

On Guard

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[0:00] 1 Peter 5 verse 8, just to start. It says there, be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

It's telling us there, it's urging Christians here to be sober, to be vigilant, because we have an adversary, we have an enemy, the devil, walking around seeking whom he may devour. And just on that theme tonight, I want to talk about being on guard, being on guard. And as a Christian, we are guarded, we are watched over, and we are also exhorted to be on guard, to be on guard.

And really, today is a time for vigilance, it's a time for soberness, it's a time for alertness and vigilance, to be alert to God's way and God's will, and to not be deceived, to not be distracted by the enemy and his works.

And we know of the enemy that it says of him that he blinds the minds of those who believe not. And I think in times, at times too, sometimes the saints can be blinded and deceived and misled and distracted from God's truth.

[1:18] And so it's mindful that we are aware of these things and seek to be vigilant. So along that theme, I'd like to put to you tonight that we are guarded by God.

There's a wonderful sense of God's guarding, God's watching over us. And we see that, for example, in 1 Peter 1 verse 5. While you're in 1 Peter there, you might want to see that.

That it says, 1 Peter 1 verse 5, of God's people, I'll read from verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

It's talking of the born again, the begotten again. Verse 4. To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

And of these it says, verse 5. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. It says there, these saints, these begotten again, these born again ones, are kept.

[2:33] Kept, guarded by the power of God through faith unto salvation. It says there that God's power guards us. God's power, the power of God. We're kept by it.

And this word kept, or to keep, it means to mount guard as a sentinel, figuratively, to hem in, to protect. It's a power beyond our own strength. We can see, as you know, military camps, they have soldiers that keep sentry duty and guard the entry points.

And our sentinels, they are sentry guards to protect the place of the camp or the establishment that they're guarding.

And this word here is the same sense of it for us, that we are kept by the power of God through faith. God's power keeps us. And we see also in Philippians 4, verse 7, that the peace of God keeps us.

Philippians 4, verse 7. We read there, and I know our missionary referred to that in the morning news that we read out. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

[3:43] The context there is of prayer, and it says that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. What an encouragement for us too, that God's peace keeps us.

So not only the power of God, but the peace of God. You could say, really, the presence of God, as we referred to in the brief talk earlier today. That God is with us.

He is with us. He says, I am with you. He says, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. And it says, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. This is the one.

His presence is with us. And we can take heart in that. I know there's many Christians that I come across and chat to at times, and they're beset by all manner of doubts and fears and despondency and cares.

And yet, if we just take hold of this truth, that God's power keeps us, that God's presence is keeping us, He's with us, that God's peace is with us, He's granted it, He's promised it.

[4:44] If we just receive that promise of Scripture, it can make life just take on a whole new dimension, really, can't it? As we realise that God is watching over us, He's guarding over us.

And there's that sense of His presence day by day, moment by moment. And also, as well as God guarding us, there's a sense where we need to be guarded too.

As the Scripture that started with talks about being vigilant, being on guard, being alert, being sober. And I know I came to a house lately, and it was like Fort Knox.

It was like Fort Knox. There's these, you know, everything's padlocked and barred and bolted and gates and this roller door here. And I pressed the alarm, the doorbell, I pressed the doorbell, and I heard the voice in there saying, We'll raise the drawbridge now.

We'll raise the drawbridge. And the roller door came up. The port polish. And the castle was open. The drawbridge was lifted, you know, so to speak. And we know the old pictures.

[5:49] I know I've spent some time in England as a lad touring different castles and lovely old buildings. And you can imagine how it would have been in those days with the drawbridge.

As it was down, the gate was down, and the fortress was protected. But when they lifted the drawbridge, as it were, or they lowered the drawbridge rather, they lowered the drawbridge to open the gate, to open the gateway into the castle, then the place was open to be entered.

And I think at times too, as Christians, we've lowered our guard. We've lowered our guard on many fronts. We, as it were, lowered the drawbridge. We've opened the gates to all manner of confusion and mayhem and danger in our world today.

