

THE WATCHMAN

“O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel” (Ez. 33:7).

Just finished “Killing Lincoln” by Bill O’Reilly and Martin Dugard. Of the many lessons in the book with spiritual implications the story of John Parker rises to the surface in my mind. John Parker was the Secret Service agent assigned to protect President Lincoln on the night the president was killed. The book reveals Parker’s inexcusable dereliction of duty that night: *“John Parker gets thirsty. He is bored, and he can’t see the play. Taltavul’s saloon calls to him. Pushing his chair against the wall, he leaves the door to the state box unguarded and wanders outside.”* (P. 187)

Parker then invited Charles Forbes, the driver of Lincoln’s carriage, to enter the pub and have a few drinks. They are not in a hurry because the play will not be over for another two hours. Ironically, the president’s assassin, John Wilkes Booth, is seated not far away in the same pub. The killer is fortifying his resolve with a few more drinks. When Wilkes finally decides to do it, his task will be made much easier because the door to the president’s box is unlocked and unguarded.

Parker was a 34 year old former machinist from Virginia. He had been disciplined as an agent for swearing at a grocer, and later a supervisor. He was also accused of insulting a woman seeking police protection. Moreover he was charged with being drunk and disorderly at a house of prostitution. The madam testified that he had been living at the whore house for 5 weeks before the incident. Even back then, however, the “Good Old Boy” system was alive and well. Parker was quickly acquitted of any wrong doing (p. 179).

Two weeks later Parker was accused of sleeping on duty, and 90 days after that he was accused of using profane language to a private citizen. Again, both charges were dismissed. On the night President Lincoln was assassinated Parker showed up late, which was a standard pattern in his behavior. When Parker heard that the president had been assassinated, instead of reporting for duty he laid down his drink and vanished into the night. The next morning Parker showed up at the Washington Police Station with a known prostitute. Formal charges were pressed against him, but once again he was acquitted.

Three years later he was finally booted out for “gross neglect of duty” and went to work as a carpenter and machinist. He died of pneumonia June 28, 1890 at the age of 60 (p. 289).

While the dereliction of duty by John Parker was a tragedy, it pales into insignificance by comparison with the responsibility God assigned to Ezekiel. If Ezekiel failed in his job thousands would die and a whole city would be destroyed.

The contrast between the role of Ezekiel and modern preachers again reflects a great dichotomy. Ezekiel warned of physical death while today we warn of eternal separation from God.

Paul wrote that “it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). Even though Jesus has ascended to heaven He has still assigned to “every man his work” (Mk. 13:34). It matters not whether the Lord has intrusted you with many talents or few, He will still hold you accountable. It is still required in stewards that a man be found faithful. Someday we will all appear at the Judgement to give account for the deeds done in the body whether good or evil (2 Cor. 5:10).

If the watchman sounds the alarm and no one responds, their blood is on their own hands. If the watchman fails to warn them, however, their blood will be upon his hands (Ez. 33:5, 6).

No one lives to himself, and no one dies to himself (Rom. 14:7). Invariably our lives are interconnected with others. Some need warning, some need comfort, some need support, but everyone needs patience (1 Thess. 5:14). With this in mind, **“We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification” (Rom. 15:1, 2).**