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***AWAKE Church!***  
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**David Alsobrook**

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**AWAKE, CHURCH!**

David Alsobrook

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## AWAKE AND ARISE!

***"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14).***

Paul has heard God speaking something which I believe He is repeating in our day. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." At a surface glance this call appears to be addressed to one particular person or group. Looking more closely we can observe that there are actually two calls of God spoken to two classes of people.

The first call is uttered to those who are sleeping. "Awake thou that sleepest," God says. A sleeping person is not to be confused with a dead person. There is a radical difference. Although a sleeping person may appear dead from a distance, there is occasional movement and sound of breathing. A dead person may lie in the same position as a sleeping person, but a corpse will exhibit no sign of life whatsoever.

"Comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:13), we can understand that the sleeper symbolizes a believer who is spiritually quickened and has the life of God in his spirit. He has been born of God. The problem is this: the living person has fallen asleep and desperately needs to be awakened.

The Father's *first call* is to such a one as this - the sleeping saint. "Awake you who sleep ... *and Christ shall give you light.* "

The believer already dwells in the kingdom of light (see 1 Peter 2:9; Colossians 1:12-13). One may ask, "How is it, then, that Christ shall give him light?" The answer can be seen in that a person who is in a well-lit room can find himself in darkness simply by closing his eyes. This explains why so many Christians are in darkness; for no one sleeps with his eyes open.

When the believer awakens, opening his eyes, the light surrounding him enters his spirit afresh. Christ gives the awakened sleeper the light of revelation. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.... The entrance of thy words giveth light.. . " (Psalm 119:18, 130). Revelation knowledge of the Word dawns upon the understanding, giving him a new awareness. The things of God take on a new meaning.

The *second call* of God is addressed to those who are dead. "Arise from the dead." The unbeliever is positionally located in the kingdom of darkness. He is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). When he calls upon the Lord he is brought "out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). A spiritual resurrection as real as Lazarus' rising from the dead occurs in a miraculous moment of time! With the darkness of the tomb behind him,

imagine how Lazarus felt - blinking his eyes in the bright sunshine! Christ gives the newborn in the kingdom of God *the light of salvation*. The divine call to the world is to arise out of death (a spiritual resurrection).

Although a believer is spiritually alive unto God (see Romans 6:11) he may be lulled into sleep by weariness, monotony, or carnality. In his inactive state he is no more useful to the Lord than a dead sinner, for both of them lie in a prone, still position. It is only as the saint awakens and starts about the Father's business that he finds purposefulness in serving God. A SLEEPING CHRISTIAN IS NO MORE EFFECTIVE IN ADVANCING THE KINGDOM OF GOD THAN A DEAD SINNER. It is imperative that he awaken!

Foremost in the Father's heart is the awakening of the Church. This call even precedes His call to the world in darkness. At first this statement may seem false; after all, isn't the world's salvation His dearest objective? It is clearly obvious that reconciling men unto Himself is the purpose for which the Son was sent. It must be seen, however, that if the world is to be reconciled there must be an instrument through which the world will hear the Gospel. This instrumentality is the body of Christ living on earth. The only time the world hears the Word is when the Church speaks. A sleeping Church is a silent Church. Only as the members of Christ's body awake will the lost hear the Word of God. When the Church arrives at the place God would have us we'll win the world!

It is interesting to note that Jesus did not pray directly for the world in John 17:9. He expressly directed His intercession for those who follow Him. " . . . I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me..... This pattern of prayer has not changed. Christ "made intercession for the transgressors" on the cross (see Isaiah 53:12). Since He arose from the dead and sat down at the right hand of God, our Lord Jesus has been interceding *for the Church* the past nineteen centuries (see Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). Christ realized that as the Church opens her eyes she will beam forth the light of the Gospel to those in the shadow of death. It is for this reason that God first calls "Awake" before "Arise." The believer does not need to be resurrected, since he is alive; he needs to be awakened. The sinner, on the other hand, must be spiritually resurrected before he can know newness of life.

## IT IS HIGH TIME TO AWAKE

***"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11).***

Paul could tell time. Very few today have an understanding pertaining to the divine timetable for those upon whom the end of the age has come. Peter also instructs, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7).

