

The Commands of Yeshua ~ Part 22

In my last post, we explored Yeshua's calling us to His sheep, demonstrate the power of God, and pray that God would send more workers into the harvest. In this post, we will explore His commands to watch and pray; be ready for His return; and, not to worry about how to witness.

Calling ~ Part D

"Therefore, brothers, try even harder to make your being called and chosen a certainty. For if you keep doing this, you will never stumble." (2 Kefa 1:10)

7. Watch and Pray

"Stay awake, and pray that you will not be put to the test — the spirit indeed is eager, but human nature is weak." (Mark 14:38; also Luke 22:40)

This command was given to Yeshua's talmidim on the evening He was arrested prior to His execution. They were about to be tempted to deny knowing Yeshua, tempted to abandon Him to His enemies, tempted to flee instead of stay and fight, tempted to give in to their physical drowsiness and succumb to sleep. Yeshua knew they were about to face a whole series of temptations and so He exhorted them to watch and pray. But they did not. They *would* not. However willing they were in their minds, their bodies had more control; and as their eyelids closed, Yeshua's enemies drew nearer and nearer. Suddenly they awoke to fiery torches, gleaming spears and swords, temple henchmen, and pompous religious leaders all around, with Judas standing right in the middle. Each of the talmidim gave in to their cowardice and fled into the night, cowering in dark places for fear of their own lives.

It would be easy to dismiss this as a particular command given only to the talmidim, but the truth contained within it applies to every Believer. The fact of the matter is that our spirit is indeed willing and desires to follow Yeshua. We want to serve Him, obey Him, love Him, seek after Him, worship Him, and know Him intimately. But our flesh is weak. No matter how many times we make resolutions, rededications, or commitments, no matter how often we surrender to Yeshua's Lordship, we fail. The key to success is to watch and pray. When we fail to watch and pray, we allow our flesh to win over our spirit. Any follower of Yeshua must be ready for action, prepared for any occasion, alert and watching for any indication from the Master.

The command still stands: ***watch and pray***. Kefa says, ***"Stay sober, stay alert! Your enemy, the Adversary, stalks about like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*** (1 Kefa 5:8). Giving in to temptation is the quickest way to deny Yeshua, to leave the path of righteousness, to abandon spiritual loyalties, and to self-destruct. Sha'ul knew how important it was to stay alert and pray. He said, ***"Pray at all times, with all kinds of prayers and requests, in the Spirit, vigilantly and persistently, for all God's people."*** (Ephesians 6:18).

Yeshua warned that there would be times of great distress for Believers prior to His return. He told them the day would come, and that most people would be unprepared for it, so His followers were to ***"keep watch on yourselves, or your hearts will become dulled by carousing, drunkenness and the worries of everyday living, and that Day will be sprung upon you suddenly like a trap! For it will close in on everyone, no matter where they live, throughout the whole world. Stay alert, always praying that you will have the strength to escape all the things that will happen and to stand in the presence of the Son of Man."*** (Luke 21:34-36)

Application: What is your greatest temptation? What is the greatest threat to you stepping off the narrow road and onto the broad way? Guard your heart so that you will stand up under pressures to conform to the world and abandon your pursuit of godliness. Do you see yourself as one who is "watching and praying"? The benefit of a regular devotional time of prayer is that you become practiced being in the presence of God and He regularly has your undivided attention.

8. Be Ready

"So stay alert, because you don't know on what day your Lord will come. But you do know this: had the owner of the house known when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you too must always be ready, for the Son of Man will come when you are not expecting him." (Matthew 24:42-44)

Yeshua is coming back. This was His promise to those who follow Him and to those who don't. Unfortunately, too many Believers live like they believe He will not return during their lifetime. When we know company is coming to our home, we make the necessary preparations such as cleaning, cooking, clearing our schedules. But preparing for the coming of the Lord is more important.

Several parables Yeshua taught had to do with masters leaving on long journeys and returning to see how their servants had managed in their absence (Matthew 24:46, 50; 25:14; Mark 13:35; and Luke 12:36-47). In one sense Yeshua has gone on a long journey and will return to see how we have been managing without His physical presence. The difference, however, is that He has provided us with His Spirit to guide, protect, teach, and empower us to do His will in the meantime.

How and **when** He comes back is not important, but He **is** coming back. When He returns, each one of us will stand before Him to give an account of the stewardship of our lives, our gifts and talents. He alone is our Judge. He determines who has been faithful and who has not. We need to be ready!

Application: It is easy to become complacent and turn our interests to worldly pursuits and become distracted by worldly issues. Yeshua commands us to be ready, to be alert, and not to be distracted or have our attentions drawn away from kingdom matters. When Yeshua returns, when His Spirit moves, will He find us standing at our posts or shirking our responsibilities?

9. Don't Worry about How to Witness

"But when they bring you to trial, do not worry about what to say or how to say it; when the time comes, you will be given what you should say. For it will not be just you speaking, but the Spirit of your heavenly Father speaking through you." (Matthew 10:19-20)

This command relates to **being ready**. It also reveals to us that the Father has provided us with a way to share the Besorah wherever He sends us. Our confidence is not to be in our own abilities or in our own preparation and strategy for witnessing; it is to be completely in the Lord. In fact, Yeshua tells us that our presentation of the Besorah should be a natural and ordinary part of our life, something we should not even worry about. The best example of this is the story of the man born blind in Yochanan 9. He couldn't explain all the 'in's and out's' that Yeshua did, but he could certainly proclaim that ***"once I was blind, but now I see."***

God is not looking for a fancy talking, well-trained orator; He is looking for a person who loves Him and who is willing to share that love with others whenever God gives the opportunity to do so. Be prepared to share clearly and concisely. God will make opportunities available.

Application: Take time to put God's Word in your heart. Study to show yourself an approved worker for God. (See 2 Timothy 2:15) The degree to which you are prepared for service will determine your usefulness to God in His kingdom.

Remember always the words of Yeshua: ***"If you love me, you will keep my commands."*** (Yochanan 14:15)

In my next post, we will begin a new mini-series on the character traits that Yeshua expects us to possess concerning cautionary insights for us to avoid the pitfalls of fulfilling His calling.