

Be always on the watch.

This is the twentieth century. A man must live his life to the full, when he has the opportunity, he thought to himself. Thank God for the job. Yes, it is a good job and it pays well. He can meet his needs and lend a helping hand. That is grace, he mused, remembering a recent sermon by his pastor. He remembers the "Thank God, it is Friday" group. Friends in the development sector who gather to drink and eat fish in that garden every Friday after work. It was a good company. You hear the latest news and the political jigs in the country. These politicians!

They arrived at the club. After a bout of lawn tennis, they sat down to drink. There was live music played by a local group and a woman dancing. As the time went by, she danced close to a man, either pull him up to dance with her or sat on his lap. You can decline to your shame. It was all "fun".

Tony is a car enthusiast. He enjoyed sampling cars and has made a few car sales websites his favorite. He goes there once in a while to review the latest and there is hardly a car that passes by that he does not know the model and the vital statistics. It gives him satisfaction to just note that he drives one of the best and latest cars in the environment. He would usually sell an old car and add some money to buy a later version. That is trade in, in the parlance of the car sales industry.

She wept! What would she do now? Where would she go? The rent in Lagos had expired. The place where she squatted with her sister was no longer available. Her room mate was returning and the space was not adequate for three, so she has to move. But to where, she did not know. She has been marketing for a property development company. Unfortunately, the estate is in Lagos, while she is here. She thus was unable to sell. She was on commission and will only get paid when she is able to sell. In frustration, she wept!

All three scenarios above describe three conditions that the bible tells us to watch out for.

³⁴ But take heed to yourselves and be on your guard, lest your hearts be overburdened and depressed (weighed down) with the giddiness and headache and nausea of self-indulgence, drunkenness, and worldly worries and cares pertaining to [the business of] this life, and [lest] that day come upon you suddenly like a trap or a noose; ³⁵ For it will come upon all who live upon the face of the entire earth. ³⁶ Keep awake then and watch at all times [be discreet, attentive, and ready], praying that you may have the full strength and ability and be accounted worthy to escape all these things [taken together] that will take place, and to stand in the presence of the Son of Man. (AMPC) Luke 21:34-36.

³⁴ "Be careful, or your hearts will be **weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life**, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ *Be always on the watch*, and *pray* that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man." (NIV) Luke 21:34-36

There are therefore three things that may weigh a man down. They are carousing, drunkenness and anxieties of life. Basically, carousing means to drink alcohol excessively or engage in dissolute behavior. In local parlance, we call this enjoyment. Thus to carouse means to engage in a rowdy behavior under influence of an intoxicant. The intoxicant could be alcohol or any other thing that makes the heart merry so much so that the carouser forgets himself or good manners. In other words, it is enjoyment that makes you to forget yourself and behave with reckless abandon! The intoxicant can be alcohol, women, money, food, or anything that constitute “enjoyment” and trips you off.

Drunkenness. A dictionary definition refers to the state of being drunk, insobriety, inebriation, intemperance, over indulgence, dipsomania, etc. again, what an individual is drunken with does not have to be alcohol. The bible gives us good examples of persons who were drunk and the consequences of their actions. Consider Noah (Gen 9:21), Lot (Gen 19:15 and 33) Nabal (I Sam 25:36), Amnon (II Sam 13:18), Elah, king of Israel (I Kings 15:9), Benhadad, King of Syria (I King 20:16). Prophet Amos (Amos 6:6) pronounced judgement on rulers of Samaria who drink and their ladies who encourage them. The NT also condemns drunkenness (Matt 24:49, Acts 2:13, 15, Eph 5:18 and I Thes 5:7).

Drunkenness has physical effects as we see in Job 12:25, Prov 23:29, Ps 107:27, Jer 25:16. The mental effects include exhilaration (Job 43:34, loss of understanding and balance of judgement (Isa 28:7 and Hos 4:11). While the happiness may be instant, it is transient, ultimately, it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder and leads to woe and sorrow (Prov 23:29-32, poverty, Prov 23:21, 17 and Ecc 19:1. Thus Prov declares that wine and anything that acts like wine is a mocker, deceiving the unwise (Prov 20:1)

Drunkenness has debilitating effect on moral and spiritual standing. It perverts justice (Prov 31:5, Isa 5:23), provokes anger, contentious and brawling spirit (Prov 20:1, 23:29 and encourages a life of profligacy (Eph 5:18. It creates licentiousness and indecency (Joel 3:3 and Gen 9:21. It deadens spiritual sensibility and destroys serious thought (Isa 5:12). The counsel is to watch that we do not get there.

The third trap, that we must watch out for is anxiety. The dictionary definition of anxiety is “a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome”. Other words that are synonyms for anxiety are worry, concern, apprehensions, perturbation, agitation, nervousness, etc. It is a condition of being drawn mentally into different directions. The bible calls it the “caes of this world: in Matt 13:22, Mk 4:19, Luke 8:14. The advise from I Pet 5:7 is to cast all your care upon him. Anxiety destroys faith and makes you helpless. You are unlikely to hear from the Holy spirit or take what he ministers to you seriously when you are full of anxiety.

All these conditions create spiritual stupor and inaction. The Lord says that we should watch. This is not the watch with physical eyes but a spiritual watch. It is a sensitivity in the spirit that draws the breaks when you are being taken away and sliding down spiritual slope into dumbness.

The ten virgins were all watching. Only five had the necessary oil that would take them to the end. Others perished because they were not alert in the spirit. You have your eyes therefore on your spiritual fuel gauge refuel when it is going down. A better approach is to replace what has been used at any moment in time.

Verse 36 of the Luke 21 says that we should always be on the watch, so that we might be able to stand before the Lord in victory with him not finding any fault in us. He was in the like manner when he declared to the disciples that the prince of this world cometh, but shall find nothing in him. The key to this successful living is to allow the Holy Spirit to take the lead in all things and sometimes leads you into what and where you did not want to go.