The apostle said to the believers at Rome, "It is high time to awake." Often after oversleeping I have looked at the clock to see the hour for work well upon me. A quick glance caused me to know what time it was: HIGH TIME to awake. As it is in the natural, so it is in the spiritual (see 1 Corinthians 15:46). Those who can hear what the Spirit is saying realize the hour is far spent. Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). Paul identified the Christian community living upon earth as being "of the day" (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Jesus further taught, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" (John 11:9), suggesting a limited time in which one can do the works of God. Christ transferred His commission to us when He said, ". . . as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). How wonderful it would be if we were as diligent in the great harvest as was our Example.

*Do you realize what time it is?* Sleeping during the harvesting hours is a characteristic of the slothful servant. Solomon said, ". . . but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame" (Proverbs 10:5). Yet while the harvest is white and ready for the laborers (see John 4:35) the Church snores on, apparently unaware of the great task at hand. When Christ said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few" (Matthew 9:37), He was not implying that the Christians are few; only the laborers are few. A laborer is a Christian who is awake. Unlike others, he is not sleeping on the job. When Jesus further instructed us, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:38), Christ was actually telling us to pray for God to awaken the Church. Much of the harvest has been irreparably lost, for the hour to put in the sickle is past and we one day must give an account to God for our wasteful sleep.

Not only are we to awaken to the harvest but, as this text (Romans 13:11) suggests, we must be watching for the Lord's appearing. Paul admonishes..... it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our

salvation nearer than when we believed." "Our salvation" refers to the ultimate outcome of our faith - the redemption of our bodies. Our spirit was justified at the new birth. Our soul is being sanctified in our walk with God. Our body will be glorified when Christ appears. Each day "our salvation" draws nearer than it was when we first believed. Each passing day brings us that much closer to His appearing. We find the term "salvation" being applied to His second coming in other passages of Scripture.

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). At His first coming Jesus was offered one time for our sins. When He appears the second time it will not be to deal with sin but rather to minister the full outcome of our salvation to us. " . . . when he shall appear, we shall be like him . . . " (1 John 3:2).

Paul expressed this thought also to the saints at Thessalonica. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us [at His first coming], that, whether we wake [physically live] or sleep [physically die], we should live together with him [at His second coming]" (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10). "To obtain salvation" does not speak of the initial act of our salvation (the spiritual rebirth), but of the ultimate deliverance of our entire life. It speaks of being completely transformed from living in the earthly, natural plane to living in the spiritual, glorified plane entirely.

To qualify for this transformation the condition is quite clear: " . . . it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer..... We must be spiritually awake to be ready for this event. The verse we quoted from Hebrews agrees, " . . . unto them that look for him . . . " (Hebrews 9:28). One who is sleeping is not looking - for no one sleeps with his eyes open.

Do not misunderstand our teaching at this point. We are not saying that a sleeping Christian is lost even should he be found sleeping at the second appearing and miss the bridal feast (see Matthew 25:11-12). The Scriptures teach that an unprepared believer can still wash his robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb during the Tribulation period (see Revelation 7:13-14).

The Master's admonition for us should be taken seriously: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

## THEY ALL SLUMBERED AND SLEPT

***"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept" (Matthew 25:1-5).***

I suppose the parable of the ten virgins has more interpretations than verses. This is a portion of Scripture I have prayed over many times. The following observations are my impressions from this passage, " . . . and I think also that I have the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 7:40). We will not study the entire parable but only that part which is connected within the scope of this study.

Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to ten virgins. A virgin, in the Scripture, is often symbolic of the believer. A believer is one who has been purified by the blood of Christ. Paul confirms this view in 2 Corinthians 11:2, in which he refers to the church as "a chaste virgin."

"Their lamps" speaks of the recreated human spirit transformed from darkness to light. "The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly" (Proverbs 20:27). Out of the Holy Spirit is born the human spirit. The spirit of man is recreated anew in Christ Jesus. The reborn spirit gives light to the believer, guiding him as he goes forth to meet the bridegroom (Jesus). A candle or a lamp could be used interchangeably in many cases.

Out of these ten virgins we find that five were wise and the other half foolish. The dividing line was drawn in accordance with the amount of oil each virgin took. The wise took more than the foolish. It has often been taught that a foolish virgin had no oil whatsoever. This is not entirely accurate. The foolish virgins must have had some oil in their lamps or their lamps would not have burned at all. Notice in the eighth verse, "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." This was spoken "at midnight" (v. 6), which was several hours after they originally "went forth to meet the bridegroom." When verse 3 states they "took no oil with them" it refers to extra oil in an additional "vessel" because "the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps" (v. 4). A foolish virgin only took her lamp, but a wise virgin took an extra measure of oil in



another vessel along with her lamp. The question, then, would be concerning the meaning of the extra vessel with oil.

