



THE  
END  
OF ALL  
THINGS

SOBRIETY, VIGILANCE & PRAYER

HUGH BINNING



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# **The End of All Things**

## **Sobriety, Vigilance & Prayer**

### **by Hugh Binning**

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## **The End of All things Is at Hand**

1 Pet. 4:7—But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer

If ye would ask what ye should do till Christ come again, or what should be your exercise and employment in this old age of the world, here ye have it in a word, "be sober, and watch unto prayer." When Christ was to go away to his Father, and leave his disciples in this world, as he left them not orphans, or comfortless, without the Comforter, so neither left he them without counsel and direction; the word he left to them was, "take heed, watch and pray," Mark 13:33. In this chapter Peter is mindful of his Lord's direction, as Paul also was, 1 Thess. 5:6. The substance of this chapter is to exhort Christians to a holy conversation, suitable to their high calling. He presses mortifications in general, from that which should be of greatest force with a believer's heart,—the strongest and most convincing reason in the world,—union with Christ crucified, even as

Paul does Rom. 6; and then in the 3d and 4th verses, he argues from their former conversation: Ye have sinned enough already,—all the rest of your time is over little to consecrate to God; according then as ye have advanced Satan's kingdom while under it, so advance Christ's kingdom when it comes to you, and take that noble revenge upon yourselves and sins, so as to bring them both captive to the obedience of Christ. And although the world may think it strange ye walk not with them, yet so much the rather ought ye to aspire after a disconformity to the world. Be then ambitious of being singular in the world. Ye would lay down such a conclusion as this, I am a stranger, and will walk as a stranger; and ye need not think yourselves miserable to be out of so much company, and to be alone; no, if ye knew what were to come upon them, ye would get you out from among them, lest ye be partakers of their plagues. The day of the Lord is coming, and the world must give an account to the Judge of all flesh: ye may endure their mockings, and all the hard measure which ye get here, for it shall be recompensed unto them. And your lot is the same that other saints had, who now sleep in the Lord; the gospel was preached unto them, and they had the same fruit of it before God, and got everlasting life by it; yet they were judged in this world as well as you, and were counted base and contemptible.

Now in this verse he comes to particular exhortations, from the former reasons. This text hath two parts, 1. An exhortation to some special duties which are so conjoined in this form of speech, that they seem all but one duty; prayer is the duty, and sobriety and watchfulness are means to it. 2. There is reason given, "because the end of all things is at hand;" so then ye have here the posture the world is in, and the posture a Christian should be in. This is the world's old age; it is declining; albeit it seem a fair and beautiful thing in the eyes of them who know no better, and unto them who are of yesterday and know nothing, it looks as if it had been created

yesterday; yet the truth is, and a believer knows, it is near the grave, grey hairs are here and there upon it, though many know it not; and Jesus the Lord is at hand to put an end to it. Now, what should be your condition in the mean time? What should immortal souls do that are to remain for ever and outlive this habitable world? How should they be employed? The spirit and soul is to endure longer than the man's possessions, goods, honour, and place; how then should he look upon these things? Here it is; be sober in the use of all things, use the world as if ye used it not, watch unto prayer. Ye are encompassed about with manifold temptations, therefore watch, and be as men on their way waiting for the bridegroom. The bride's exercise since Christ ascended unto heaven, should be to say, "Lord Jesus, come quickly."

In discoursing upon this subject, we shall, 1. Speak of these three parts of a Christian's duty severally. 2. Consider how they help one another, and so jointly speak of them. And then, 3. Of the reason and motive to them all, and how it enforces such an exercise. As to the first of these we observe, That sobriety is a duty becoming every Christian that is united unto Jesus Christ, and is separated by God's holy calling from the rest of the world. I add these two considerations, because of the preceding verse; for in the first and second verses, he lays down an excellent ground of all kind of mortification, viz. the believer's union with Christ crucified. Jesus Christ suffered and died for us, as a common person, to sustain the guilt of our sins. He died as a cautioner and undertaker for us, and as our head and king, and we by virtue of that are obliged to crucify sin also. In verses 3d and 4th the other consideration is set down; there ought to be a vast difference between the believer now, and before his conversion; he should not be the same man, but as Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," Gal. 2:20; he should be separated from the world, that

all the world may wonder at him, and think it strange to see his conversation. Now I conceive this exhortation is gathered from both these, and the word of reference, therefore, relates to the preceding verse, as well as his reason in the words now read, "now therefore be sober." This sobriety is not limited to meat, drink, or apparel; the object of it is more comprehensive in Scripture; it uses sometimes to be expressed singly, without making mention of any particular matter, evidently importing, that sobriety ought to be in all things; that which we ought to be sober in, is certainly the all things spoken of, in the reason of sobriety, whose end is at hand. They are most distinctly expressed 1 John 2:15, 16, 17. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," all that perishes, is not of the Father, but of the world; that is, the world which wicked men frame to themselves. Here then is a large commentary on all things. Therefore, whatever is in the world is the matter of sobriety, whatever comes under the senses calls for sobriety; whatever comes under the object of the mind is the matter of sobriety; nay, whatever is corruptible and perishing, or whatever the last day of the Lord's coming shall put an end to, in all these there must be sobriety exercised. There is a threefold sobriety.

First, Sobriety in the mind, or sober mindedness, Rom. 12:3. "We ought not to think more highly of ourselves, than we ought to think, but to think soberly. 1 Cor. 4:6, 7; Tit. 2:6; Rom. 11:20; 1 Cor. 8:2. Sobriety of mind is that excellent lesson that Christ Jesus both taught, and practised in his humble state, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," Matth. 11:29. Humility is not like Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord; Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet." But humility is rather like Mary, that sat down at Christ's feet, and washed them with tears. Sobriety of mind does not undervalue God's gifts and graces, neither doth it overvalue them; it thinks of itself according to the measure of grace freely

given, Rom. 12:3.; and sobriety looks on all its own gifts and ornaments, as not its own but another's, as free gifts, and therefore it puffs not up a man against his neighbour, though he should see a gift given beyond his neighbour; high-mindedness is like the high bending of a string of an instrument, which easily breaks in two pieces. Sobriety walks with a low sail, and creeps through under the wind; but the high mind is like the cedar, that moves with the wind, and falls when the bowing twig stands still. Some will think the aspiring of the spirit a sign of a better spirit than the humble mind, and so look down upon others; but oh, if they walk safely, they will walk humbly with God.