As we see on many fronts, there's many areas where we need to be on our guard. And I know I was talking with someone on the way here, talking about the wise and foolish virgins and how some were ready, some were prepared, and some were not.

They were caught hopping. And I think that likewise too, for many Christians, that we can be caught off our guard and caught napping, as it were. And I'd like to put it to you, some areas that we need to be on our guard against.

[7:06] Three things, if you like, that we could take from Scripture that we need to be guarding ourselves against. And the first we see is in 2 Peter 2, verse 1. 2 Peter 2, verse 1.

To be on guard against false teachers. False teachers. Now, I know, I've come to some Christians' homes and they suddenly turn the TV preacher off that they're watching and they're under great conviction as I knock on the door and think, oh, no, we're only just switching the channel quickly. And they're just trying to hide the fact that they're watching these heretical preachers on their television sets. But seriously, brothers, you need to be guarded. You need to be careful about false teachers and false preachers of false gospels.

As it were, 2 Peter 2, verse 1. The Lord warns through Peter. He writes here, 2 Peter 2, verse 1. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you who privily or secretly shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

And there's dangers there. The context there talks of how we need to be aware of the character traits of such false teachers and talks of some who make merchandise of people.

[8:23] We see that often times as much as there's good and bad and as you pick the bones out of anything, I suppose. But you see some of the things that these preachers rabbit on about is all about money, it's all about prosperity, about health, wealth, and name it and claim it, blab it and grab it, all this kind of caper.

And you wonder, what are they really on about? What's really driving these people? And they're marketing a Jesus. They're marketing a Jesus that is not biblical. It's about marketing. It's about selling a Jesus that is not biblical. And the Bible talks about these times where there will be false Christs. False Christs. False Gospels and false spirits.

We see the ecumenical movement, a supposed unity, but really an artificial one. We need to raise the defences. Not lower our guard, but raise the defences. Raise the discernment levels.

Discernment of spirits. It's one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We need that more than ever today, I believe. The discerning of spirits, the discernment. We need to have a sense of discerning between right and wrong, of having our senses exercised, as it says, to discern.

[9:36] To discern. And there is an apostasy. An apostasy is predicted, and I believe we've seen that in many quarters of our world today. A false teaching going on.

False doctrine. False doctrine. And we see the health, wealth and prosperity gospel. Now, it's a blessing to be wealthy. It's a blessing to have material goods. But that's not the focus of the scripture.

That's not the focus. That's not what God would have us to focus on. Nor healing. Healing is not a focus for us as believers today. Healing is something God grants through believing prayer, according to His will.

As we seek His face, as we seek His perfect will for our lives. It's not a guarantee, something we can claim, or I've heard it said of late, not just confessing your healing, but commanding your healing.

As if we could dare, dare to command God. What an affront. What a blasphemy. We can't command God anything. All we can do is beseech Him and seek His will.

[10:41] Seek His face and prayerfully beseech Him and implore Him. And sometimes He'll say no. He'll say, no, my grace is sufficient for thee. My strength is made perfect in weakness, like He did to Paul.

And sometimes God allows, God wills sickness, dare I say, as much as that would be. And that would be something I would be called a heretic on the Pentecostal scene today, because now they're saying, it's always God's will for you to be healed.

Brother and sister, no, it's not. Sometimes God allows it for our good. And there's watered-down messages. There's some abominations. I've seen some crazy video clips.

And look, I'm not saying, I know some will say, look, that's just the crazies. And by and large, there are these crazies that are taken over. And now it's becoming the mainstream in many quarters.

But there's these watered-down messages. There's unscriptural practices that it's becoming the done thing. Have the altar call and expect to be slain in the Spirit, so-called.

[11:42] But as the Word says, the only slain by the Spirit is Ananias and Sapphira. They're the only people slain by the Spirit. People falling on the floor and groveling around and making a load of hoo-ha.

