

Luke 12 (Part 2): 35-48 • Are You Ready?

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Luke 12:35, it says,

“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. ³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.

³⁸ If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! ³⁹ But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” ⁴¹ Peter said, “Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?”

⁴² And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk,

⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.” (ESV)

Let's stop there. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father as always, we come before you whenever we open up the Word of God with a confession of our mouths that it is truly a work of your Spirit to make the Word alive to our hearts and even to make it understandable.

We recognize our need for you to bring clarity and then application to the Word of God. So Father, as we take time to unpack these words this morning, would you please use them to speak words of grace and insight? Teach us today, nourish our souls. We ask you Father to do this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

When I'm looking at a passage of Scripture and getting ready to teach it for a Sunday morning or even a Wednesday night for that matter, there are times when I'm reading through verses and begin to study them out, and I am hit with the realization that there's way more here than I maybe had originally perceived, and this is one of those times. Whenever we get to talking about this issue or this subject of the coming of the Lord and all the things that go along with it and the things that Jesus is saying here related to His coming, there's so much, there's so many dynamics here.

As the earthly ministry of Jesus is rapidly coming to a close He begins to speak to His disciples about His return. Interestingly enough He doesn't focus so much on His departure. He's talking here about His return, and so He begins by saying it this way with just some simple exhortations. In verse 35, you'll notice that He begins by saying. "*Stay dressed for action.*" And this is, you and I would probably say today, keep your clothes on and be ready to move. And you probably think that someone would say something like that if you were expecting some kind, maybe a storm or a natural disaster or something of that nature.

Stay dressed. In other words, go to bed tonight with your clothes on and ready to move at any time. It's interesting that in the Greek this phrase, "*Stay dressed for action,*" is literally translated, let your waist be girded. And the reason they said it that way was because they wore long robes in that day, and you can imagine those could be quite a hindrance if you needed to move quickly, and so, they would wear a belt around their waist, which they referred to as a girdle.

And if they had work to do or they needed to get somewhere. and maybe they were going to run or do some hard labor they would literally take up their robe and tuck it up under their belt and tie the belt so that the long, the ending of the robe was then out of the way. And that is, literally, what Jesus is saying. He's saying stay ready. Ready to move at any time. Be ready.

And the next thing He says there in verse 35 is to “*keep your lamps burning.*” And again, we deal with electricity today and not the burning of lamps, but we know what Jesus is essentially saying here, and in fact, there, this imagery is used elsewhere in the Scripture.

Being ready, keep your lamp burning. When the Lord returns, there's not going to be time to go buy more oil, there's not going to be time even to trim your lamp and you should be on already when the Lord comes, and you guys probably remember that parable that Jesus told of the virgins who are awaiting the bridegroom as he comes to get his bride. Let's read through it on the screen here. Notice this is from Matthew chapter 25, He says,

Mathew 25:1-13 (ESV)

Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.

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Mathew 25:1-13 (ESV)

And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.'

(Here's the deal though, it says) *And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for*

yourselves.' And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, (And here's the summary. Watch therefore) for you know neither the day nor the hour."

It's a fairly well-known parable that Jesus told. And it's interesting to me how people get hung up on the details that maybe don't matter. I've had, I've been in on huge discussions and debates, well, exactly who are the 10 foolish virgins and who are the 10 wise virgins, something like that. Well, you've got to be careful not to miss the point.

The point is, be ready. Keep your lamp burning. Keep it on. Don't wait. Don't say, ah, it's okay. Here's the simple message, very simple. And Jesus uses the imagery in that parable and also in this passage of a wedding and being ready for what was going to happen at a wedding.

I rather like the way Jews did weddings. I wish we did weddings like that because there was a sense of anticipation that frankly just doesn't really occur in our modern weddings because the way people would get married back in those days is they would, we would call it being engaged, but they called it being betrothed.

The man would betroth them self to a woman, and that was essentially meaning that they were engaged, and they wouldn't live together during the betrothal. In fact, the groom would go away to build his house, and he would prepare a place for his bride, and his father was the only one who could tell him when that structure was finished to the degree that he was ready to go get his bride.

And that's why Jesus said no one knows the day or the hour, not even the Son, but only the Father. Because He was using that imagery of the Jewish wedding. And so, it was an exciting sort of a thing, because when the father would go and inspect his son's work and realize that the structure was finished to his satisfaction, he would finally say to his son, all right, boy, go get her, go get your wife.

And that's, but the people had to be ready, because it could happen at any time, and he would go to get his bride, and they would send out the call, "here comes the bridegroom," and it was just, it was a delightful, festive sort of a situation. And so, Jesus liked using that imagery to remind us of His second coming because He is the bridegroom.