Secondly, There is also sobriety in the affections, when they are moderate. The objects of this world which come under the affections, are either sinful and unlawful, or in themselves lawful and allowable: Now sobriety towards the first kind is simple abstinence; towards the second, moderation. The rule of the first is, "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the mind, 1 Pet. 2:12; and, as it was said in another sense, "touch not, taste not, handle not, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," Eph. 5:11. As a man who would be clean should not touch pitch, and he who would not be burnt, should not carry coals in his bosom, so should the child of God, who walked formerly in the lusts of ignorance, after the custom of this world, abstain from all appearance of evil, 1 Thes. 5:21; not only from sin itself, but from all occasions of it, and inducements unto it,—all that which hath any appearance of evil. There is no measure of moderation here; a man must not think to give his lusts part, and Christ part: No, he must have all or none; no quarters with sin; ye should be out of speaking terms with it: The least motion of the affections and heart that way, is insobriety, and inordinate affections. (2.) But sobriety in things lawful is moderation, when the spirit is kept within bounds, Col. 3:1, 2; and the rule of this is that



which Paul prescribes, 1 Cor. 7:29, "Use the world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of the world doth pass away:" Love this world as ye loved it not. Everything hath too much of the heart; and Jesus Christ would have his royal palace, his peculiar place, here; he may have suitable affections to God's dispensations in this world, for the Christian wants none of his senses, yet he ought not to be greatly moved, as David speaks, Psalm 62:2. Now we consider this in three things, (1.) In seeking of anything. (2.) In enjoying of anything. (3.) In losing or wanting anything. That rule of Paul's may be applied to all the three,—he should seek the world as if he sought it not; he should enjoy the world as if he enjoyed it not; he should want or lose the world as if he lost it not. This sobriety makes him want in abundance, and abound in want; to have nothing, and yet possess all things. All our time and pains, and affections are spent out upon these, and turn about on these three points. Desire attended with care and anxiety goes out to fetch in anything that the mind fancies; when the soul hath gotten its desire, it delights and rejoices in it, and when it is frustrated, disappointed or crossed, it grieves and torments itself: If ye find a Christian sober in these, you find his pulse beat well. (1.) Ye should then seek the world or anything, as if ye sought it not. We are given to idolize the creatures, and dig broken cisterns, and forsake the fountain of living waters, to seek the creature as if it were God; and the strength of affections uses to be spent on it. Men having big and large apprehensions of the things of this world, are like foolish children amazed with pictures and dreams. Fancy busks up and adorns the object with all things suitable, and thus the poor soul is put in expectation of something, and stretcheth out itself to the utmost of its ability, to purchase that which being had, will not satisfy. The world promises fair to deluded minds that know no better; but the child of God must be sober here, he ought to have a low estimation of all created things, and conclude all under vanity and vexation of spirit. Luke 10:41, 42. Sobriety so

seeks that it cannot want, because it seeks a better thing that it cannot miss; but the poor worldling seeks this world as his only thing, and if he want it, what hath he more? He must have it, or else he hath nothing; the child of God should seek as a rich man that is satisfied, and needs no more, that he cares not whether he obtain it or not: the worldlings seek it as their portion, their heart and affections are on it; but he seeks it not as his portion, but as accessory to his inheritance, Matt. 6:33. Again we observe, (2.) That the good man uses the world, and enjoys it, as if he enjoyed it not; when riches increase, he sets not his heart on them: He is dead to the world, and crucified to it; it is but an unpleasant thing to him, and he to it. He can be refreshed with his meat more than another, because he sees God and his love in it; yet he hath it not as his portion, he is not excessive in gladness for any dispensation cast in the balance, one kind of dispensation or other; that which would make another man think he was half in heaven, or half in hell, will not add much moment and weight to such a spirit,—it is but like the casting in of a feather in a great balance, that will scarcely incline it to either side. (3.) He loses or wants the world, as if he lost it not; that which would break another man's heart, sobriety will make him go light under it, and not be much disquieted for anything; why, what is the matter of it? can it trouble his peace or access to God? Can his portion be removed? What then should all him, for the light of God's countenance is more recompense than all the world. Proceed we now to apply this in some uses.

Use 1. It discovers unto the most of men how little they are advanced in Christianity: Many are insober in the use of the world; and what must their affections be? The works of darkness that become not the children of God, nor the children of the day, are yet common in the visible church: Insobriety in many is palpable, and written on their forehead,—that beastly sin of drunkenness abounds in many

congregations. But, (2.) We would even convince the Lord's own children of great shortcoming in this duty. Although your carriage before men might pass free of censure of insobriety, yet O! how many things will God put such a construction on? There are many saints that cannot walk soberly in the use of this world; they spend their time upon it, and this is insobriety; scarce can prayer and communion with God get an hour in the day from their calling, and when ye have to spend, insobriety is written upon many passages of your behaviour. Your meat, and drink, and clothing should declare, that ye are waiting for a better inheritance; but oh! how are your affections wedded unto this present world? The current and stream of many of your thoughts goes this way:—What shall I eat or drink? Or what shall I put on for clothing? And ye spend your spirits in projecting, and in following out your projects; there are some evident demonstrations of insobriety in the affections, for, (1.) Most of your thoughts run upon temporal things; and certainly if your hearts were not in this world, your minds would follow your hearts. Christians, too many amongst you spend whole days, and never any object enters into your minds, but one thing of the world after another; your minds are high ways for the travellers of this world to come through. It may be ye will steal an hour or half an hour for prayer, but the rest of your conversation is not in heaven, but void of God; according as every hour furnishes new opportunities, so are your minds here, Phil. 3:20. And meditation upon spiritual things,—that is, the nerves and sinews of religion,—that is a rare thing. If your affections were not more upon this world, than upon Christ Jesus, would not our Saviour be uppermost in your thoughts? Would not Christ interrupt your thoughts of the world; would not heaven come in the midst of your business, and get a spare look and ejaculation? The world uses to interrupt your thoughts of God, and the mind is given to wander in prayer; but put you upon something temporal, ye can fix your heart as long as you please, and never wander: David