It's not scriptural, brothers and sisters, except as we see when the Lord encountered the demonic. Brothers and sisters, and I'm not saying that everything that goes on in such churches is demonic. But I'm saying we need to exercise discernment.

That is what the Scripture would urge us to do. And I implore you to do so. There's a danger, too, of manipulated decisions. Manipulated decisions where, you know, everything's geared and engineered and fostering this atmosphere, this environment, this emotional state, and where everything's geared for people to make a decision.

But sometimes that is, likewise, a hollow thing and a shallow thing. We need to be guarded about such things. Brothers and sisters, there's a need, a crying need for sound doctrine, for doctrine that's scriptural, that's solid, that's strong, where there's strong conviction for truth, where we can build strong Christian families, strong preaching.

2 Timothy 4.2 tells us more in that term, where Paul spoke to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4.2. He exhorted young Timothy there.

[13:05] He said to him, Preach the word, be instant, in season, out of season. So, in other words, whenever and wherever. He says, Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

I read a quote on this verse, on 2 Timothy 4.2, and it goes like this. And it was in the context of referring to some Latter-day prophets, or miracle workers, you could say, faith healers, in terms of some current events.

And people might have heard the name Todd Bentley, for example. It was in that context, and this is what the writer says. He says, Preach the word, preach the word. That's what it says. It doesn't say preach about miracles.

Preach about angels. Preach about extra-scriptural revelations. Preach about coming revivals, etc. It says, Preach the word of God.

[14:23] Sharp, plain, pure preaching of the word of God should be the primary mark of a true revival. Then it says to reprove and rebuke. Where is the reprovng and rebuking in this revival of calling out sin and proclaiming the judgment of God upon an apostate church?

Where is the exhorting, the spurring on to love and holiness, the sound scriptural exaltation with sound doctrine and clear biblical exegesis? This is what we need, brothers and sisters.

I know I need to be more in the word so I can exhort more of the word. I can be neglectful of this too, that we need to get into the word.

We must get into the word. I pray I exhort you, brothers and sisters, younger people, older people, the word of God is our food. It's our bread. It's our life to us.

And we need the word of God. It's like Paul said in Acts 20, 32. He says, And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

[15:32] He says, I exhort you, I commend to you the word of God, the word of His grace. It's able to build you up. We need to raise the defences. How do we do that? By getting grounded.

By getting grounded and planted in the word. grounded and planted, like the blessed man of Psalm 1. Grounded and planted, getting that nourishment, getting that refreshment, that strengthening of biblical truth, of scriptural truth, so then that we can fight for it and defend it and raise the defences. We're seeing false teachers. False teachers. We need to be guarded. Not everyone who stands behind a pulpit, not everyone who spouts scripture is a preacher of the gospel.

We need to be guarded about false teachers, about false doctrine. Analyze it. Examine it. Scrutinize it. Search the scriptures. See if these things are so.

Test me. Search the scriptures. See if what I'm telling you is the truth. Or whoever you listen to, whoever you read, whoever you watch, whoever you pay attention to, search the scriptures.

[16:38] See if these things are so. And be led by the Spirit as the Word is the ground, as the Word is the foundation for what you believe. False teachers.

False doctrine. False fire. False fire. The strange fire that was given in worship. It was worship, but it was false. It wasn't scriptural. It wasn't as God had ordained it to be.

And we're seeing that today, brothers and sisters, on many fronts, in many circles today. Subjective worship, where it's all subjective. It's all about the buzz, the feeling, the atmosphere.

It's about the presence, the mystique, the aroma, the sense, the sensation of it, the carnality of it, really, the fleshliness of it.

If you dig deep enough, if you scratch the surface enough, it's really carnality driving it. It's hysteria. It's madness. I read a book about slaying in the Spirit by Nathan McHale.

[17:37] It was one of the books that helped me to see the dangers of the Pentecostal movement that I was in at the time. Slaying by the Spirit. And Nathan McHale wrote about hypnotism and altered states of consciousness.

And he compared and illustrated and he soundly demonstrated that what was going on in the slaying in the Spirit and the Azusa street was hypnotism.

