

"Be not high-minded, but fear", said that same apostle, in another connection. One cannot read the Bible without being impressed with the frequency of its exhortations to watchfulness. And so the proverbs current amongst us follow closely the teaching of scripture, when they declare that safety lies only in watchfulness, in vigilance, in constant and persistent taking heed. Heedlessness is sure to end in hurt.

Nature, too, teaches the necessity of watchfulness. The wild animals seem to realize that eternal vigilance is the price of safety. The cunning of the fox is but one phase of that vigilance which makes Reynard so difficult to entrap. The beaver, so 'tis said, sleeps with his tail in the water, that he may become instantly cognizant of any one's tampering with his dam. The eagles build their eyry for away in some inaccessible crag where they may rear their young safe from intrusions and alarms.

Watchfulness is a law of all human experience. The man of business knows this, and acts upon his knowledge. The rise and fall of market prices, the trend of trade, the passing of old ideas and customs and the coming of new—of these the alert business man takes note, and governs himself accordingly.

The safety of a nation lies in vigilance. The history of medieval Spain is an eloquent commentary on the truth just stated. With the wealth of Mexico and Peru flowing into her treasury like the tide of a mighty river, Spain left off taking heed; and ere long fell to pieces through the rottenness of inward decay.

Watchfulness is a law for the church. Let the church which thinketh it standeth, take heed lest it fall. In proportion as a church feels a sense of its sufficiency and permits a spirit of ecclesiastical pride to take possession of it, it alienates itself from the sources of its power.

Watchfulness, above all, is a law of the individual spiritual life. Moses had the reputation of being the meekest of all men, yet he failed at the very point where he was strongest. Our safety lies in distrust of our own sufficiency, and in casting ourselves at every critical, perilous moment upon Him

who is strong to support the weak and mighty to save unto the uttermost.

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Selecting the Point

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The first task of the teacher is to select the central point of the lesson; his second, to shape his material so as to lead up to, develop and apply, that central truth. Let us look more closely at this first task.

The selection of the central point depends, first of all, upon an accurate lesson analysis. No matter how familiar you are with the scriptures, you must not depend on this general familiarity. Take the lesson text; read it over carefully to get the general meaning. Now, begin at the first verse and ask yourself, "What does this verse say? What is it really about?" (Write your answers down.) "How many verses are occupied with the same thought? Does it occupy all the verse, and may there be another thought in the same verse? What is the second thought? What is the third thought, the fourth, the fifth, and how many verses for each?" Let us illustrate from the lesson of May 1st, Matt. 12: 1-14.

1. Jesus in the field on the Sabbath, v. 1.
2. His disciples taking and eating the wheat, v. 1.
3. The complaint of the Pharisees, v. 2.
4. The reply of Jesus, vs. 3-8.
5. Jesus' departure from thence, v. 9.
6. Jesus' entrance into their synagogue, v. 9.
7. The presence of the man with the withered hand, v. 10.
8. The question of the Pharisees, v. 10.
9. Their purpose, v. 10.
10. The reply of Jesus, vs. 11, 12.
11. Jesus' command to the man, v. 13.
12. The man's response, v. 13.
13. The healing, v. 13.
14. The departure of the Pharisees, v. 14.
15. Their council, v. 14.

Our analysis reveals two incidents (Jesus in the field and Jesus in the synagogue on the Sabbath), and their setting. There is no difficulty in seeing the thought common to both, namely, Jesus' teaching about the Sabbath. Here is the central fact of this lesson.