was not so; he awaked, and was still with God, he meditates upon him in the night watches, he remembers him day and night, Psalm 63:8, and this made him a lively Christian. But, (2.) If ye be seeking anything, ye seek it so, as insobriety is stamped upon it; your seeking of the world is prejudicial to your seeking of God, and takes away much time for prayer; ye will be as eager in the pursuit of a momentary passing vanity, as ever ye were in the seeking of God, Col. 3:1, 2. Care and anxiety comes in to be your provision, and ye put not prayer in the place of it, to make your requests known unto God; ye seek it as if it were your portion and inheritance,—surely this is insobriety. (3.) Look upon your affections toward present enjoyments, and are ye sober? Ye can delight in these things, and take the sweetness of them, but the consolations of God are a small thing to you; anything adds to your joy and lifts you up, albeit ye be not in good terms with God, yet ye can take your pleasure in the world: Ye see not a worm and moth in your pleasures; ye are not afraid to fill your belly with honey. Some think themselves made up when they get such a lot; but saints, are ye sober, when such a thing changes your condition? O but the children of God look upon this world as David did in his fretting condition, Psalm 38 and in his prosperous condition, Psalm 30. Ye sit down and say, "My mountain stands strong, and I shall never be moved;" ye have more delight in your outward lot than ever ye had in Jesus Christ. But, (4.) When any outward thing goes cross to your mind, then your insobriety appears: The taking of a sad and cross dispensation will evidence how ye sought the world; the taking away of a friend or idol, will declare ye idolized it. As the saints have too longing desires for the things of this world, and look upon them in the paradise of God, not as Paul did, who thought the world a dead thing; so remove anything that ye enjoy, and your joy is taken from you. Give something to pray, your sorrow is away and ye can no more mourn for sin; and take something away, and your joy is gone, ye cannot delight in God: Ye

vex and disquiet yourselves in vain, and are weighed down with it. Are ye not then under the feet of this present world, when it tramples upon you? Are ye not servants unto it, when your condition altereth and changeth according to the nod of outward things? Ye may know what puts you up and down, that commands you, and this is not sobriety: Ye are drunk with the creature. The child of God should be like mount Zion, that can never be moved. Therefore,

Thirdly, We would exhort all the saints to study more sobriety in this world; we need no more exhortation than what Paul gives, 1 Cor. 7:29. It is a strange language, saints; "Set not your affections upon the things of this earth, but on the things which are above," Col. 3:1, 2. "Love not the world, nor the things of the world," &c., 1 John 2:15–17. Ye ought to study such a walk abstracted from this world, that ye might be as strangers at home, as sojourners in your own country. The child of God should sit down in his own family, among his children, as if he were abroad: and he ought to be abroad as if he were home. Wherefore is your life called a pilgrimage, and ye strangers? Engage not much your heart to any thing of this world; take but a standing drink and be gone, ye may not lay down your staff and burden that his may bear you right. 1. Consider that insobriety is idolatry; insobriety puts the creature in God's place, and sobriety puts all things in their own place. When a man's heart or affections are set on any thing, that is his idol and his master; and Christ says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," Matt. 6:24, these two masters. Sure the worldling thinks not that he desires his riches, yet Christ puts that construction upon his loving them well. Christ calls any thing that is a man's master his god. Now, any thing that the heart goes after is a man's master; that which commands a man's affections, commands the whole man, for the affections are the man's master; and they command the man. If ye knew this ye would be afraid of spending your hearts upon vanity; ye put that vanity in the

place of Jesus Christ, and so your heart is a temple of idols, and the great gospel-promise, Ezek. 36:25, 26, hath not gotten place in you. The due place of the creature is, to be subservient to the Lord its Maker,—to be only the footstool, that he may have the throne. True, insobriety puts the creature upon the throne, and worships it. 2. Insobriety of love to the world hinders the love of God; as much as is added to the one, is taken from the other, 1 John 2:15. If the love of the world have one grain weight of allowance more than Christ speaks of, that is incompatible with the love of the Father. The creature will suffer a parting of affection, and will be content with a share, like the harlot and false mother that would be content with the divided child; but God must have all or none, and will not share with the creature; ye may find it by experience, when your hearts have been much set upon any thing in this world, Christ Jesus has not been so pleasant to you, ye have not so much delighted in him. Affection must run in the channel, or it is but weak, if once ye divide the streams, and much more here. The love of the world makes the heart carnal; it is the defilement of the whole soul, and a weight that easily besets us, that it cannot mount up in a cloud of divine affection to Jesus. Can the needle go to two contrary points both at once? Can it move to the north and the south at the same time? Such an opposition is there between the Father and the things of the world. If then ye turn your face on the creature, ye must turn your back upon God. Think not, Christians, to keep love entire to God, and to set your affections on the world. Solomon's backsliding had this false principle; he thought to retain his integrity, and his wisdom should abide with him, though he would try folly and madness, Eccl. 7:23; but did he not grow more foolish? Did he retain his wisdom? Many have come down from their excellence by this presumption. 3. Insobriety is the world's sin; it is the sin of the days of your ignorance, when ye walked after the lust of the Gentiles; and it is a shame for a child of God to be so. This duty is opposed to their

former walking, verses 3d and 4th. There should be a great distance between you and the world, that ye may seem men of diverse countries; though ye dwell in one city or in one house, ye ought so to walk as men may think it strange, as it may be a wonder in the world. O but few Christians give the worldly men occasion to speak of them for holiness; few give them any ground for wondering at and mocking their conversation. Your conversation is so like theirs, that they need not think any thing in it strange. Is it not a shame, saints, to be like pagans? Christ uses such an argument with his disciples to dissuade them from carnal carefulness, Matt. 6:32. Sobriety is a work of the day, becoming a child of light, as Paul observes, 1 Thess. 5:4–9, importing as much as if it were a shame for the Christian to be found much in love with the world, as it is for a man to be drunk at nine in the morning, and staggering in the streets. There ought to be as great a difference between you and the world, as there is between day and night, light and darkness. Since the true light hath shined, to discover a more excellent happiness than the world can give, and since it hath concluded all under vanity, ye are not answerable to your holy calling to have it in any higher estimation. Consider also, 4. That the world is not your portion: your life consists not in what you enjoy; your inheritance is above, reserved in the heavens for you; therefore be sober. If ye believed this, that one day ye shall put on white robes, and be clothed with immortality, would ye so pursue after the world? It is the world's portion; and let them who know no better seek it as their god, and love it as their inheritance; but fie upon believers, that have a hope laid up in heaven, and fixed as an anchor within the vail. Should ye cause your portion to be evil spoken of, by your groping so much after this present world? If ye walked right; ye should torment the world, and oblige them to be convinced that ye seek a city to come, and that ye despise all their enjoyments. But, 5. Insobriety becomes not a reasonable soul, and is very unbeseeming a Christian; even so is it to every man: "Are ye not

