



DAY 24



ALERT

“Keep alert at all times. And pray that you might be strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand before the Son of Man.”

Luke 21:36

Alertness is not one of those qualities that is typically commended to us, either as a virtue or a fruit of the Spirit, in our pursuit of a life that is more like Christ. Perhaps this is because alertness is less about being like him, and more about being useful to him – as a full partner who is fully engaged in the spiritual battle being waged all around us.

In the previous verse, we are admonished to shun those indulgences that would sideline us from this battle; “Watch out! Don’t let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness, and by the worries of this life.”

A timely reminder to those of us who may not struggle with carousing and drunkenness, that anxiety can be an equally effective tool in the hands of an Enemy who would see us turned aside and removed from the field of battle just when we need most to be fully engaged.

Lord, help me to trust in you and to draw strength from your Word and the fellowship of others when the anxieties that beset me would dull my heart and threaten to sideline me from this battle.



And what are we to make of our Lord's encouragement to pray that we might be strong enough to "escape" the horrors that lie ahead? The larger context of this passage suggests that we should not imagine the kind of escape that involves running away, or being spared from the battle, but, rather, the kind of escape that is only achieved by fully engaging in the battle and coming out on the other side. Then we will be able to stand before the Son of Man, who himself escaped the power of the grave, not by avoiding it, but by coming out victorious on the other side. The former requires no strength at all, while the latter requires a strength that our Lord promises to give us if we ask him.

As I await his coming, what are the spiritual disciplines that will help me to maintain an active stance of readiness and alertness, focused and fully engaged in the work of his kingdom? Am I trying to tough this out on my own, or, even in the midst of a global pandemic, am I walking in community as a full partner with my Lord and with the brothers and sisters he has placed in my life?

Lord, give me strength to escape the trials that lie ahead, not by avoiding them, but by being one of those who fully engages in the battle and, by your grace, comes out on the other side.

– PAUL TUCKER –

