

# Words of Life

Westside church of Christ

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**"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."**

John 6:68

**Watching**  
Gary Fiscus

Most of us have religious friends and acquaintances who believe the doctrine of "once saved always saved." That tenet is foreign to the scriptures. Please read Luke 21:34-38, and then let us study this text in this article to discover the truth.

First, I propose a question that if the Calvinist doctrine of "once saved always saved" is true, then why does Jesus warn His disciples about the necessity of "watching" (Lk. 21:36)?

Secondly, notice the first clause of Luke 21:34, "But take heed to yourselves..." There is a sense in which the man of God must pay close attention to the pitfalls and stumbling blocks which often confront him. The word "heed" as used here means "to hold the mind towards, i.e., pay attention to, be cautious about, apply oneself to, adhere to, beware, have regard," (Strong). If one is automatically and unconditionally saved, then of what use would it be to expend energy in "watching" and "taking heed" to "oneself?" God has done His part in offering salvation. We must do our part in "keeping ourselves pure," (Jas. 1:27c), "...and worthy to escape all these things..." (Lk. 21:36).

Thirdly, ungodly and unrighteous activities "weigh down one's heart" (Lk. 21:34). The momentary pleasure enjoyed at the time eventually pricks the conscience of any God-fearing soul. The Bible says it will (v. 34). Listed in this text are numerous activities that may hinder one's spirituality. E.g., "...carousing, drunkenness and cares of this life..."

Let's consider separately these three problems listed in the text:

- 1) **Carousing:** Bible scholars tell us that this is translated into modern terminology as a *hangover* brought about as a result of drinking liquor or alcohol.
- 2) **Drunkenness:** This is defined as intoxication. The word also implies the problem of drug abuse or physical harm to the body.
- 3) **Cares of this life:** The word "*distraction*" is a part of the definition here

## Trends

"...a study of the U.S. Church's ideas about missions, social justice, Bible translation and other aspects of spreading the gospel around the world... When asked if they had previously 'heard of the Great Commission,' half of U.S. churchgoers (51%) say they do not know this term. It would be reassuring to assume that the other half who know the term are also actually familiar with the passage known by this name, but that proportion is low (17%). Meanwhile, 'the Great Commission' does ring a bell for one in four (25%), though they can't remember what it is. Six percent of churchgoers are simply not sure whether they have heard this term 'the Great Commission' before.

- via Barna Research

**1 Peter 3:15:** "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;"

## Sentence Sermons

**"Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter."** —Charles Spurgeon

## News & Notes

**Pray for one another:** "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (Jas. 5:16)

Please consider donating funds to Zach & Taya Martin. Zach is a medical student and he and his wife Taya are planning to assist Ron Halbrook on one of his preaching trips to the Philippines. The Martins are worthy of our support. You can contact Zach at: zcmartin30@gmail.com.

Please pray for one another! "comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Please pray for Ryan & Jennifer and the brethren of the Northern Michigan church of Christ. They are now meeting in their newly purchased building in Roscommon, Michigan.

Please keep sisters Virginia Brown and Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. Their faithfulness sets a great example and gives encouragement to all! Ditto for Al (our Barnabas!).

Pray for all the lost souls, especially those in the greater Bloomington area. Pray that Westside might be an influence for good in this community.

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people face many trials and temptations at school.

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and means that a person is so preoccupied with the material things of this life that he overrides the spiritual fiber he has.

All three sins mentioned above require a full-time attitude of “watching” that those things do not destroy one’s salvation, and certainly, the inference here is that salvation can indeed be lost!

Fourthly, Jesus is addressing a “time issue” in Luke 21:34. One “watches” so that he will not be caught off-guard. He adds to this postulation in other passages like Matthew 25:1-13 in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Paul uses similar language in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, and Peter states the same in 2 Peter 3:10.

Fifthly, the word “snare” as used in Luke 21:35 is interesting and serves as another warning to “watch.” This word “snare” is understood as a trap often fastened by a noose or notch. Figuratively it involves being tricky and deceit. It is also inclusive of the word “temptation.” Our Lord preaches that one must be “watching” because “*anyone of the whole earth*” is subject as prey. For example, if a person or animal is “watching carefully” as he walks through the woods, he can most likely avoid a “snare.” He is not as apt to fall if he is “watching.”

Sixth, I ask, what is the point of prayer if the doctrine of “once saved always saved” is true? In Luke 21:36, the Lord emphasizes that not only is one to “watch,” but he is also to “pray!” This prayer involves a degree of “worthiness” of the person praying. It is not merely a matter of “watching” for the pitfalls, but it is also a matter of “testing oneself to see whether or not he is in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5). Some versions translate verse 36 (“...you may be counted worthy to escape all these things...”) as “...you would have the STRENGTH... to escape...” As with the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:27), one would never be worthy to partake of that supper, but he would always be able to partake of it in a “worthy manner.”

Jesus is teaching in the Luke passage that one is “counted as worthy,” meaning that all of his efforts as a Christian in maintaining a “pure and undefiled religion” (Jas. 1:27) are exercised in a *deserving fashion*. Pray that one would be successful in being counted as one of the “worthy ones,” because of his love and obedience to the Lord, to inherit salvation. Not that it is given without condition, but in meeting the Lord’s commands, salvation is granted.

Seventh, the last clause of Luke 21:36 says, “...to stand before the Son of Man.” This context was written regarding the soon-to-come destruction of Jerusalem that took place in A.D. 70. He introduces the subject in Luke 21:20 and concludes in our verses of study here.

Although there is a divine principle regarding the final judgment, we must first honor the context of why Jesus was initially giving these warnings to these people at this time. His declarations to them were clear. They were admonishments of warnings for this impending calamity. Matthew 24 is a parallel study to Luke 21.

In either case, the message for us all is that we must “watch” because the judgment is inevitable. We must be ready, having prepared ourselves for the final pronouncement.

### **Can Pentecostals Say This?**

Larry Ray Hafley

Often during public discussions with Pentecostal preachers, I have asked them if, at the end of the debate, they could say what Paul said:

(1) “*Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ*” (Rom. 15:19).

(2) “*And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*” (1 Cor. 2:4, 5).

(3) “*Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds*” (2 Cor. 12:12).

(4) “*For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*” (1 Thess. 1:5).

If Pentecostal “faith healers” truly have the power of the Spirit and the ability to work miracles, they should be able to make similar statements which are verified by them that hear them. However, they do not because they cannot! (If you have a friend who is a member of a Pentecostal church, you might ask him if their preacher can say what Paul said.)

Like Philip, who “preached Christ,” it should be said of them, “*And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did*” (Acts 8:6). One convert in Samaria “*continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done*” (Acts 8:13). If they have the same powers from God, why can we not say such things about modern day Pentecostal preachers whenever they come into a town to preach?

Some excuse themselves by saying that the power is not theirs, but Peter said to the lame man before he healed him, “*Such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk*” (Acts 3:6).

Others say that the Spirit does not always work miracles, even when they are needed. True enough, but those fellows, the Pentecostals, never perform miracles. They can never say what Paul said in the passages cited above. If they had the power the apostles had, they could, at times, say what Paul said. Again, though, they cannot make such statements for they cannot produce the same effects. Perhaps Solomon had the Pentecostals in mind when he said, “*Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain*” (Prov. 25:14).