better," says Christ, "than many sparrows? Is not the life more than meat?" Matt. 6:25; Luke 12:23, 24. So we may say, Is not the soul better than the perishing creature? O! it is the disgrace and debasement of an immortal spirit to be put under the feet of a piece of clay, to be subjected to vanity, and to the poor perishing things of the world. If a man but knew himself, and his natural prerogative above the creatures let be his Christian privileges, he would despise the world, and think all that is in it not a satisfying portion for his spirit: He would count it a great disparagement to lodge upon this side of infiniteness and divine fulness. Would ye not think it a base thing to see a king's son sitting down among beggars, and puddling in the filth of the city. God made man to have lordship and pre-eminence over the creatures, and his spirit shall outlive all those things he sees, and looks to; and what a dishonour must it be to spend an immortal spirit on vanity, to have no eye beyond the span of time? As Christ said, "What hath a man gained if he lose his own soul?" What gain ye in this world, though all things should befall you according to your contentment; what gain ye since ye prostitute an immortal soul unto the service of the world, and have made the prince of the world and of all things, your servant and slave?

## **Watch unto Prayer**

1 Pet. 4:7—And watch unto prayer

Watch. A Christian should watch; a Christian is a watchman by office. This duty of watchfulness is frequently commanded and commended in Scripture, Matt. 24:42; Mark 13:33; 1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 5:6; 1 Pet. 5:8; Col. 4:2; Luke 12:37. "David did wait as they that did watch for the morning light." The ministers of the gospel are styled



watchmen in Scripture; and every Christian should be to himself as a minister is to his flock, he should watch over himself. This imports the Christian's condition in this world, and expresses his exercise in it. Watching is a military posture, and insinuates the Christian's case in this world: 1. He is compassed about with enemies, and therefore he must be a soldier, 2 Tim. 2:4. "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The Christian hath a warfare to accomplish in this world, and therefore the church here is militant, and in heaven triumphant, 1 Tim. 1:18. Every Christian should "war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience." What is the reason that when Christ triumphed upon the cross, and conquered all his enemies, and is ascended on high, that he hath not made all believers conquerors? Is the man that sits with Christ in heavenly places, Eph. 2:6, and he who is dead with Christ, and also risen with him, is he yet a soldier when Christ hath overcome, and gotten the crown,—and the believer hath he not the victory that Christ obtained? Why then is he put to fight any more? hath not Christ completely done it? Yes, indeed, Christ hath overcome by his own strength, Col. 2:15, and is now on high, yet he will have the poor pieces of contemptible clay to overcome the archangel, the immortal spirits. It was not so much for the prince Gabriel, the messenger of the covenant, the King of saints, to overcome his own creature; but he hath drawn out a battle and warfare to all his followers, that in the strength of their victory in him already past, they may be made more than conquerors; and there may be a perpetual song of triumph and victory in heaven, that he hath made the saints strong, and hath made the strong weak: "He hath set the poor with princes, and the kings on the dunghill." The Christian's heart and grace are like a besieged city, that is blocked up upon every hand; there are enemies without, and false friends within; its party is great principalities and powers, &c., Eph. 6:13, and these go about continually to spy a breach in the city; what strength can do, what policy can do, will not

be wanting; all things of the world besiege the heart, and every sense is a port [i.e. gate] to let the enemy in. All a man's negotiation and trade in the world is as dangerous as the proclaiming a public market in a town for the country, while the enemy is about it. There is a desperate wicked heart within, that hath deceived many thousands, and would surrender the city upon any occasion: "Here are fleshly lusts which war against the soul," 1 Pet. 2:11, temptation to sin, and to unbelief; there is a heart within that can conceive and bring forth sin, and needs no temptation,—a heart within that can seduce temptation itself; but he follows the tempter; and when, to all that, a foreign power is added, O then! who can stand? Christ himself was tempted, but Satan found nothing in him, and had nothing in him; but when Satan comes he finds all in us, and we are like powder to conceive flame: we can even tempt ourselves, as well as be tempted by another. The Christian keeps a house that the enemy surrounds, and if he sleep he will enter; he is here a pilgrim, and is not yet come home, yet he hath a foul and dangerous way to go through. He is like a servant that his Lord hath left, and given provision to, and is to come home when he pleases, Mark 13:33; Matth. 24:32. If his master find him sleeping, woe to him,—this is his case. What, then, should his exercise and posture be? He should be a watchman. (1.) Watching is opposed to security and sleeping, Matt. 24:42; Mark 13:33; he must keep his eyes open, or else he is gone, 1 Pet. 5:8; be vigilant lest the devil attack you. The sluggard's destruction comes as an armed man, because of his little sleep and little slumber, Prov. 6:10; 20:13. Security is the Christian's night, when he ceases from his labour, and the adversary does with him according to his pleasure; but the Christian is in a better condition when he is wrestling with temptation, and getting sore blows; when he is at peace and dwells securely, as the people of Laish, and troubles himself with nothing, but dreams over his days,—but that is a decaying condition. (2.) To watch, is to observe all things, 1 Sam. 4:13; Luke 6:7. This is a special

point of the watchman's duty,—to let nothing pass by without observation; whatever object would come in, ask at it, from whence, and whither. The heart is a highway-side that all things travel through; if the Christian then be not exact in this, to know what comes in, and what is its errand, he may be surprised ere he know. He should observe all the motions of the enemy, and be well acquainted with all the subtillies of temptations; he must know his own spirit, or his thoughts; he should also observe all the Lord's motions and dealings with his spirit. It concerns him also to know what is his enemy or friend; therefore the Christian should get upon the watch-tower of the word, and look through the prospect of faith round about him, that he may know what his spiritual condition is. But, (3.) The watchman gives warning while it is seasonable, and the enemy far off; it raises the alarm, and all must be in readiness, so ought ye to be: come to Jesus Christ with all ye observe; inform the captain of your salvation, whose soldiers you are. It is best dealing with temptation far off, and resisting the first motions of sin; for when it comes near hand it gets many friends within, and it is the watchman's part not to give his judgment of what he sees, but to report only. Do not ye sit down to pass the sentence on any thing, whether it be good or evil, sin or not, but come unto Jesus, and let him speak, for oftentimes we reason according to flesh and blood. (4.) There must be no interruption in this watching; he must give diligent heed to it, Mark 13:33; 1 Thes. 5:6. It is a very laborious exercise for a Christian to watch; all his senses will be exercised by it; he must look up, and that stedfastly; he must stand, and when he hath done all to stand; when he hath overcome he must yet watch, lest he enter into temptation—he is in greater hazard after victory than before, Ezra 6:13. He must watch when he is come out of one temptation, lest he enter into another. The greatest disadvantage that armies have gotten, hath been after some victory, when they

were secure; therefore we ought to give all diligence and love not sleep, lest we come into poverty.

