

Being Strengthened to Stand without Compromise (Lk. 21:34-36)

I. JESUS SPOKE AS A PROPHET AND PASTOR ABOUT OVERCOMING IN THE END TIMES

- A. Jesus prophesied that the events related to His return will come like a snare that tests everyone (v. 25, 35). He called His people to be strengthened to escape a snare of sin and fear so as to stand in victory (v. 36) and warned them not to allow their hearts to be weighed down (v. 34). He gave pastoral exhortations—to *take heed to themselves* (v. 34) and to *watch and pray* (v. 36).
²⁵“There will be...on the earth distress of nations...²⁶men’s hearts failing them from fear...²⁸When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near...³²this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place...³⁴But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on...the whole earth. ³⁶Watch...pray always that you may be counted worthy [have strength] to escape all these things...to stand before the Son of Man.” (Lk. 21:25-36)
- B. ***Distress of nations***: The intensity of the distress will cause men’s hearts to fail from fear (v. 26), yet others will be encouraged, lifting their heads because their salvation draws near (v. 28). The distress will include financial crisis, terrorism, racial clashes, violent weather, persecution, etc.
⁴⁸[Jesus said], “...to whom much is given, from him much will be required...” (Lk. 12:48)
- C. ***Your redemption***: God’s saving power will be manifested in a great measure unto Jesus’ return.
³He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. (Ps. 91:3)
- D. ***Begin***: God’s people are to recognize when these things “begin” in the generation of His return (v. 28, 32). The end-time “snare” of sin, pressure, and persecution will increase in intensity over a generation, reaching its fullness in the final 3½ years of this age, culminating in Jesus’ return.
- E. ***Unexpected***: Many will lack understanding of the danger of the events that are unfolding (v. 34).
- F. ***Snare***: In the ancient world, snares, or traps, were used to capture animals for food. A baited snare was *hidden* to lure its prey into the trap and catch it unsuspectingly. Snares are designed to *capture and hold* their prey, making it very difficult for animals to escape once caught.
- G. Jesus highlighted three emotional snares that will cause people to draw back from Him.
1. ***Carousing (dissipation)***: Over-indulgence leads people to squander, or lose, their strength. Their strength is dissipated as they live without sufficient restraint. Many today are overly stimulated by what they eat, drink, watch, or do.
 2. ***Drunkenness***: Many will seek to escape pain and pressure without connecting with God. People who are filled with pain often seek “comfort” as a way to escape their anguish.
 3. ***Cares of life***: Many will be overcome with anxiety and fear about their need of safety and provision (v. 26, 34). This preoccupation will cause their hearts to be weighed down.

II. TWO EXHORTATIONS: TAKE HEED AND WATCH AND PRAY (LK. 21:34, 36)

- A. God's people can be strengthened to escape the snare of sin and fear and stand in victory (v. 36). Jesus gave two commands—to *take heed to themselves* (v. 34) and to *watch and pray* (v. 36).
³⁴***“Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of life...³⁶ Watch...and pray always that you may be counted worthy [have strength] to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”***
(Lk. 21:34-36)
- ³⁶***“...praying that you may have strength to escape all these things.”*** (Lk. 21:36, NASB)
- B. ***Have strength***: A vibrant spiritual life leads to courage, zeal for God, and being alert in the Spirit. The phrase “*be counted worthy*” (v. 36, NKJV) is translated as “*have strength*” in most modern Bible translations. NKJV footnotes offer “*to have strength*” as an alternate translation. The idea is to be strengthened to respond to the Lord in a way that is “worthy of who He is.”
- C. ***Weighed down***: Our heart can grow spiritually dull, defiled, clouded, and unresponsive to God. What we do with our body (immorality, drunkenness, etc.) greatly affects the spiritual condition of our heart— e.g., we lose godly perspective, courage, and motivation to diligently seek God.
- D. ***To stand***: Believers can *stand in victory* as overcomers, rather than *fall in sin* and compromise.
- E. ***To escape***: This means *not yielding* to lust, drunkenness, and fear, etc. God's people are to be *prepared spiritually* to escape falling to fear, offense, deception, confusion, and compromise.
- F. **#1 *Take heed to yourselves***: We are to pay close attention that our hearts not be weighed down.
- G. **#2 *Watch and pray***: We position ourselves to receive more from the King—*strength* to love well as pressures mount and *insight* to understand what the Lord is doing so that we can help others.
1. ***Watch***: We are to be alert to what God is doing outwardly in society (and the nations) and inwardly in our heart (His leadership in our personal life). Watching includes being alert to the biblical signs of the times as anointed observers. People with understanding will have life-saving insight, like one who has a *compass* in a storm at sea.
 2. ***Pray***: We pray for strength to stand by growing in communion with King Jesus. See notes at mikebickle.org: ***Ten Prayers to Strengthen Our Inner Man: F-E-L-L-O-W-S-H-I-P.***
 3. Some believers *pray*, but do not *watch*—pay attention to what is happening prophetically in the nations. Others *watch*, but do not *pray*. Jesus calls us to do both.
- H. Jesus gave His people practical pastoral counsel in calling them to watch and pray. Ten times God's people are exhorted to “watch,” related to end-times events and pressures (Mt. 24:42; 25:13; Mk. 13:9, 33, 34, 35, 37; Lk. 21:36; 1 Thes. 5:6; Rev. 16:15). The command to watch and pray empowers believers to love people well. ***People will need to be helped by those walking in power, courage, and insight into what God is doing.*** Spiritually dull believers filled with fear and confusion will contribute to the problems of those they love, rather than providing solutions.