He is the one coming for His bride and He says, *“I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place, I will come back to bring you to where I am.”* And it's just it's really beautiful. Now, you'll notice He uses some wedding imagery here.

In verse 36, He says, *“And be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast.”* Now, this is different here, isn't it? Rather than waiting for the bridegroom, this time Jesus uses wedding imagery to say that these are servants now, whose master has gone to attend the wedding feast but, He said, be ready for the master to come home because a wedding feast could last a long time, but you don't really know.

It's like, whenever the wine runs out, I suppose, and so it could last for days and days. And so, Jesus says to everyone, be like people who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast because you want to be there when he comes home. You want to be there to open the door. And so, we're to be watchful, we're to be ready for the Master's return.

And He further emphasized it in verses 37 and following. He even went on to say, *“Blessed are those servants whose master finds them awake when He comes.”*

In fact, He goes on to give a promise connected with that. He says, *“I tell you this, when the master comes home and finds his servants awake, he'll dress himself to serve them.”* He will actually serve them. And He says, *“even if he comes in the third or second or third watch of the night and finds them awake, there's a great blessing that attends those servants who are there awake and ready.”* And then He gives this interesting sort of a statement in verse 39. If you look with me there again in your Bible, He says, *“If the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house be broken into.”*

And it's strange to our ears for Jesus to suddenly turn the imagery to kind of a negative one, speaking of a thief and basically saying, if you if you got wind of when the thief was going to come to your home, you'd be ready and so forth. But the reason He does it is to make the conclusion in verse 40, you also must be ready. And He tells us why.

The Son of Man is going to come at an hour that we don't expect. So, He likens His coming to that of a thief arriving unexpectedly, and of course, a thief always arrives unexpectedly. Thieves don't call you up on the phone and say, by the way, I'll be there Thursday night around 10:30 so, it's always unexpected.

Now, all this talk that Jesus has been giving about His coming, and unexpected coming, and how you were to be ready, and so forth, causes a question to rise up in the mind of Peter and so he gives voice to it in verse 41 and he simply asks the question, Lord, are you telling this parable for us? And he means for just the disciples, your closest followers, in other words, or he says, are you telling this for everybody? And you'll notice in the coming verses that Jesus gives a very indirect reply.

And essentially, He launches into another illustration about readiness, but you'll notice in this coming illustration, He does change the wording a little bit. Notice how He puts it in verse 42. It says, *“And the Lord said, who then is the faithful and wise manager?”*

Now, if you have a different Bible translation you're looking at, you may have a different word such as steward, because it's not the same word that's used previously about servants who are just to be ready for the coming of the master.

But now He talks about those who are given a position of management. Stewardship is when you are given something, a position of authority to carry out. And he says, *“Who is the faithful and wise individual who's been given this position of leadership?”* Management, and so forth.

And He says, and He begins to talk about that person, and we know that He's changed the language here because He talked, He makes statements like, *“someone who has been set over His household.”* He also talks about people who have been given the responsibility of feeding the flock.

Notice He says there in that verse 42, *“Who then is the faithful and wise manager whom his master will set over his household to give them their portion of food.”* He's talking about those who are feeding people with the Word of God.

This is, you see Jesus is answering Peter's question by launching, essentially what He's saying is, I was talking about just everyday servants just a moment ago, now I will talk to you guys. I'll talk to those of you who have been given a management position in the body of Christ, who've been set over the household in some sort of a stewardship role, and who are responsible for feeding the flock.

And what is the message that Jesus is giving to those individuals? Well, it's a two-sided message. It begins in verse 43, where He says, *“Blessed is that*

servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, he will set him over his possessions.”

Jesus begins by saying, there's a great promise of blessing that's going to come to those who've been given a management role, whatever that may be. And He says, if they're found ministering the Word when I return, there's going to be great blessing, but there's also another side to this, the other side of the coin.

And that is that with this added responsibility, there's added expectation of faithfulness. Look what it says in verse 45. This is where He begins to say, but if that servant says to himself, you know what? Boy, I tell you, my master, He's been staying away a long time, and He just starts to lose it in terms of just representing the master in any sort of a positive way. And Jesus begins to characterize this person as starting to mistreat and abuse people in the body of Christ, even to the point of getting drunk.

And He says, the master of that servant will come on a day when he doesn't expect him and at an hour he does not know, and it won't be good. Because you see there's an issue of representation that's going on and God cares about those who represent Him. He cares really a lot.

Moses found out the hard way about misrepresenting the Lord. Do you guys know that that's why he couldn't go into the promised land? Moses was not allowed to go into the promised land. He led the people there for 40 years and never went in. Why?

