

# SOLA FIDE

## Watch and Pray

I have a sick patient assigned to me and for twelve hours I am watching. I get my emergency equipment ready for the worst case scenarios anticipated. I am looking for the slightest change in blood pressure, pulse, and color. I watch and wait for an infection to attack while simultaneously fighting to strengthen my patient's health status. The job requires alertness to potential dangers but also a proactive work of improving the vitality of the patient's condition. This description pertains to physical health but when it comes to our spiritual health, I cannot help but think of it in a similar way. When malignant sin threatens and the devil lurks to attack our spiritual well-being, are we fighting or are we

sleeping on the job? Are we merely reactive to the oncoming threats or are we in the works of building a robust faith that will stand? Too often we cruise through life without paying attention to our spiritual condition and the imminent danger around us. Spiritual decay is subtle and progressive, and if we do not pay attention, we will find ourselves drifting away from the Lord. Therefore, one of the most important tasks of a believer is to remain watchful. The breadth of watchfulness is too vast to cover its entirety, but let's consider two aspects of watching- why and how we can grow in the discipline of watchfulness.



## Why

If we were perfect beings and immune to sin, there would be no need to be watchful. However, that is simply not the case. John Owen defines watchfulness in this way- **“Watchfulness is a universal carefulness and diligence, exercising itself in and by all ways and means prescribed by God, over our hearts and ways, the baits and methods of Satan, the occasions and advantages of sin in the world, that we be not entangled.”** As Owen says, there is a threat both within ourselves and outside of ourselves. First, the internal source of danger is real because believers are not immune to the internal fleshly desires; believers still battle the internal fleshly desires (1 Pet. 2:12). Though sin's dominion over us is no longer, we will not be perfect until we stand before the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. So while we are on this earth, we have to be watchful. Jesus Himself warns to be watchful because **“the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak”** (Mat. 26:41). Second, the external danger comes from Satan and his snare. Apostle Peter warns us to be watchful because **“the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”** (1 Pet. 5:8). We must remember that Satan has mastered the art of deceiving men. This expert deceiver is waiting for the proper opportunity to snatch us. Satan's temptation is far more dangerous than most of us think. Temptations will lead to sin, and cause us to rebel against His rule (Rom. 6:23). Satan's temptations are dangerous because they are always attractive and alluring. Even though it may be small temptations, once we fall into it, and thus sin, the sin will grow, becoming even more alarming, comparable to being chased by a hungry lion. We are weak and our adversary is out to get us. I hope that these two realities are enough to make you see the value of watchfulness!

## How



We want to run the race of faith well and persevere. How then are we to watch? We have to watch ourselves, watch the enemy, and watch Jesus. 1 Timothy 4:16 says to “watch your life and your doctrine.” Examine your heart and behaviors- your thoughts, motives, words, desires, and actions. Check your growth in holiness or regression in heart’s hardness. You will never know you are drifting if you never take the time to assess yourself. Look for the patterns of sin in your life- both the things that you fail to do (e.g. not thanking God) and the things that you commit (e.g. cursing a co-worker). Every person has a certain bent toward particular sin patterns, be it anger,

lust, pride, greed and etc. Awareness of sins should lead to continual repentance and consistent exercise of vigilance to flee at the first sight of temptation. See what you commonly fill your heart with and align your life instead to truth (Prov. 4:23). Just like you would expect harm in feeding an infant soda, you can expect harm when you are feeding your heart worldly preoccupations. In addition, we must watch for the enemy in every season- particularly in times of prosperity, self-confidence, doubt, slumber, and isolation. The enemy loves to use seasons such as these to his advantage to draw us to sins of entitlement, pride, and unbelief. We have to be vigilant in different circumstances we face. Finally, and most importantly, we are to watch Jesus. After all, it is Him who keeps us and preserves our faith (1 Pet. 1:5; Phil. 1:6). There is no progress, hope, or help apart from His grace. The more captivated we become with Jesus, the less enamored we become with idols. Depending on ourselves or our own efforts to keep our souls simply cannot be done. We have to look to Jesus Christ. So we need to constantly pray for His protection, guidance and leading. Jesus commands to watch and pray (Mat. 26:41), praying “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil ( Mat. 6:13).” Let us then persevere in daily contending with the Lord to keep us, forgive us, and deliver us in fervent prayer.

## Finishing well

Brothers and sisters, may you be motivated to watch your soul because of the God-given desire to maintain uninterrupted fellowship with Jesus Christ. Knowing our weakness and the devil’s deceitfulness, let us look unto Jesus our entire journey to our eternal home. And let us remember our fellow brothers and sisters in the process because vigilance is not done alone but interactively with fellow saints. Together we can look to Jesus to keep our souls from temptation (Jude 1:24), to restore us in our failures (1 Pet. 5:10) and to allow us to persevere in this spiritual race (Heb. 12:2).  
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### X-ray Questions

Self-evaluation can be helpful in remaining watchful. Below are some questions to think about to assess your own spiritual vigilance.

1. Do you find yourself praying words robotically without a love for the God whom you pray to? Do you do your devotions but fail to apply it into your life? Do you sing worship songs without a heart that is worshipful?
2. In your times of solitude, what do you dwell on? What are common temptations you face when you are alone, and how are you guarding yourself from falling into them?
3. Are you making it easier or harder for others to help watch over your soul? How can you invite others to do so easily?
4. Where do you find yourself justifying sin in your life?