

• The Quiet Hour •

The Duty of Watchfulness.*

BY WAYLAND HOYT, D. D.

Let your lions be girded about (v. 35). The Orientals wore flowing robes, which, dangling about the feet, would hinder swift movement. So they tucked their lower robes into their girdles when any special service must be done. Alertness for service is, then, the meaning of the figure.

And your lamps burning (v. 35). The same idea underlines the burning lamps. They had no street lights. If a journey must be made at night, they must be ready with lighted lamps to go forth.

Men looking for their Lord (v. 36). The same idea underlines the third figure. A master is absent at a wedding feast. Precisely when he will return home his servants may not know. But meanwhile they may not do *use* and do what they please. They must keep about and alert to let him in the moment the master's knock is heard. Notice how our Lord turns the commonest things—robes, lights, our returning from a marriage-feast—to the spiritual uses. Try in like manner to make the common happenings of your daily life subserve the precious and noble spiritual life. Notice, too, the constant mood in which our Lord would have His followers,—that of ready, quick service. We may not be indifferent to service. We are to be on the keen watch for it. Specially, Christians are to keep themselves from worldly entanglements preventing service like the bothering Oriental robes (1 Pet. 1: 13; Eph. 6: 14).

Remember our Lord's washing the disciples' feet (John 13). The figure is that of the highest possible honor and reward for the watching servant, the one steadily alert for duty. Never think your service for your Lord lost. It may seem so to you. It never is or can be. Your Lord notices and treasures it. Some day He will crown you with utmost blessing because you were ready and faithful in it. Mark that "shall find watching." Your Lord is watching you, whether you are watchfully alert for Him.

"The Jewish night was anciently divided into three watches, the first or 'beginning of the watches' (Lam. 2: 10) lasting from sunset to 10 p. m., the middle watch (Judg. 7: 19) lasting from 10 p. m. to 2 a. m., and the morning watch (Exod. 14: 24; 1 Sam. 11: 11) lasting from 2 a. m. till sunrise. But under the Romans the watches were increased in number to four (Matt. 14: 25; Mark 13: 35). To which watches, Jewish or Roman, our Lord referred here, we cannot tell. In either case, the teaching is the same,—that of watchful readiness. How we should steadily guard ourselves against the delusive tendency to *set* a time for our Lord's second advent!

In effect, our death will be our Lord's coming to us; when that shall strike we cannot tell.

"It is very important to observe that, often as our Lord bade His disciples to *be ready* for His return, He as often indicates that His return might be long delayed (Matt. 25: 5, 19). He always implied that He should come suddenly (21: 34, 36; 1 Thess. 5: 2, 6; Rev. 3: 3), but not necessarily soon (v. 46; 2 Pet. 3: 8, 9)."

*Lesson XIII., September 23, Luke 12: 35-46. GOLDEN TEXT.—Watch and Pray,—that ye enter not into temptation.—Matt. 26: 41.

Who then is the faithful and wise steward? (v. 42). Our Lord appoints us service—"Set over his household." Faithfulness to our Lord is service for others—"to give them their portion of food." True service is exact service—"in due season." True service is continued service—"shall find so doing." Service issues in promotion; not only his Lord's household, but, all that he hath," shall be given over into the faithful and wise servant's care.

Shall say in his heart (v. 45). "The worst scepticism is that which lurks in the heart of the professed disciple, not that which openly assails the church from without."

Shall begin to beat the men servants (v. 45). Unfaithfulness to our Lord is the steady breeder of unholiness. See this passage precisely illustrated in the fearful history of the Roman church. The Roman hierarchy was horribly corrupt, and became cruelly persecuting. Savonarola, Huss, Wyclif, etc., those who stood for truth and purity, were foully slain.

The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not (v. 46). Retribution shall certainly, and often unexpectedly, smite unfaithfulness.

Shall cut him asunder (v. 46). The figure of retribution is a figure; it is borrowed from the custom of the time; but remember that the figure carries meaning of retribution. Specially may we make application of "drink, and to be drunken," to the sin of intemperance. For that there is certainly terrible retribution both in this life and in the life to come. A medical student tells me that three-fourths of the diseases in a hospital he knows spring from intemperance and its accompanying vices.

