

## ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER

**"Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth."** Isaiah 21:6

G-o-o-o-d morning Vietnam! This iconic introduction, followed by the unmistakable guitar of Jimi Hendrix playing *All Along the Watchtower* over the airwaves, was the wakeup call from American Forces Radio to usher in another day in the Nam. Many of us became familiar with the watchtowers that permeated the landscape of Vietnam. The towers were built in rear areas and flown out by Boeing CH-47 Chinook Helicopters, or similar heavy lifting aircraft, to create elevated observation points at strategic locations throughout the country. I saw many of these man-made landmarks during my two terms of duty. Historically, we recognize SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD, but these prominent towers, produced in copious numbers, could have been christened as the EIGHTH WONDER.

Though there were many, I became intimately familiar with only two. The first was located on Hill 190, that was occupied by Lima Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 26<sup>th</sup> Marines. **The tower stood proudly next to our CO's command bunker.** It was adorned with a transmitting and receiving antenna, and was equipped with a state-of-the-art starlight scope. There was also a well-stocked arsenal of weaponry awaiting the grunts who were assigned a watch detail upon their entering the trapdoor in the floor. You should never embrace a false sense of security while serving in a war zone, but you always felt confident that you were out of reach of the enemies rocket teams while on the tower.

The other tower was at a remote outpost garrison. I called the outpost, Camp Custer. A ragtag, undisciplined army could have easily overrun our perimeter if she were manned by anyone other than United States Marines. The garrison was square shaped with a river tributary on one side and a village on another. For the sake of visibility, there was partially cleared vegetation to extend the distance to the tree lines on the other two sides. There was a sandbag wall about three or four bags high surrounding our positions. There were fighting positions at crudely constructed bunkers in each of the four corners, equipped with .30 caliber machine guns, and the perimeter was enclosed with a vast amount of concertina wire and Claymore mines. The tower stood in the center of the garrison alongside an 81mm mortar pit. The tower could have easily been taken out by a well-aimed or even a lucky shot from a B-40 or RPG rocket, neutralizing its effectiveness. Nobody stood watch inside the tower unless it was raining. The grunts preferred the very top of the roof that was partially protected by a layer of sandbags. The roof also sported an awesome M2 Browning .50 caliber machine gun on a tripod, **and a number of M72 LAWs.** You still felt a bit vulnerable.

Two towers, two different scenarios, but in both cases there was only one objective. **"Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth."** It is common knowledge that if you have ever served in a heightened state of alertness, or the state of active attention by high sensory awareness, you may never come down. Perhaps you feel **that you haven't come down and remain a watchman on the tower. That's okay, and presents to us a third scenario.** The Lord admonishes us to be watchmen on the tower. *"But watch thou in all things..."* 2 Timothy 4:5

The word *"watch"* means to be sober, to be calm and collected in spirit, to be temperate and circumspect. It is a command. It is urgent that we comply with His orders. We are warriors in His spiritual militia. We have real enemies. There are casualties everywhere to prove the seriousness of the spiritual warfare. This word speaks of alertness. I stood watch through many lonely hours while serving with the Marines in Vietnam. While the rest of our company slept, I diligently watched for any signs of the enemy. The men rested knowing that someone was watching to alert them in case of an enemy attack. You had to be sober on a watch. The life of every man in the company depended on the watchman. Paul expresses urgency in this command.

The words *"all things"* give the scope of our watch area. Any area of our lives that we leave unwatched is a weak link in the chain. Someone has said that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. Strong men have fallen because they left one small area of their lives unguarded. They were overconfident because they minimized the risk in that small area of their lives. The admonition is to *"watch."* How do we watch? I want to suggest the following ways:

WE ARE TO WATCH WITH ENDURANCE. Paul says, *"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions..."* The words *"endure afflictions"* means to suffer hardships and troubles. We are under orders to endure. One of the great comforts we have in times of affliction where endurance is necessary is to rest in the truth of Romans 8:28: *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* God can take hardships and troubles and use them for good.

WE ARE TO WATCH WITH A WEAPON IN HAND. There was never a time in the village when a weapon was out of our reach. You carried your rifle everywhere, even to take a dump off the side of a paddy dike. There is a great story in the Book of Nehemiah. They built the walls of Jerusalem with one hand, and they handled the sword with the other. The Word of God is our Sword. There are four things that this Sword will do for us when we are afflicted. The Word will give enlightenment, give cleansing, strengthen our faith, and give peace and comfort.

WE ARE TO WATCH WITH CAUTION FOR THE ROARING LION. Peter says, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."* 1 Peter 5:8. He is our adversary, which means, he is our opponent in this spiritual warfare. He is seeking those who are not watching. They are careless watchmen who are not alert. He catches them off guard.

Paul says, *"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions ...."* Are we faithful watchers on the tower? Are we alert? Are we at our post of duty? If the Lord came today, would He find us watching, or by surprise in a deep slumber?

*"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching.... And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."* Luke 12:37-40

*"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men (grow up), be strong."* 1 Corinthians 16:13

*"If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."* Revelation 3:3

Semper Fi

*Chaplain Ron*



Tower on Hill 190



Chaplain Ron on the Tower at Camp Custer