

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

**For 9 pages of “extended notes” on this message, go to mikebickle@ihopkc.org*

I. JESUS SPOKE AS A PROPHET AND PASTOR: BE AN OVERCOMER IN THE END TIMES

A. Jesus prophesied that the events related to His return will come like a snare to test everyone (v. 25, 35). He called His people to be strengthened to escape the 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). He called them to prioritize accessing the grace that has been made available to them in Christ.

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 power will be manifested in an increasing measure unto Jesus’ return.

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***: People surprised by the increasing distress will be more vulnerable to fear (v. 34).

F. ***Snare***: Snares, or traps, were used at that time to capture animals for food. A baited snare was *hidden* to lure its prey into the trap and designed to *hold* its prey, making it difficult to escape.

³*He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. (Ps. 91:3)*

G. Jesus highlighted three emotional snares that will weigh hearts down and cause people to fall.

1. ***Carousing (dissipation)***: This speaks of *over-indulgence* that dissipates or diminishes one’s spiritual strength—through immorality or other pleasures outside of God’s will.

2. ***Drunkenness***: Many people seek to escape their pain and pressure—by finding comfort through mind-altering substances instead of seeking it by connecting with Jesus.

3. ***Cares of life***: Many will be overcome with anxiety that results in bitterness towards those who block their goals related to their position, provision, protection, etc. (v. 26, 34).

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

- A. God's people must be strengthened to escape the snare of sin and fear to stand in victory (v. 36).
³⁴*“Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of life...³⁶Watch...and pray always that you may be counted worthy [have strength] to escape all these things...and to stand before the Son of Man.” (Lk. 21:34-36)*
- B. **#1 Take heed to yourselves:** We are to prioritize accessing grace to avoid being weighed down.
1. **Have strength:** A vibrant spiritual life leads to courage and zeal for God. The phrase “*be counted worthy*” (v. 36, NKJV) is translated as “*have strength*” in most modern Bible translations. NKJV footnote offers “*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.”
 2. **Weighed down:** A heart that is weighed down with sin and fear is *unresponsive to Jesus*. What we do with our body (immorality, drunkenness, etc.) greatly affects the spiritual condition of our heart—losing godly perspective, courage, and motivation to seek God.
 3. **To stand:** Believers can *stand in victory* as overcomers, rather than fall in sin, etc.
 4. **To escape:** This means to escape being entrapped by lust, drunkenness, fear, etc. God's people are to be *prepared spiritually* to escape falling to fear, deception, sin, etc.
- C. **#2 Watch and pray:** Jesus gave His people practical pastoral counsel in calling them to watch and pray. Nine times in the Scripture Jesus exhorted His people to “watch” related to end-times pressures (Mt. 24:42; 25:13; Mk. 13:9, 33, 34, 35, 37; Lk. 21:36; Rev. 16:15; cf. 1 Thes. 5:6).
1. **Watch:** This exhortation *focuses on the mind*—to grow in understanding by watching the biblical signs of the times unfold. As our understanding increases, it produces greater urgency in us. By watching what the prophetic scriptures say about the end-time distress in the nations, people can see prophecy progressively unfold before them. As people watch, they inevitably talk more about what is occurring that is in line with the prophetic scriptures. Thus, they connect with more people who have a common urgency and vision.
 2. **Pray:** This exhortation *focuses on the heart*—to grow in strength from connecting with Jesus. Prayer strengthens our heart and releases His resources into the earthly realm.
(*Prayers to Strengthen Our Inner Man*: <http://mikebickle.org/resources/resource/3637>)
- D. **Summary:** We are to position ourselves to receive greater *insight* (by watching) to understand what the Lord is doing and to receive greater *strength* (by prayer) to love well as pressures continued to increase. Those who grow in *understanding and strength* will stand as overcomers.
- E. People with understanding will have life-saving insight, like one who has a *compass* in a storm at sea. Jesus' call to watch and pray is a call to empower believers to love others well. **Multitudes will need to be helped by those walking in power, courage, and insight into what God is doing.** People with understanding will be a part of the solution instead of contributing to the confusion.