From what hath been said, we see how few are in a warlike posture against Satan; many serve under Satan's colours, and the strong man keeps the house; they watch not against him but for him,—they fight for him, and not against him. Do not many Christians in profession, even watch for their sin, how to encompass what they would be at? Many wait on all advantages to get their own heart's desires; they watch against God's word, to hold out conviction. These are the children of darkness, in whom the devil reigns. We also observe from this, (2.) That even the children of God are seldom found watching, there is much woeful security among them; and this is the universal complaint,—who of you walks as if ye were among enemies? Ye walk as if ye were in a peaceable city without gates, as the people of Laish, who dwelt securely; ye have no friend in all the world, and yet what unspeakable negligence and sleeping is there among you? The flesh is so weak, that ye cannot watch but one hour for Christ: And O! but the intermission of one hour's watching hath brought down many strong ones. This made a breach upon David that could hardly be made up for ever again. From the words, we observe, (3.) That prayer is a part of a good Christian's exercise; we may be ashamed to speak or hear of this duty. It is true, indeed, our religion is all compendized in this duty, yet this duty is so little in practice, that our religion must be but little. We would then speak somewhat of prayer, and observe,

1. That it is the distinguishing character of a Christian in Scripture; the child of God, and the man that calls upon God's name is all one, and the same thing. The wicked man's name is one that calls not upon God nor seeks him; but the godly call upon their Maker, Acts 9:14; 1 Cor. 1:2. All the saints in Scripture have been praying men. The wicked or natural man is not an indigent man; he wants nothing,

and therefore seeks nothing from God; but the Christian is one who hath nothing in himself,—a beggar by birth,—one that is cast out into the open field,—and he is still seeking to make up his losses. Praying and wanting go hand in hand together. Prayer, then, is the first breathing of the new man; what sign of life would ye know him by? Motion is an infallible sign of life, and this is the motion of the new creature. Prayer is the stirring of the soul, and going out of itself for bread,—it is the sucking of the breasts of consolation; grace turns a man's face God-ward and Christ-ward. 2. Prayer is the pouring out of an indigent man's heart in God's bosom; it is the emptying of the soul, and the landing of it on God's lee-shore, Psal. 102:8; 1 Sam. 1:5; Psal. 142:2, &c. When a pious heart is overwhelmed and sore disquieted it prays; prayer emptieth the vessel, and brings the soul above the water again,—it is a present ease in the time of trouble. Care and anxiety of spirit plunges the soul over the ears, but prayer brings it again into dry land, Phil. 4:6. Care burns and drowns a man's requests, but prayer makes them known to God in every circumstance of life. Therefore prayer is called a "making known our requests unto God," and "the lifting up of our souls unto God," Psal. 25:1, 2. But, 3. Prayer is the provision of a soul; for it is sufficient to do that which carefulness and thoughtfulness undertakes to do, and effectuates not, Phil. 4:6. Prayer does all a man's business,—he lives by prayer, as "Paul lived by Christ living in him," &c. Gal. 2:20; he lived the natural life of a Christian by faith; so David says, "I gave myself unto prayer:" he opposes this unto all that his enemies do against him. Not only doth it ease the spirit of the present burden, but prayer does all his business, because it puts it over into a better hand, viz. the hand of him "who cares for us," 1 Pet. 5:6. It is like a child who is under his father's tutory, and he does nothing himself, but all is done for him; and he needs to do no more but ask and have,—to seek and find,—to knock and it shall be opened unto him. Prayer hath the promise of all spiritual and valuable blessings; and the

promise is true. 4. Prayer speaks a life of indigence and dependence in the creature, and also speaks out the attributes of God for the supply of all our need, sovereignty, bounty, and good-will in God; it is the travelling of the poor creature between his own emptiness and God's all-sufficient fulness. It acknowledges that he hath nothing, and that God hath all things he can desire to make him happy. Prayer is an act of homage and subjection to our Creator, and it is also an act of love and reverence; for prayer looks upon God as a Lord, a Father, and a Master. 5. Prayer is the pulse of a Christian, and here ye may find him; if he be vigorous and frequent here he is well; a decay in this is a woeful symptom of a dangerous and dwining [i.e. declining] condition. This is the fountain of the Spirit of life, and the Spirit's breath; "for the Spirit helps our infirmities with groans which cannot be uttered," Rom. 8:26, 27; and according as the Spirit of God dwells in a man, in as far is he a good Christian. If, then, ye would ask how ye should walk here, and thrive in true Christianity, we would only say this,—pray fervently and without ceasing; pray and prosper, and daily be strong, and the Lord shall be with you,—he will never fail nor forsake you. Again, consider, 6. That prayer is not so much a duty as a privilege; and if saints knew this, prayer would not so often be a burden unto them: is there any privilege like this? For prayer is an admission into the secrets of God; it is an emptying of the heart into his bosom; it is a great part of our correspondence with heaven; it is a swift messenger sent thither, that never comes back with ill news,—it never returns empty, but accomplishes its intent. Prayer is, as it were, speaking with God face to face, as a man speaks to his friend; and is it not an honourable privilege, that believers are admitted to him, and may boldly come to him under all their necessities, and have such a sympathising friend as Jesus? What is wonderful in scripture, that God hath put that honour upon prayer to be instrumental in obtaining the greatest blessings? Did not the Lord, at the prayer of Moses, dry up the Red Sea? Did he not, at the

prayer of Elias, withhold and give rain? Did not the prayer of Joshua make the sun to stand still, till he had vanquished his enemies? Wherefore was all this? Ought he not to have done it unasked? Certainly, but the Lord would put that honour and respect upon prayer in all ages, that it might be a demonstration to all ages and generations, how ready and propense God was to hear prayer; nay, to speak with reverence, God will submit his own omnipotence to prayer. "Command, ask of me, and command me," says the high and holy One, Isa. 45:11. O but "the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avails much!" James 5:16. It does a man's business, and upon less expenses; it gives a reward in the hand, and the hope of the things sought. Withal, prayer is like Jacob's getting that within doors, without much toil, which careful Esau goes about all the fields for, and toils all day to obtain. Prayer is the most compendious way of remedy of all things else; it always makes up losses either of the same kind or better; for if the loss be temporal, if the want be bodily, prayer makes it up with access unto God; it pays in gold; if it give not the same coin, yet it is better.