It was hypnotic. It was altered states of consciousness. So we need to be guarded about that. We need to be guarded and guided by the Scripture. If it's not in here, then it's not scriptural. It doesn't

matter whether everyone else is doing it, whether it's the fashion and fad of the popular church today.

It doesn't make it right, does it? It's got to be Scripture that guides us. Not extremism, not confusion, not false miracles. I know some of this might be getting a bit close to the bone for some of you, but people tonight, I urge you, I must urge you, I've been soundly convinced there's many video clips I could show you from the internet that are just absolutely shocking.

Shocking. It's absolutely disgusting. You know, this man, Todd Bentley, he's now married to his mistress, was the nanny of his children, and he's gearing up ready to relaunch his ministry.

[18:56] In February, apparently, he'll be back on the airwaves, on God TV, and they're making a big thing of it. They planned revival. They're calling it a revival. I don't know what they're going to call the next revival, but people today, this is a man who's committed adultery with barely a blink of an eye, with some token of repentance that he's accepted he's committed a sin, and now he's just standing alongside this new woman that he has, ready to launch his new ministry, and yet, where is God in all of this?

And this was a woman that was with him when Lakeland revival was just starting. It was right through the whole of this supposed revival, where there's all this madness and extremism going on, and people today, I want to say this, I'm not bagging everything that's Pentecostal.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying everything Pentecostal is of the devil and it's wrong and sinful and false, but I'm saying that we need to be discerning, we must, we must, we must exercise discernment with anything that we believe in and we practice, because we can all be led astray by our own feelings or our own preferences, our own upbringing or our own training, and so we need to question.

Question the experience, it's not experience that guides us, it mustn't be, not feelings, not experience, it's not whether you feel saved, it's not whether you feel the anointing, it's not whether it feels right or wrong, it's about whether God says it's right or wrong, that's what matters, it's whether the truth is resident and president and ultimate in what we are doing, is it the truth that underpins and is the foundation, or are we following the Pied Piper, the Pied Piper, we know the children's story of the music, music, man who guided the children of the village out to their destruction, and it's a picture of really the Pied Pipers, the popular scene, the popular movements of Christendom today can be very dangerous and we need to be very guarded and careful, so it's not emotions that save, some people make an emotional response when an evangelist makes an appeal, they get an emotional response, they get a response to join in, to follow, to follow what the preacher says to do, to say, and they think that by mouthing words at the preacher's guidance, that that makes them saved.

Now, despite the preacher and despite the circumstances, that can still happen, but nevertheless, it's not by parroting some words that another man says, it's not by rote or ritual or formula that we utter a certain prayer, it's whether we call on the name of the Lord, that's what matters, you can do that in all kinds of ways, you can do that as you put your trust in Christ, that can come about in all kinds of ways, and thank God it comes through evangelists, despite some of the methodologies at times, that God can still work through all of these things, and yet, is it scripture, that is what must guide us, it's not emotions that save us or make us spiritual, it's God that saves, it's God that's looking for the fruit of obedience, and so, think of that tonight, is it false teachers, false doctrine, false fire, let's be guarded, let's be guided by scripture, be guarding, setting up the defences, I'd like to urge you tonight to guard against a couple more things, guard against softness, guard against softness, many Christians today are pleased to be uplifted by a sermon, but not corrected by the sermon, you start to kick a few holy cows, or scratch a few nerves, or get a little bit under the skin, and people get offended, they get upset, they get irritated, but we need to be irritated by God's word, if God's word irritates us, if the truth of God starts to get close to the bone, then that's a good thing, that's what we need, it cuts to the bone, and it cuts to the heart, it pricked the heart, it pierced the heart, as the preachers of old gave it, and churches and preaching has become soft, soft, soft against sin, soft against sin, many of today's preachers are soft, there's a soft watered down message for fear that they may anger people, it's like