He misrepresented the Lord. When they started their journey, they came, the whole crowd was complaining and moaning and groaning about no water, and God told Moses to go out and take his staff and strike this huge rock. He says, strike the rock and I'll miraculously make water come gushing out of this rock to take care of the whole nation of Israel. And he did. He struck the rock with his staff. Out came water. Well, about 38 years later, this whole story happened again. The people are complaining, and we don't have any water.

And God told Moses. Go out and speak to the rock, and I will bring water to the people. But you see, Moses was frustrated, and he was angry, and 38 years, 40 years putting up with a bunch of crybabies in the desert, I mean, he just, he'd had it, you know? And so he, instead of going out and speaking to the rock, he went out and struck the rock again. He took his staff and struck the rock. Well, by God's grace, out came water. But afterwards, God said to Moses, come here son, we need to talk.

And He basically explained to Moses that he had misrepresented the Lord to the people because the Lord wasn't frustrated, the Lord wasn't angry, and He wanted very much to bless His people, but there was a greater representation that God wanted Moses to portray that day, that he blew. You see, the rock is a picture of Jesus. That's what we're told in the New Testament. That rock is Jesus who feeds us with living water. And the whole point of that illustration was to convey that you only need to strike the rock once. And that speaks of his death on the cross and out comes living water.

And now after that you just speak to the rock. And of course, the whole picture there was that Jesus need not die repeatedly on the cross in order to give forth living water. But you see, Moses blew it. He blew the whole representation thing. And because of that, he wasn't able to go into the promised land. And Jesus is talking in these passages, as well, about those who represent the Lord. And frankly, He goes on to talk about this in these last verses that we're going through here this morning are pretty challenging to read.

Look at verse 47 and 48. He says, *“And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not get ready or act accordingly, according to his will, will receive a severe beating.”*

And then he goes on in verse 48 to describe the one who didn't know what was really expected of him, but he didn't live the way he should have anyway, and his beating will be less and so forth. And you read these verses and you're what is, what's He saying here?

And I'll be honest with you, as I read through a lot of the Bible commentators that I have access to, I found that most of them didn't even want to deal with it. They didn't really even want to talk about it, because you see, there's an elephant in the room in these two verses and the elephant is basically, is He talking about believers here or is He talking about unbelievers?

Because He talks about servants, one who knows his master's will, but doesn't do it. One who doesn't really know his master's will and doesn't live the way he should and having different elements of judgment that go along with it. And it's troubling to read because when we talk about judgment from a Christian standpoint, we like to say that there will be no judgment for believers.

And we follow that up with passages from Romans that talk about, *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who in Christ Jesus.”* And so, there's good reason for you and I to say there's no judgment for believers from that standpoint.

And what we're talking about when we say that is the fact that you accepted what Jesus did for you on the cross, that takes care of the issue of sin unto eternal death for you. There is going to be no issue. Okay, let me just put this very clearly. For those of you who are in Jesus today, who are in Christ, you will not stand before God at any time in the future and deal with sin unto death. Second death I'm referring to. That issue's been dealt with at the cross. Okay, done, it's over. In other words, God is not going to bring up any sin in your life that could somehow condemn you from receiving eternal life.

Our eternal life is fixed in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Are we good on that? Are we settled on that? Alright, having said that, knowing that as we do, now we begin to look at these passages that speak of the judgment of sin in our lives that isn't unto death. He's not talking about punishment unto death here, or unto separation. He's talking about something else. He's talking about, I don't know how it's going to play out exactly, but He's talking about those individuals, and again, this is really referring to like managers, that steward that Jesus spoke about earlier who have that greater responsibility because they've been given the greater privilege, of ministering the Word, managing the flock and so forth.

And He's saying that if they're not doing things the way they ought, it's not going to be perfect. They're not going to, in other words, God's not going to say, well done good and faithful servant. Doesn't mean they're not saved. We love to think of everybody getting saved and just being the recipient of great rewards, all of us, and all of us hearing the words, well done, good and faithful servant. I don't think that's the way it's going to be. In fact, Paul tells us in another section in his letter to the Corinthians, he says that there are some who will be saved, but they will lose everything.

They themselves will be saved, he says, but as a man escaping through the flames, everything that he built in life will go up in flames, although he himself will be saved. So, we have to understand, whether we're talking about judgment related to salvation, or judgment related to works that is not connected to salvation because we like to say, we're not saved through works were saved by grace, right? But that doesn't mean works don't come into play for Christians because they do. Not for salvation, but for reward or lack thereof.