We have spoken something of prayer for this end, that your hearts may fall in love with it; it is the property of a sincere upright man, "that he calls always upon God," whereas the hypocrite will not always do it. Count, then, yourselves as much Christians as ye find of the spirit of prayer and supplication in you; for those that call not on God their portion is very terrible—God will pour out his wrath upon them: God's face is set against such as do not pray. And I believe the multitude of this visible kirk have this brand upon their face,—they call not upon God. God hath taken this character to himself,—"the hearer of prayer;" and those who mock at it, their judgment hasteneth, their damnation slumbereth not.

# Be Sober

1 Pet. 4:7. Be sober, and watch unto prayer

We now come to consider the coherence and connexion these duties have one to another. Prayer is the principal part of the Christian's employment, and sobriety and watchfulness are subordinate to it, —"Be sober and watch unto prayer." (1.) Prayer is such a tender thing that there is necessity of dieting the spirit unto it, that prayer may be in good health; a man must keep a diet and be sober, sobriety conduces so much to its well-being, and insobriety makes prayer fail: Prayer requests a wholesome Christian at his best estate. (2.) Because prayer that is well at itself must have much divine affection in it, that may be the wings of it to rise upon, the oil that may keep the flame, James 5:16. Now insobriety is the moth of divine affection; the love of this world eats out the love of God and spiritual things; as much as the one goes up the other goes down, like the contrary points, 1 John 2:15. Vehement desires would be a cloud of incense to carry the petition up unto heaven; but the love of this world scatters it, pours water upon the heart, and makes it neither to conceive heat nor flame. "To be carnally minded is death." both here and hereafter, Rom 8:5, 6, 7. It is death to duties; it kills the spiritual life of the soul. Insobriety is carnal mindedness, and minding of the flesh; a man hath no more taste of Jesus Christ than the white of an egg: it quite distempers his taste, and makes that only savoury which is like itself, and all other things bitter. But, (3.) Prayer must have hope in it; for how shall a man pray, if he hope not to come speed? If he maintain not a lively hope, he will cool in his petitions: insobriety is not consistent with "hope to the end," 1 Pet. 1:17. He that would hope to the end must lift up his garments that hang aside, and take a lick of every thing by the way; he must not let them hang down, but gird up



his affections with the girdle of truth and sobriety. We observe, (4.) That prayer must come out of a pure heart, and God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, John 4:23, 24; 2 Tim. 2:22. Insobriety makes an unclean heart, the lusts of the flesh, and the love of the world defile the spirit, and make it to send forth impure streams. (5.) There cannot be lodging for the Spirit where there is much love to the world; this grieves the Spirit, and makes him depart from us, and so a man is best to express his own groans, or to have none at all, which is worse. Where the "Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and the Spirit must have a clean house; ye must touch no unclean thing, if you would have God to receive you into the holy adoption of his children. (6.) Prayer cannot thrive where faith is not in good condition, for faith purifies the heart which sends out prayer, 1 Tim. 1:5; Acts 15:9; 2 Tim 2:22; and O, but insobriety makes an ill conscience! and faith and a good conscience scarce fall in one bottom, both fall and stand together. How, then, can the soul look that Holy One in the face, whose eyes are pure, and cannot look upon iniquity but with abhorrence? How can it look upon his holiness, when it hath been going a-whoring after the world, and forsaking the fountain of living waters? In a word, the heart that is not dead to this present world, will neither pray much nor well; for the heart is otherwise taken up, hath not many wants to spread before God, nor room for spiritual things; the creature gives him no leave to come to God. O, but communion with God is a tender thing, and subject to many alterations and changes of weather! A little more mirth than is needful will indispose us for prayer, a little more sadness than is within bounds will also indispose us for this duty. Carefulness and anxiety cannot pray; therefore it concerns all the saints to keep their hearts with all keeping, to "keep themselves unspotted from the world." If ye would keep yourselves in speaking terms with God, ye must not entertain the creature too much; any excess in your affections will divert the current of them, that they shall not run

towards God. And next, ye see a solid reason why ye are so little in prayer, and keep not a praying temper, because ye are too liberal and lavish of your affections upon the world. Christians, how can ye pray, when your affections are upon the things of the earth? will ye seek heavenly things, or care much for communion with God, when a present world is so much in your eye? Prayer must be wersh [i.e. tasteless] and unsavoury when the world is sweet, and religion turns a compliment, when your hearts are here. Prayer is a special point of your conversation in heaven, and the love of this world keeps your hearts beneath heaven; your treasure is here, and your hearts can be no where else willingly: Ye must then be mortified to the world before ye can pray aright. But we would likewise consider,

Secondly, That sobriety is a great furtherance to watching, and therefore they are usually joined together, 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:6–9. This is clear, for if a man be not sober, but drink too much of the creature's sweetness, or bitterness, till he lose his feet, he cannot watch, and the enemy will make invasion when he sleeps. Sobriety is the mother of security,—a surfeit of any thing indisposes the body for any action. When the mind goes without the bounds of moderation, and stretches its Christian liberty beyond the bounds of edification, it cannot hold waking; a little sleep and slumber overtakes, till poverty and destruction come like an armed man. (2.) When a man hath drunk himself of the creature and hath his heart engaged to it, he is in an incapacity to discern a friend from an enemy; whatever comes in with his predominant or idol, will get fair quarters, though, it may be, it will betray him. The love of the world, when it stands sentry at a man's heart, will keep out true friends, it will hold out Jesus Christ and spiritual things, all that seems to come in contrary terms with itself, and will let in the enemy that will destroy the soul. (3.) Insobriety entangles a man with the snares of the world, and so he cannot be a good soldier of Jesus. I think the conjunction here is

expressed more fully, 2 Tim. 2:2, 3, 4. The good soldier of Jesus Christ, that wars a good warfare, must not entangle himself with the affairs of this life: He must be sober in the use of all things, or else he cannot be faithful to his Master; he will be about his own business when he should be watching; he will not only labour to please the Captain of his salvation, Jesus, but he has many other things to please besides; and if any of his too kind friends come to speak with him, he will leave his duty and go apart with them, the watchman's office will take him up nothing beside; but the insobber man cannot give himself wholly to it, because his idols cry upon him,—he will prefer his pleasures before his credit and honesty. Therefore, as ye would not expose your souls, and all ye have, to the will of temptation, be sober; the devil hath gotten his will of a man that he can force to lie down with the creature and sleep in its bosom. If once Satan can gild up the world in your eyes, and represent it amiable, and cause high and big apprehensions of it, O, ye are in the greatest hazard from the world of being overcome wholly by it; that was the temptation Satan sought to prevail with Christ by, but he found nothing in him. If the devil have taken thee up to a mountain to see the glory of the world, and make you fancy a pleasant life hereaway, take heed of it, for ye will drink drunk, and forget yourselves. and will not discern between good and evil.

