to the Word*. Praise the Lord.

Again, the religious world wants to *sugar coat* that. They want to make it something where somebody just has to pray a little prayer: *I accept the Lord*, and then they're told: *praise the Lord, you're saved*.

But when we read the Word, we see in one place where Jesus said: *he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved*. [Matthew 24:13] Praise the Lord. And here Peter is saying: *the righteous scarcely is saved*. Praise the Lord.

On the one hand, we don't say that to scare anybody, but on the other hand, to show *the seriousness*.

Jude said: *there are certain ones you need to save with fear*. [Jude 1:23]

Again, it's not that *we can save*, but we can *preach the Word*. And at times – if we preach it right – we're going to see *the seriousness*, and it can even invoke a certain *godly fear*. Praise the Lord.

So Peter says: *watch out, the enemy is out there*. [1Peter 5:8]

Above all, he's after *our soul*. We've talked about that. And until he can get *our soul*, he'll also try, he'll run after *our testimony*. But he really wants *our soul*.

Let's go to Luke 21 and verse 36.

I wasn't planning on starting here, but I think I'll go ahead and start in verse 34.

Jesus says here:

Luke 21:34

*And take heed to yourselves,*

Now we have to remember: he's not speaking to the worldly element. These people were following Jesus. These were Jews who wanted to serve the Lord. They were religious in nature.

He says here:

Luke 21:34

*And take heed to yourself, 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.*

Luke 21:35

*For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.*

Luke 21:36

*Watch ye therefore, and pray always,*

This is the verse I want to focus on.

Luke 21:36

*that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass,*

So he says: *these things are going to come as a snare* – in other words: *as a trap* – *on all that dwell on the earth.*

But here, he's letting us know: *there will be some who will escape.* Praise the Lord.

Luke 21:36

*that ye may be*

Luke 21:36

*worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the son of man.*

Now, *Jesus Christ* is the *Son of Man*. Praise the Lord. And *there he was* speaking to them.

It's interesting: they were standing there *before the Son of Man*, and he said: *pray that you may be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man.*

So there are two things to see here.

First of all: at that time, he came as *the Lamb of God*. A lamb is a *meek, harmless animal*. Amen. Has anyone ever heard of somebody getting attacked by a lamb? You know you've never heard that. It's a *meek animal*. Even when they beat Jesus, he didn't answer them back. He was silent. He suffered. He shed his blood, and he died.

But when he comes back, he's going to come back as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah*. Praise the Lord. He's going to *come back to execute judgement*.

And just as he perfectly was that *Lamb of God*, when he comes back, he will also *perfectly fulfill* that – if I can say it like this – that *calling of the Lion of the tribe of Judah*.

So this really wasn't for – we can say – it wasn't going to have *its effect* at that time but *it applies now to your and my day*. If there's ever been a time when we need to be *watching and praying to be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man*, it is *today!* Amen.

A couple weeks ago, Damaris called me and told me about a couple of dreams that she'd had. I'm going to ask her to tell the dreams. I'm not saying that I see all the details of what they relate to, but there is something that stands out to me as far as the big picture.

So please come up Damaris.

In the first dream, myself and others were being hunted down by – in the dream, it felt like – *the cartel*. We kept trying to hide and run. We were being shot at constantly. And I would see people get shot and die in front of me.

Then I managed to try to hide in a well. But you can imagine how hard that is. There were others with me in the well, we were trying really hard to hide in there. And I got worried because I had made a movement and I knew that they saw me. I knew that they were coming towards us to essentially find us and shoot us. But then someone had gotten in the way and they shot them instead.

Then I don't know how but somehow I think a different group came and kind of beat or shot the cartel. So we were safe. But a lot of us were pretty traumatized.

Then one of the people who had survived got the body of one of the cartel members and I think in his anger and trauma, he started to put his body through a brutal machine. Essentially he kept putting the remains of his body through that machine over and over again.

That was the end of that dream.