[23:35] Paul said, am I becoming your enemy because I've told you the truth, we must speak the truth in love, but nevertheless speak the truth,

many of today's sermons are an uplifting message made by man to please men, but they are not of God, they are designer sermons designed to uplift the church's contributors, a softened gospel, that's really no gospel at all, would be better that you were offended by the truth, and then did something about it, than for me not to declare it, some demand, as they did in Isaiah's day, Isaiah 30 verse 10, they said to him, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceit, now I could utter all kinds of happy, clappy, warm and fuzzy kind of messages that make you have a high or a buzz or emotional response, that's good to have an emotional response still too, as well as your reason, but that's not the focus, that's not the focal point, our focus is not upon that, our focus is upon the truth, and it's like today where people are not interested in the truth, the hard things, the hard things, they just want to feel good, it's like in John 6 verse 60, it says there that the disciples of our

Lord, it says, many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, this is a hard saying, who can hear it, he's talking in the context there where he says, you must drink my blood and eat my flesh, for spiritually speaking, that identification with Christ, and they said, this is a hard saying, who can hear it, this word hard, in hard saying, where they described our Lord's preaching, it means dry, it means hard, tough, it means harsh, severe, fierce, hard, they called the Lord's preaching hard, something that was dry, something that was fierce and severe, and then it later says, verse 66 of John 6, from that time, many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him, they just couldn't hack it, they couldn't hack what the Saviour said, was too hard for them, our Lord was hard in what he said, it wasn't smooth, it was hard, we must be aware and be wary of a constant diet of smooth things, now of course we all like smooth things, it's all great to have an encouraging sermon, when we lift it up, and I pray you'll still be lifted up nevertheless by this message, but it's not about lifting you up and making you feel good, it's about imparting truth, that is what we must be about, smooth things are sin, smooth things are sin, we just smooth things over and say, you know, we'll excuse that sin, we'll just overlook it, is that really helping you, is that really helping you to grow, to trust him, to walk in Christ, you can have a pleasant touchy-feely sermon, a soft easy sermon that really is not going to convict, it's not going to draw you closer to the saviour, it's going to leave you just the way you are, you can come to church and have your ego stroked, and have your easy chairs and your casual comfortable free ride kind of Christianity, and miss the boat, miss the boat completely, about God's truth, and now is the time for forceful message, for an uncompromising message, for bold, hard truths, that strike to the heart of a man, of a woman, are you right with God, am I right with God, that must be our plea, our prayer, our earnest desire, that we must seek his face, that we must yearn and long to be right with God, it's a time to confront our sin, not to excuse it, not to put it aside, but to confront sin, to confront sin, to seek God, to seek God, to seek his face, to seek him, do we truly do that, to repent, to truly repent, not some glib, token, words out of your mouth, but truly repent, smoothness is an enemy, today, and secondly, slackness, slackness is an enemy, we can get slack, all of us can, diversions, distractions, things that divert our energies, a weakness of many Christians is slackness, slackness, someone wrote this, they said, 300 million years from now, the only thing that will matter is who is in heaven, and who is in hell, what are you doing of significance today, that will matter then, makes you think, doesn't it, puts it all into context, all of the day by day worries, and concerns, the things that occupy us, what will it matter millions of years from now, it will matter who is in heaven, and who is in hell, and what part can you play, of course we know it is ultimately God's absolute way that leads a man to be saved, but you are his tool, you are his voice, you are his hand extended, you are his messenger, you are the one that he has imparted and commissioned that message of salvation to, you are the one who can tell another, you are his voice, don't neglect that, don't be slack, don't become comfortable, it's not about making Jesus acceptable or attractive, it's not about marketing a Jesus that will make you feel good, marketing a Jesus will make you wealthy or healthy, or give you success, success, that's not the Jesus of the Bible, the Jesus of the Bible says take up your cross and follow me, except you repent, you shall likewise perish, so many scriptures I could think of, unless you believe, you're lost, you'll perish, now that's pretty in your face stuff isn't it, that's hard, that's a hard saying and it confronts us,