And so, what is Jesus saying here? He's saying that those who have been given that responsibility to manage and feed the flock, need to do that with integrity and accuracy. And I've got to tell you something. As a teacher of the Bible, verses like this have challenged my peace of mind on more than one occasion. Because it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And that

doesn't mean that I'm terrified of Him. I know that He loves me. I know that He forgives me. But I also know that there are warnings given to believers. Not about losing their salvation, but about how we've lived our lives. Look at it on the screen, James chapter 3, verse 1.

James 3:1 (ESV)

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

Not many of you (James writes) should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

And this is one of the verses that's kept me up a couple of nights, I've got to tell you, in the last 38 years since I started teaching the Bible. There's a greater strictness. Why? Because there's a greater responsibility because you're representing the Lord or representing the truth of the Lord, and I'm not trying to dissuade you from like teaching Sunday school or doing a Bible study or anything like that, but we do go into it with sobriety, right? We do go into it with the proper attitude. We don't just go, eh, whatever.

But let's return here to the simple message that Jesus is trying to convey to us, and that is He's coming back. Do you know the essence of why we hold to the return of Jesus is given to us in, well, in many passages, but one of them is the words of angels. Let me show you this from Acts chapter 1. It says,

Acts 1:9-11 (ESV)

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

And when (Jesus) he had said these things, as they were looking on, (this is a great passage. It says) he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, (and these are angels) and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? (Look at this) This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

The Bible actually prophesies completely in line with this, that Jesus will come back in that same way. He went up in a cloud, He's going to come back with the clouds, and we even know, we actually even know from the Scripture where He's going to set foot when He returns. We know that. The Scripture gives it, and He's going to come back to the same place He left, which is the Mount of Olives. And so, when you read through the New Testament, you get the very distinct idea from the writers that they expected Jesus to come back at any time.

They believed His coming was imminent and you might read through the New Testament and go, well, I don't know, maybe they missed the boat on that one because it's been 2000 years. I mean, here they are talking about, and they would say things like His return is closer now than when we first believed.

Well, where is He? It's been a long time, and you could think, well, maybe these guys didn't know what they were talking about. Actually, Peter told us that that attitude would be something that people would grab onto, particularly in the last days. Look at this from 2 Peter chapter 3 he wrote, and he said,

2 Peter 3:3-4, 8-9 (ESV)

...scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

...scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." (But he goes on to say) But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (And that just simply means God's view on time is not the same as yours and mine. And he goes on to say, listen) The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, (What's actually going on here is that he's being) but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Why is God delaying the second coming of Jesus? Well, if He had come back in 1960, would you have been on board? How about in 1980? How about in 1990? He's delaying because He wants more people to be saved. He's delaying out of patience, and desiring that people would stop messing around and ignoring what

the Bible says. By the way, every Christmas we love to quote all those wonderful passages that talk about the coming of Messiah in His first advent, and they're great and I love reading them and quoting them, how He's going to be born in Bethlehem, and all the stuff that goes along.

Do you know there are more prophecies about His second coming than His first? There are more. And oh, His first was absolute, you think the second is going to be, is not? Oh, we're going to call that one off. Oh, no. Oh, no. It's going to happen just like He said it would happen. So, here's the question. This is the real elephant in the room. We'll put it on the screen as a form of a huge question.

Are You Ready for Christ's Return?

Are you ready for Christ's return? Simple as that. Are you ready? Are you ready for Him to come back? The Bible likes to use the picture of night and day to describe how people can potentially live their lives, and along with that are the pictures of darkness and light, and also the images of being asleep or awake.

And what Jesus tells us to do is to stay awake. Spiritually. To stay ready for His coming. Don't give in to the darkness. Don't live in the darkness. Live instead in the light of His presence and stay awake. And stay alert. And that means living in the full awareness of His return, at all times never losing sight of the fact that He could come back.

Were the early disciples wrong when they wrote in the Bible that Jesus could come back at any time? No. Because that's what Jesus told them. He says, you don't know. Isn't that what Jesus said? You don't know. You don't know the day or the hour. No man knows the day or the hour. Well, what does that leave you with? It leaves you with, well, He could come anytime. Could happen anytime. That's called the imminent return of Christ. His return is imminent, meaning He could come at any time. Could be today, could be tomorrow.