In the second dream, I don't really know where I was but I was surrounded by a lot of people. Somehow we knew that we were in danger. I got the notion that it was like a combination of natural disasters and also like monstrous animals. And the only way to get out of that place was by taking like a tram or a gondola.

Gondolas are really slow. They hang on ropes. Everybody was rushing to get on these gondolas. Everybody was jam-packing into them and I had gotten on one of them.

In their desperation, some people had grabbed onto the bottom of the gondolas and they were hanging from them. Then the gondolas started moving up. And that probably would've saved them, but as the gondolas were reaching their destination, there was like a platform and essentially what ended up happening is: it decapitated all of them.

That was the end of that dream.

Again, I'm not saying that I have the interpretation of every detail. There may be certain specific cases where we actually see natural persecution. To some extent, that's already happening in certain places.

But the bigger picture: she mentioned that there were these monstrous animals, or that was her feeling. And we just read how Peter said that *the enemy comes around as a roaring lion*. [1Peter 5:8]

I really believe that the big picture of this is *spiritual* – I'm speaking of the dreams – that there are *spiritual forces* that absolutely – again: *spiritually* – they desire to kill us.

Now, I do want to make it clear: if we truly are a child of God – of course, the world today wants to say that everybody is a child of God but that's definitely not true, *scripturally that's not true* – but if we are a child of God, there's no way the devil can take our salvation away.

At the same time – and to a large extent, the religious world has run with this – many have *not really been saved*. They just *claim salvation*. But they haven't really taken the time or made the spiritual effort to ensure that it lines up with the Word. And that's really where they are.

So the enemy is after *everyone he can get*.

What really stood out to me at the end of the second dream were those who were decapitated.

If we can go to Revelation 20 and verse 4.

Revelation 20:4

*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them:*

In Spanish it says: *and they that had received the ability to judge sat upon them.*

Revelation 20:4

*and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

Here it mentions a group that was *decapitated*. You and I know that this is, of course, pointing to the *foolish virgins*. But at the beginning of the verse, it speaks of those who *sat on thrones*, who had *received the ability to judge*. That's *the Bride*.

If we look forward in time, we are coming closer and closer to the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel. Not everybody who says they're a Christian is going to escape that 70<sup>th</sup> Week. In fact, *not everybody who says they're a Christian is really even going to* – we can say – *have eternal life*. [Matthew 7:21]

In the first dream Damaris mentioned, she saw that some were people getting shot and killed.

We see today how there are some people who for *ten years, twenty years*, or more, even *thirty or forty years*, they rejoiced in the knowledge of what God had done in this age: sending a messenger to the Laodicean Age, that *seventh church age messenger*. And we see how *spirits* have come on the scene: some of those same people *have now rejected that*.

*They have completely lost everything of spiritual substance that they had.* [Luke 19:26]

Some just go back to the world. Others go back – like I said – to the sugar-coated version of Christianity that says: live the way you want, the Lord, He loves you. He knows you're a sinner but He loves you.

I will say: *yes, He loves you*. But He doesn't save us to have us remain as sinners. Praise the Lord. *He expects a change in our life*.

We see people today, as they have rejected what God has done in this age, even their appearance changes: the way they dress, the way they present themselves to the world.

You may say: well Brother, I don't think we should have rules of how we dress and things like that.

Well, I'll say this: it's *not* about rules. But we are going to present ourselves in a way that *manifests* what's inside our heart.

You look at gangsters: they get covered in tattoos. There's no rule book that says: if you're a gangster, you have to cover yourself in tattoos. That's what *they desire to do*. It's the *spirit* inside of them that makes it *their desire*.

We're going to reflect *what's in our heart*.

So when we see people who have gone in that direction, then yes, *spiritually*, they have died.

That's really what I want to say this morning: *we are living in a very dangerous time*. Paul said: *dangerous times shall come*. [2Timothy 3:1]

We can look out and say: well, there's violence, there's *this*, there's *that*. And yes, from the natural side, *that* is there. But Paul was really looking above that to *the spirits which are behind all those things*, how they would come after you and me.