doesn't it, it's a bold, direct message, a message of judgment, the Lord Jesus, of course he was meek and mild as a baby in the manger, but one day he's going to have fire coming out of his eyes, he's going to have judgment coming out of his mouth, there's going to be a time when gentle [30:31] Jesus is going to be gentle no more, it's going to be Jesus the judge, Jesus the judge of planet earth, there'll be a time when he'll have no more mercy, he'll have no more compassion, the door will be closed as it was on Noah's ark, and God will strike judgment upon planet earth, the same Jesus of the Bible is the same Jesus who will be the judge of all the earth, the judge of the living and the dead, and we need some strong preaching, we need some strong exhorting, some strong stirring, not a sharing, caring, hoping, coping, but a Bible message, a message of hope, of salvation, of life eternal, of fleeing from the judgment to come, of fleeing from the wrath to come, a gospel with fervor, with zeal, a preaching about sin, repentance, death, hell, judgment, the torments of hell, repentance is absent today, repentance is absent, in many circles we see it's all about getting the numbers, it's all about marketing the

Jesus, it's all about marketing the church, it's about filling the pews, it's about tickling the ears, it's about catering to the emotions, what about repentance, that's the emotion that we need isn't it, it's a heartfelt repentance, a heartfelt remorse, a heartfelt brokering up of our soul, a breaking up, a contrition of soul, of heart, that is what we are called to today, not some casual, contemporary, come as you feel kind of Christianity, but a come just as I am, and for him not to leave us that way, we come just as we are, but he doesn't leave us that way, it's not some kind of entertainment to tickle the ears and tickle the fancy, friends today, I urge you to be encouraged, to find God's truth, to see that God is that great guard, 24 by 7, his eyes run to and fro about all the earth, he's got 24 hour surveillance, he's your security guard, he's guarding you, he's keeping you by his power, keeping you by his peace, keeping you by his presence, there's false teachers, there's false doctrine, there's false fire, be on your guard, watch out for these things, watch out for smoothness, watch out for slackness, repentance is absent, reverence is absent, churches can opt for this slackness, a take it or leave it kind of

Christianity, a do as you please kind of Christianity, not that we work for our salvation, not that we're saved by working, but as Christians we work because we love him, because we love him we want to serve, and we want to have that sense of who he is, just to close, Psalm 89 7 it says, God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints as we have in reverence of all them that are about him, God is greatly to be feared, God is greatly to be feared, to be feared, have we lost that fear of God, where God is just our mate, our chump, our friend, of course he is a friend of sinners, thank God, but he's much more isn't he, he is the great and awesome one, the almighty with whom we have to deal, before his word we should tremble, before his wrath, we should be in awe, in conviction, in repentance, and thank

God the wrath has been vented in Christ's cross, he is the one who's born it, that penalty of our guilt, of our shame, he's taken every bit of the weight, of the punishment for our sin, God is greatly to be feared, one day we'll see God's wrath vented on planet earth, we'll be the same watching as the wrath is poured out, I trust that you are saved tonight, that you'll be on the right side of his wrath, that you'll be on the side where the wrath has been paid for you, at Calvary's cross, at the shadow of the cross, his wrath was vented, was poured out, was paid for in full, in Christ's body on the cross, and you can know that conviction of sin, before the wrath of God, that conviction of the fearfulness of his anger, that it's going to be poured out on the unrepentant, a time is coming when his mercy will be no more, he will not look at us then with pity and mercy, no more compassion, but judgment, judgment on those who have not repented, judgment on those who have refused his offer of mercy, people today, being encouraged,

I pray, want to urge each one, dig deep in the word of God, let the word guide, not those that might give some feel good kind of latter day messages that are askew from the word, test everything, test me, test everything, test that which you hear that it lines up with God's word, as it's been said of the word of God, this is our only rule of faith and conduct, this is the rule, this is the guide, this is the guide book, that measuring stick by what we measure everything is the word of God.

[36:25] ending ending Thank you.