Thirdly, Prayer must be watched unto; we must not only pray but continue instant in prayer, Rom. 12. We must "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." Col. 4:2; it is a strange expression, and familiar in scripture, Eph. 6:18. O what a strange word is it! it is either very needless, or else imports the unspeakable necessity of prayer. Praying always,—what needed more? But we must pray "with all manner of prayer and supplication in the Spirit;" and more yet, watching thereunto; and to express the superlative degree of the necessity of prayer, he adds, "with all perseverance."

Since the words at the first view do speak infinitely more than we practise, let many a Christian express their own practice, and set it down beside this verse, and blush and be ashamed; the most part of you behoved to speak thus, I pray sometimes morning and evening when I have nothing to do; and is this "praying always, and watching thereunto with all perseverance?" To watch unto prayer we conceive speaks these things,

First, To observe all opportunities, occasions, and advantages of prayer, to be glad of getting any occasion to sit down and pray; it is to seek out occasions and to be waiting for them. Too many use to excuse themselves easily that their other employments take them up; and they think on this account that they may omit prayer with a good conscience, as ministers busied about their calling, and at their book, think it no omission that they pray not often; but, alas! is this watching unto prayer? Ye should be as men lying in wait upon some good opportunity to take hold of. Prayer would hinder no business of that kind, but much further it, prayer would be the compendious way of it. Ye use not to be challenged when ye get not a commodity to pray; but do ye seek opportunity when it is not offered? Do ye look after a retiring place, and withdraw from company, when ye cannot pray with company? This were indeed "watching unto prayer;" but watching unto prayer will make men sometimes uncivil (so to speak, that which, it may be, would be called uncivility); it will be a very pressing necessity that will draw away the time of prayer; no compliment would hinder you to go to it; if ye got a corner alone, that would invite a man that watches unto prayer, he even seeks it when he finds it not offering itself. The watcher unto prayer will steal much of his time from others, and other employments, and he will not spend time unnecessarily.

Secondly, To watch unto prayer, is to accept willingly of all occasions and opportunities offered. O! if such a man find a corner, but it will be seasonable and sweet unto him. If he have nothing to do, and knows not how to pass his time, then he conceives he is called to prayer, and to keep communion with God; but how many opportunities have ye, and what advantage make ye of them? Ye have time and place convenient, all the day or much of it, and yet ye content yourselves with an ordinary set diet; sure this is not watching. Watching unto prayer would make all emergent occasions welcome; ye would not have any impulse of the Spirit and motion to pray, but would ye follow it, and be led by the Spirit to your duty? Ye would not hear of any rare passage of providence, or any of God's dispensations towards yourselves, and other saints, but you would think it a good call to pray, and make the right use and improvement of it.

Thirdly, To watch unto prayer, is to observe all the impediments of prayer, all the enemies of that precious thing—prayer, that ye ought to keep as the apple of your eye; whatever ye find by experience prejudicial unto prayer, mark that; what indisposes the spirit and makes it carnal, mark that; what fills you with confusion and astonishment, and what hinders the liberty of your delighting in God, and rejoicing in his promises, mark these and set yourselves against them. O but many Christians find liberal discoursing, and much mirth, prejudicial to the Spirit's temper; and yet, who watches against it?

Fourthly, Watch over your hearts, that ye may keep a praying temper, and be still in speaking terms with God. And if ye would still keep a praying temper, (1.) Be frequent and often in the meditation of God; keep yourselves in his presence as before him, that ye may walk under the sight of his eye. Psal. 119:168; 139:1–7. Stealing out of

God's sight, makes the heart bold to sin; the temper of the heart is but like the heat of iron, that keeps not when it is out of the fire, or like the melting of wax: if ye be out of God's sight, your hearts will close. But, (2.) Let no object come through your mind without examination of it; let not your heart be a highway for all. If a good motion enter, entertain it, and let it not die out; give it up to God that he may cherish it. (3.) Repel not any motion of the Spirit, but entertain it. There are three things ye would watch over: As, (1.) Yourselves, your own hearts, Prov. 4:23, &c.; ye must keep your heart, and it keeps all. (2.) Watch over your duty, Luke 8:8. (3.) The time of Christ's coming, his second coming to judgment, Matt. 24:42; Mark 13:31. So did David wait and watch till the Lord should return, Psal. 130:5, 6. So did Job wait all the days of his appointed time, till his change came. Now, Christians, where are ye? Is not your practice your shame? It is one among a thousand professors that can be noted for much praying. Who among you can get this commendation that the Holy Ghost gives to Anna: "She served God with fasting and prayer night and day?" Your morning and evening are the limits of your duty, and it is as almost an heresy to go beyond that. Is there any tender well-doing Christian in scripture, but he prayed much? This made David so exemplary; and hath not Jesus Christ "gone before you, Heb. 5:7, to lead the way?" O but Christ's praying so often in the days of his flesh, and "making supplication with strong cries," is a crying witness against the sloth of Christians in this generation; both people and pastor, how should ye be ashamed! Hath Jesus prayed so long and often, and should not the poor followers, indigent beggars, be all in supplication? The Christian should name himself as David did: "I gave myself to prayer." Many a man sits down to his employment and prays not much, because he hath gifts and abilities; but so did not Christ, who was able to save, yet he prayed and went about the Father's work with dependence upon him. And O that ministers would seek all from heaven immediately, and people seek

it from heaven also! Think ye that the Spirit will take twice a-day for praying always, and set times for watching thereunto? No, no; we think there is little of this practised in this generation.