So we have to know *where we are spiritually*.

Let's go to the book of John chapter 10 and verse 1.

John 10:1

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*

There's a lot of that today, we could say: *false prophets* and *false ministers*.

He says here:

John 10:2

*But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

John 10:3

*To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*

What does he lead them out from? *He leads them out of the world*.

John 10:4

*And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.*

Praise the Lord. *The true sheep know the voice of the Lord.*

He says here:

John 10:5

*And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

Praise the Lord.

Now, that's the natural side or a natural example. I've never been a shepherd in the natural – I'm talking about a shepherd of sheep – I've never really worked with sheep. But reading what the Lord is saying here, I understand that *the sheep learn the voice of their shepherd.*

If somebody else comes along. They may say the same words, they may make the same gestures, but *the sheep are not deceived. They don't go after a stranger.*

Here he says: *they will know the voice of the shepherd.* [John 10:4] And we know: he's the *true shepherd.* Amen.

Do we *know* the natural voice of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we even *hear* the natural voice of the Lord Jesus Christ? *We do not.* If we were to have a recording of the Lord speaking, just saying something simple, none of us would know: oh, that's the Lord. He would just sound like any other man.

But here, *the voice* is: *the spiritual voice* which is *expressed through the ministry.*

So the *true sheep know which ministry to follow* because *that's where we hear the voice of the Lord.* Praise the Lord.

Let's jump down to verse 7.

John 10:7

*Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I am the door of the sheep.*

There's *only one way in* and that is: *the Lord Jesus Christ.*

As we keep reading, let's go down to verse 11. He says here:

John 10:11

*I am the good shepherd:*

So he is also *the shepherd*. Now, we know that he has placed *shepherds*, but *he* is *the good shepherd*. Praise the Lord. And it's *his voice* that we follow.

John 10:11

*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

Let's jump down to verse 14. And as we read this, we'll remember that he was speaking to Jews at that time.

John 10:14

*I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep,*

Praise the Lord.

John 10:14

*and am known of mine.*

John 10:15

*As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

John 10:16

*And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold:*

Now, what did he mean by that? Well, we know he was speaking to *Jews*. John even said: *he was sent to his own, and his own received him not.* [John 1:11] *As a nation*, they did *not* receive him. But there was a *portion*, or we could say a *fold*, that *did* receive him.

He says here:

John 10:16

*other sheep I have, which are not of this fold:*

That was looking forward in time to *the Gentiles*.

He says:

John 10:16

*them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice;*

Praise the Lord.

So even among the Gentiles, the ones who are *the true sheep* are going to respond when they *hear the voice*.

We know Brother Branham used the example of the eagle that was raised with the chickens. The eagle thought it was a chicken because it was with all the other chickens. But as it grew, there was *a difference in its nature*. And when it finally heard that *eagle cry*, there was something in its heart: *I need to get out of here and I need to go to that*.

And out of the Gentiles, there were people living in the world, just living for this life, but when they heard the gospel, especially beginning with Paul and his ministry, *something happened in their heart*. *They recognized that voice*.

He said:

John 10:16

*them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

That *one fold* is the Bride of Jesus Christ.

Paul said in the book of Ephesians: *God has broken down the partition that was between us*. [Ephesians 2:14].

Now, we don't really have a lot of contact with Jews today because we know they've been blinded, at least – I'm talking about – *in a spiritual sense*. But *at that time*, in a congregation like this, maybe *one-third* would've been *Jews*, and *two-thirds* would've been *Gentiles*.

And if we *don't think* there were *cultural points of friction*, then we don't know *how* the enemy works. I'm sure there were many things at which the Gentiles would scratch their head: why do the Jews do *this*? And likewise, the Jews: why do the Gentiles do *that*?

But the Lord moved on the scene and *gave them victory* over those carnal divisions. And they both – Jews and Gentiles – could worship the Lord, love the Lord, and *love each other* because they knew: *it was the same Lord that saved them*.