Explanatory Notes.

Your (v. 35). *Ye yourselves* (v. 36). By the emphasis given the pronouns, attention is called to the watchfulness that should distinguish Christ's followers from others.—*Would have watched* (v. 39). There was not in the Orient any systematic police protection, so that it was necessary for householders to arrange for guarding their own houses.—*Steward* (v. 42). A slave that was given charge of providing for the needs of all the household.—*Portion of food* (v. 42). A ration, such as was given out at regular intervals on large estates.

No Man Liveth to Himself.

BY JOSEPH PARKER, D. D.

However rich a man is, he cannot do without some other man. There are times when it is so dark that even the outputting of the hand is a gospel. O, to feel a holding hand, a familiar grip! it makes the darkness light, it brings sustenance to the soul. We cannot do without one another. The weakest may help the strongest. Paul said, "Brethren, pray for us." There is the mightiest man in the church asking some man and woman heart to pray for him, when the water is deep and cold and the night so dark. Let the very humblest man know that he may one day have it in his power to help the very strongest man he has ever known. I may not be in any grand and dramatic way. A child can open the gate for a horseman; a mouse may let a lion at liberty; and the very poorest creature can put a terrible check up on atheism.

A Large Prayer.—xiii.—Rooted and Grounded. When and How it Has to be Done?

Ephesians, III 14-21.

BY ANNA ROSS.

As a tree stretches out its branches and matures it fruit only by means of its diligent and silent, invisible, rooting in the soft soil underneath, so a Christian grows in likeness to Jesus Christ and in power to bless others in exactly the same way. It is only as he is "rooted and grounded in love" that he is "able to comprehend" the love that passeth knowledge; and so lives his daily life "filled with all the fulness of God."

The soil into which we are to root is, the love of God our Father. There is no other soil that will yield the poor, hungry human soul the nutriment it positively demands, if ever it is to develop into what its Creator meant it to be, or do what its Lord wants it to do. Once we are planted in Christ, we are introduced into the very richest regions of the love of God. Our life and growth will be measured by the intelligence and diligence with which we root into the wealth of the soil in which we have been planted.

But what do you mean by all this? What am I to do? How am I to do this rooting? will be the honest question of some readers. The figure is suggestive, but after all, perhaps it conveys no definite instruction. Let me give two distinct and practical suggestions as to how to root.

1st. *Root* into the love of God as manifested in Bible truth and promise. The mere *reading* of the Bible may be and often is a most profitless and hardening process: But *rooting* into Bible truth and Bible promise is a very different matter. Luther has said, "The Gospel lies in the pronouns." So the difference between mere reading the Bible and rooting into it lies in the different way in which the pronouns are dealt with. Let me give an illustration. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Merely read, it means no more than this. The Lord is a Shepherd. His sheep shall not want. Merely read, the significance of the first personal pronouns is entirely lost sight of. The same verse *rooted* into will read with each pronoun distinctly and joyfully emphasized, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd, I shall not want." You cannot go over a chapter so quickly when you stop to *root* into it. One verse, sometimes one clause, will give you such a meal that you have positively no appetite for any more at that time. "You are satisfied with the fatness" of that one verse, and will sing and hold sweet communion with your God over the wealth and sweetness and power you have found, rather than read any further. Rooting into the word of God leads you to find out that "God means every word he says," and once you have found that out, rooting will go on more eagerly than ever.

A little experimenting with various passages of scripture will quickly reveal the difference between mere reading and rooting. Try Isa. 53. Turn each of the pronouns into the first person singular. Bring it out with hearty goodwill. Pause at each clause and see what you have. If it is good, send up a "Thanks be unto God for this," and then go on. O this blessed rooting process! It fills the heart with joy and the life with power.

and. *Root* into the love of God as it is manifested in His own providential arrangement of the circumstances—of your daily life. The hairs of your head have been numbered. Each down-sitting and uprising has been "known" and planned for from all eternity, and each thought has been "understood afar off"—so far off that it was taken in the arrangement of the plans of the