Now, we come to the reason that is added in the text, "the end of all things is at hand," that is, the day of the Lord is at hand: Christ Jesus, who was once here offered for sins, shall again appear without sin, unto salvation, unto them who look and wait for his appearance: and he shall put an end to all these things, either to themselves, by consuming them, or to the use of them. All that ye now doat upon is perishing, and it is not far hence that ye shall see the world in a flame, and all that ye spend your spirits on; and Jesus Christ shall bring salvation to his own saints; therefore, "be sober and watch." But how is it that the end is said to be at hand? Are not many generations passed since this word was spoken? it is almost two thousand years since, and yet Peter spake of it, and Christ spake of this day as at hand, sure it must be nearer us now than it was then, — "The day of the Lord is at hand." (1.) Because, if we would count years as God doth, we would call the world but of one week's standing, for God counts "a thousand years as but one day," 2 Pet. 3:8, 9. The world thinks he is slack concerning his promise, and asks, "Where is the promise of his coming?" But believers think not ye so, — reckon years according to the duration of the Ancient of days, and by faith see the Lord's day at your hand, as it were to-morrow still. But, (2.) It is not without special reason that the New Testament speaks of all the time from Christ's coming to the end as the last time, as it were but one age or generation immediately preceding the great day, as if the day of judgment were to be before this generation of the earth should pass. It is of great use to us, because the Lord would have believers, in the last age of the world, come to some greater pitch of mortification and deadness to the world, and hope of immortality, than has been come to before; he would have them as

men waiting for the Bridegroom; and this their exercise,—every one in this generation standing with their loins girded, and their shoes put on ready for the journey, and their lamps in their hand, Luke 12:37; Mark 13; Matt. 25. He would have all walking as if the day of judgment were tomorrow; as if the King of saints were now entering into the city, and all believers should go out to meet him as their King bringing salvation.

This, then, is the posture of the world—all things are near run—"the fashion of this world passes away," 1 Cor. 7:29; and the same exhortation is here pressed. This then, I say, is the state all things ye see are in,—it is their old age. The creation now is an old rotten house that is all dropping through and leaning to the one side. The creature is now subject to vanity and groaning, Rom. 8:21, 22. The day is not far hence, that this habitable world must be consumed; and O but many a man's god and idol will then be burnt to ashes! 2 Pet. 3:10, 11, 12—"the heavens shall pass away with a great noise," &c. God hath suffered men to live long in this world, that they might come to repentance, and he hath kept it so long for the elect's sake. If it had not been for them, the world should not be unburied till six hours at night; but when he hath gathered in all the election, then shall an end be put to all the administrations of kingdoms, all government, all nations. Think ye that God had so much respect to the world, or to the kings of it? No, he would put an end to all the kingdoms of the world, and never let them make their testament, if the elect were completed; if Christ were completed, there would be no marrying or giving in marriage, no more food and raiment, no more laws and government,—all your fair lands and buildings must go to the fire. Now, ask the question that Peter asks—"Seeing all things shall be dissolved, what manner of conversation ought ye to have?" And here it is answered—"be sober, and watch unto prayer." Ask at Paul, and he will tell you, 1 Cor. 7:29–31, "The time is short;



what remains then, but that they that marry be as they who marry not; they that weep as they that wept not," &c. So, then, here is the duty of those who look for Christ's second coming: Christ hath left it with you till he come again, and put an end to all things—"be ye sober and vigilant." But, 2. Consider what strength this reason hath to enforce this exercise, and how suitable this duty is to them who look for Christ's second coming. (1.) In relation to sobriety it hath a twofold force; for, 1. It is all the absurdity of the world, that ye should so eagerly pursue perishing vanities; that ye should fall in love with the old decrepit world that is groaning under vanity, and very near consumption. The day is coming that the soul shall see all these things destroyed to ashes; and what will it then think of this idol? This is the thing I lost my soul for, and it is gone; and O how tormenting a thing will it be to the conscience! How have I been put by heaven for a thing of nought—for a vanity! Be sober, for the world cannot be a portion to an immortal spirit. Your spirit is immortal and will continue after these things are gone; and it will outlive this world. Your goods and good name—your pleasures and profits—your lands and rents—all will have an end; and your spirit shall continue after them. Why, then, will ye choose that for your portion, that will take wings and flee from you, or you will leave it, when ye see all burnt up; where, then, will your god and your portion be? 2. Christian believers, ye have another portion; for Christ, who comes to put an end to these things, shall appear in glory, and ye shall appear with him in glory. He shall come with salvation to you, Heb. 9:28; Col. 3:4. Your life shall appear with him, your inheritance is above. That sweet Saviour that came unto this world for saving lost sinners, shall come again, and will not think himself complete without you, and till he have all his members at his right hand. And, therefore, saints, be sober, while ye are in this world; ye need not any other thing in the interim but the hope of eternal life, to keep your hearts, and hold them up. O but ye will think yourselves will come to

it, ere it be long; ye may laugh at the poor, blind, demented worldlings, who are standing in slippery places, and, like children, catching a shadow, or labouring to comprehend the wind in their fists. They are but dreaming that they eat and drink, and behold, when the great day of awakening comes at the resurrection, they find their souls empty, though, while they lived, they blessed their own souls, and men blessed them also. Your inheritance is above; and what need ye more that have such a hope? May ye not purify yourselves as he is pure, and purge your hearts from all corruptions, and use this world as strangers in your passage through it, that own nothing as their own? Ye have no property here, and therefore ye may the better live as strangers. But, (2.) In relation to watching, Christ Jesus is coming, and is near, therefore watch. This Christ himself presses earnestly, "Be as men that wait for the coming of the Lord," since he is not far off; therefore, Christians, ye ought to be upon your feet, and not sit down with the creature; ye should entertain this hope of his coming, and comfort yourselves by it, and be kept at your duty by it. I may say, there is nothing that is less known among Christians. Christ and his apostles often pressed it, as it seems he would have it the one ever running duty, through all generations. Ye ought, then, to be ready for Christ's coming, and not be found sleeping. (3.) In relation to prayer; for "if the end of all things is at hand," and Christ will soon come again, then the Spirit's exercise, and the bride's should be, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Pray Christ back again, and say, "Why tarry his chariot wheels?" Pray him back with salvation, and hasten his return by prayer. He hath left such a dependent condition, left such an employment for us, as speaks dependence and necessity. This is the time of promises, and we ought to pray for their accomplishment. In heaven there will be no prayer, for prayer shall be swallowed up in praise, faith in vision, and hope in possession. But prayer is a duty suitable to the time, and to the Christian's minority,—to his

banishment and sojourning. Dream not of an eternity hereaway; learn wisdom to number your days, and apply your hearts to religious wisdom; and if ye die thus, ye may rejoice that so many of the number are passed, and cannot return again.

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