The Jews who received the Gospel back in the *first age* – or actually, even before the *first age* started, I should say: *the first advent* – they are a part of the same Bride of Jesus Christ.

The point to focus on here is: he said *those other sheep will also know his voice*.

What is that *voice*? It's *the truth of the Word of God*.

The *gift of the Holy Ghost* that we receive when we are saved *is the Spirit of Truth*. [John 15:26]

There are churches all over this world and *they all have their specialty*, if I can say it like that. There's something that *identifies them*. Some have a spirit of – I will say – it's a *social spirit*. The point of that church really is: it's a *social venue*.

What the enemy will do many times is: he'll take some of the *benefits* that the *true Church* has, and he'll capitalize on that to get people's eyes *off* of the Word of God. So like I said: for some of them, it's a *social thing*.

For others, they feel *an obligation*. They feel a responsibility to go to church. They feel that they owe the Lord. And I have to say: *yes, we owe Him our life*. But if church is just a place where we feel that we've completed our obligation and we can enjoy the week however we want, but then we have to go back and show again that we appreciate what the Lord has done, I have to say: that's *not* where it's at.

Yes, we do have *an obligation*, but it goes *beyond that*.

The Spirit is to be: *the Spirit of Truth*. When we find an assembly where *the Spirit of Truth* is the point of focus, then that's where we're going to *hear the voice of the Lord* because He said that *the Holy Ghost was the Spirit of truth*. [John 15:26]

Let's go to John chapter 14 and verse 15.

It's interesting, Jesus said:

John 14:15  
*If ye love me,*

He *didn't* just ask them: do you love me?

He said:

John 14:15  
*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

Have you ever thought about the fact that there really wasn't much Jesus said that we might categorize as *commandments*?

Yes, he said certain things like: *if you're smitten on the left cheek, give them your right cheek*. [Matthew 5:39] We could say: *that's a commandment*.

But there *isn't a lot* in the form of *commandments*.

The more we study this, we can see: it's *not just* what we would look at as *commandments*, but *his declarations* and *his teachings* are also included in that. It's *his words* which are: *God's Word*.

I marvel how a lot of *modern* or *so-called Christianity* ignores or doesn't want to hear much of what Jesus said. They just want to take what they like. They'll read this and they'll say: oh, well Jesus said: *I give you the commandment to love one another*.

Well, he *did* give that commandment. But a couple of things about that. First of all, he said: *love one another as I have loved you*. [John 13:34] Amen.

We see: he *didn't* have the attitude that exists today of just: *I want to please*, that's how I show my love. I just want everybody to feel good about everything.

But if there was a need for correction, *he corrected*. If there was a need for rebuke, *he rebuked*. And yes, when there was a time to encourage, *he encouraged*. Amen.

He had – we can say – *the right way* of going about it all. And he said: *love one another as I have loved you*. Praise the Lord.

Now let's keep going, verse 16:

John 14:16  
*And I will pray the Father,*

Or: *I will pray to the Father*.

John 14:16  
*and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*

He says: *a Comforter*.

Have you ever had a question about something in the Word? And it becomes something that *you're concerned about* because you don't really know the answer to the question. You want to *know* what's right. You want to *believe* what's right.

But the time comes – as you study the Word, as you hear the Word preached – the day comes *when God clears that up*. And it becomes *a comfort to your spiritual well-being*. You no longer have the burden of not knowing how to look at it, of not knowing: is *this* the truth or is *that* the truth? But *the Lord shows you in the Word what is true*.

How does He do that? He does it *by the Holy Ghost*.

So he says here:

John 14:17

*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

Praise the Lord.

And now we are living in the day that *the Holy Ghost is within us*, ever since the day of Pentecost.

So let's go now to Matthew chapter 7 and verse 15.