That's the point. You and I don't know exactly so we're told to be constantly on awareness or to have awareness that He could come at any time, and you see, if you stay aware, then you won't be surprised. It's not to say you'll know when He's going to come, but you won't be surprised. That's what Paul said when he wrote to the Thessalonians. Let me show you this. From 1 Thessalonians, I love this, chapter 5, he says,

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 (ESV)

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (Again, a thief doesn't broadcast when he's going to come. But) While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, (So this is written to you now, as believers. You're not in darkness.) for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

Can I focus your attention for just a moment on that very last word that he uses there? The word sober. He says, stay awake and be sober. I looked it up in the Greek and it means the exact same thing as it does in English. Means not drunk. But obviously there's more to it than just not being under the influence of alcohol or something like that. In fact, the New Living Translation (NLT), which I like to read from time to time, actually says be clear minded, instead of sober.

And I really like that translation because when you and I think of sobriety it's not just the absence of having alcohol or some other drug or stimulant or something in your system. It's being able to think. Being clear minded. And I think about all the things that can get in the way of being clear minded in my life.

Well, obviously, drinking and smoking weed and doing drugs and all the other stupid thing, those all obviously come to mind, of course. And don't you know that that's Satan's plan? That's what disappointed me so much when we started seeing pot shops come up, pop up all around Ontario.

I know that people voted it in. I know. I was still disappointed. I was ashamed. More than that, I was ashamed. Because I know what Satan's up to. He is

desperately trying to get people to not be clear minded. Because if they're not clear minded, they're not going to be able to think. And if they can't think, they're not going to open their heart to anything related to the Bible or be watchful or whatever. And this is just, good grief, you guys, this is just the enemy, okay? Let's not mix metaphors or talk about political this or that.

This is the work of the enemy, okay? It is the work, this is satanic attack on our area, right? That we now have pot shops all over the place, okay? I'm sorry. If you don't like that, it's just the fact of the matter. Because we are told to be sober minded, we're told to be clear minded and wait and be alert, and you can't do that if your mind is befuddled with all of these other chemicals. And those are the things that obviously come to mind. But you know what? It doesn't end there.

It's too easy just to say, well, if I didn't go to the liquor store or I didn't stop by the pot shop, I'm obviously keeping a clear mind because that doesn't necessarily follow. I think there are lots of things that the enemy can use to keep us focused on something other than the return of the Lord.

I've never been drunk in my life How's that for a weird thing? Don't think that I'm virtuous I just wasn't real crazy about puking on my shoes to be honest with you. I've never been drunk, and I've never been high at least on artificial substances.

But you know what? I have many, many, many, many times in my life not been clear minded. In fact, I have had the opposite of sobriety going on in my life on many occasions. No chemicals needed. Why? Because I got distracted. Many times with just life. Paul's pursuits, what I wanted to do, things of this world. Pursuits of this world that kept me from being alert. So, you can't just comfort yourself by saying, well, I never go to the liquor store or the pot shop, so we're all staying alert in Jesus. Not necessarily.

There are tons of things that we can get into that'll draw our hearts and minds away from a focus of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. I want to end with this passage from Hebrews chapter 10 on how you and I can stay connected. And he writes to the Hebrew Christians and he says,

Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)

...let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

...let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, (And that means doing what you're doing right here today) but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

We're to do this more and more this. This is the thing. Pastor Paul how do I stay on course? I'm supposed to stay alert. I'm supposed to stay focused. How do I do that? There it is right there. It's up to all of us. And we're to be encouraging one another, and I'm to encourage you and you're to encourage me to keep my focus on the imminent return of Jesus. He says not neglecting to meet together.

In other words, what we're doing, coming together, church, Bible study, hanging out with believers who are going to encourage you, build you up in the Word and so forth.

Don't neglect those things, but rather encourage one another when you come together, and all the more, as you know, that you know, that you know, that Jesus' return is closer than it was before. And that's one thing we know for sure. His return is closer now than it was yesterday, and regardless of exactly when it comes, we're closer now, so as we draw closer to that day let us encourage one another. I hope, I hope that when you come to church, or when you come to Bible study, or you come to whatever you come to, to encourage one another.

I hope that you come not just to receive, but to give, because there are people who show up and they need your encouragement. They need to be encouraged. From you. They need to hear from you. Hey man, you know, stay true, man. Keep your eyes on Jesus because people will come and they'll say, hey man, pray for me. Got this going on or whatever, and we do that.

We pray for people, and we want to pray for people. But we also want to exhort them. Say, well, meanwhile, let's not get high centered on this thing, so that you're sitting there spinning your wheels, right?

Let's stay on track. Let's stay on course. That's not a bad thing to say to each other. I need to hear it from you just as much as you need to hear it from me. So, I invite you to, if I start, if I'm talking about all these other things going on, I give you permission to say, hey Paul, stay on course. Keep your eyes on Jesus. He's coming back. Are you ready? Being sober minded, right? Clear headed. Can you think, right? We all need it, amen.