Matthew 7:15

*Beware of false prophets,*

He says here: *beware! There are going to be false prophets.*

We heard these dreams this morning. It's *not* – I mean: maybe some of us might need to watch out for the cartel – but it's *not* the cartel that's coming after everybody. As Paul said: *it's spiritual wickedness in high places.* [Ephesians 6:12]

He says:

Matthew 7:15

*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing,*

In other words, *they come to you, and their costume* – if I can say it like that – *their costume is: I'm a Christian.* Those who follow the shepherd are the sheep, *so they put on the sheep's clothing and they look just like Christians.* They say: well, I'm a Christian too. I love the Lord. He saved my soul.

Here Jesus is saying: *watch out! They come to you in sheep's clothing.*

Matthew 7:15

*but inwardly, they are ravening wolves.*

If we have, if God has given us – we can say – a *discerning spirit*, we will be able to see by *what they do*, by *how they live*, and by *what they say*, all of that *manifests* what's really inside.

And if we are *spiritually vigilant*, we're going to be able to *discern that*. We're going to be able to *stay away from that*.

Matthew 7:15

*inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

Again, going back to the dream that Damaris had, she said that there were *monstrous animals*. Well, we've read about the *roaring lion* [1Peter 5:8] and now *ravening wolves*. [Matthew 7:15] We know that the wolf wants to kill the sheep.

I am preaching a message of *warning* this morning. There are *spirits* out there today. They are after you and me, and we do need to hide.

And when I say *hide*, I don't mean: we need to run and get under the bed. But we need to be *hid in the Word of God*. God is *our refuge*. [Psalm 46:1] He is *our hiding place*. [Psalm 32:7] Praise the Lord.

Let's go to Philippians chapter 3 and verse 2.

Paul says here:

Philippians 3:2  
*Beware of dogs,*

Again, that's *not* natural dogs. Even though, maybe I could learn that on the natural side. I've been bitten by so many dogs. And it looks like I still haven't learned my lesson. [Laugh]

Philippians 3:2  
*Beware of dogs,*

There's another animal.

Philippians 3:2  
*beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.*

Of course, we know Paul here was looking specifically at those who were preaching the message that the Gentiles had to be circumcised to be saved. That was a *false message*. And since we have the writings of Paul and the others, most of us *aren't* going to be persuaded by that same [false] message.

But there are other ways now that the enemy uses men to come along with a message that sounds *close*. However, *it's not the same*. It's *not really* the Word of God. And those who would work to persuade us away from the truth, Paul is calling them *dogs, evil workers*.

Again, he says: *beware*.

We'll read one more scripture. Let's go to Colossians chapter 2 and verse 8.

Paul says here:

Colossians 2:8

*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

The enemy likes to use the – we can say – *the rudiments of the world*. Again, he tries to *put a costume on it to make it look like Christianity*, really looking at or pulling on different aspects of the flesh.

This is basically what the Catholic Church has become. It's the largest *supposedly Christian* organization. Over a billion people say they're Catholic. Well, you know why? They can pretty much do whatever they want and be a Catholic. It has something *to appeal to the flesh* of every person.

Even when John – in a vision – when he saw that *harlot*, he said: *I wondered*. [Revelation 17:6]

When we look from the external point, the beauty of their buildings, their clothing, their ceremonies, it's all *after the rudiments of the world*. But it's *disguised* as though it's Christianity.

And this *doesn't stop* in the Catholic Church. If the enemy can send a man with a message that *appeals to our flesh*, that *doesn't exactly line up with truth*, if we run after that, *we're responsible*.

I'll close this morning.

The 70<sup>th</sup> Week is coming up. No, it won't start tomorrow but *in a few years, it will begin*. There will be those who *do love the Lord*, but they *aren't wise*, they *aren't prudent*, and they're going to go right into that 70<sup>th</sup> Week. They're going to go *through the tribulation*.

Somebody may say: Brother, I thought the Church *isn't* going to go through the tribulation. The *true Church won't* but *the foolish virgins will*. They are still *virgins* but they are *foolish*. They *aren't spiritually vigilant*.

So I'll go ahead and close this morning.