According to the Word, the vessel could easily be a symbol of the human body of the believer. In his writings the Apostle Paul referred to "earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7) in direct application to the natural bodies of the saints.

The wise virgins not only had oil in their lamps, but also had extra measures of oil filling each of their vessels.

The oil is often used as a type of the Holy Spirit (see Leviticus 14:17; James 5:14).

With these truths in mind let us now look at the parable focusing on the hidden meaning Christ taught. The foolish virgin represents that believer who is only born of the Spirit. The wise virgin is that Christian who is filled with the Spirit. The saddest part of the story is *not* that the foolish virgins were forbidden entrance to the marriage feast. The most saddening aspect of this whole parable is that BOTH kinds of Christians, including those who had received the baptism with the Spirit, *were sleeping rather than watching!* Christ excludes no one when He says, "While the bridegroom tarried, they *all* slumbered and slept" (v. 5). It is within our grasp to perhaps understand the foolish virgins sleeping. What is hard to justify is the fact that the wise virgins also slept. Evidently this saddened the heart of the Lord, for He concluded the parable exhorting, "*Watch* therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (v. 13).

Traveling across the nation we minister to many groups and often find the attitude that suggests, "We're it - we've arrived." No wonder, then, that this type of Christian drifts off to sleep. God instructed Israel to gather fresh manna daily. If they overslept the manna melted on the ground before they had a chance to gather it. If they tried to live on yesterday's manna, due to laziness, it bred worms and stank (see Exodus 16). We must be ever pressing in for more of God! Spiritual sleep strikes at any point in a person's progress. Nobody ever gets beyond the possibility of relapse.

Spirit-filled Christians often ask, "I have received the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Why doesn't the power of God operate in my life?" We often fail to notice that Jesus said, "But ye shall receive power, *after* that the Holy Ghost is come upon you . . . " (Acts 1:8). What we often overlook is that word *after!* And for some of us it's a long time after!!



The Scriptures teach us why a Spirit-baptized believer may still lack the power of God. The wise virgins had oil in their vessels yet they slept right along with the foolish virgins. Isaiah prophetically spoke to the Church, saying, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion..." (Isaiah 52:1). We know that Zion was the little hill where David pitched his tent. At the tabernacle of David there was no veil separating the ark of the covenant from the people. They worshipped with singing, shouting, and dancing. David himself had danced all the way from the house of Obed-edom to Zion where he pitched his tent. Zion speaks of the renewed Church. Traditional Christians would not have enjoyed the worship at Zion. Zion speaks of the Spirit-filled community of believers. Yet notice that with all the clapping and shouting Zion sleeps. "Awake, Zion!" Isaiah cries. The Spirit speaks today, "Awake, Church!"

In the natural after one awakens he dresses for the day. "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments..... You can only put on strength AFTER YOU AWAKEN. So we see from this verse that a *sleeping Christian is a weak Christian*. It doesn't matter if he has oil in his vessel; if he's asleep he's weak. "Strength" here speaks of the power of God. Only after a believer awakens can he enter into that power.

Isaiah's twice-uttered "Awake" speaks prophetically to the two time periods of restoration in the Church Age. The first call to awake speaks to the early Church. The second call is addressed to the latter Church. You are living in the time of the second call. As part of the latter Church, will you awake and enter into the power that shall be revealed? The Church Age will finish in greater power than what it began with on the Day of Pentecost. Haggai foresaw the Church as two houses, comparing them with the two temples built by Solomon and rebuilt by Zerubbabel. The old men could remember Solomon's temple from their childhood. The rebuilt structure was not nearly as magnificent and beautiful. The old men wept. At the same time the young men who had been born during the Babylonian captivity thought this rebuilt temple was a tremendous sight and so they raised a great shout. At the same time there was loud weeping and jubilant shouting (see Ezra 3:12-13). Haggai spoke to the older men, "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory [Solomon's temple]? and how do ye see it [the rebuilt temple] now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" (Haggai 2:3). Beloved, when I was first baptized with the Holy Spirit and began to flow with God I was like these young men. I had never seen anything so great and shouted with a great shout. As I grew and matured in the Lord and started looking in the Word, especially Acts, I saw how far behind we are as compared with the early Church. We are not seeing whole cities turn to God and entire regions shaken by the Gospel. The miracles they had flowing were of such magnitude that great fear was on the people. By and large the latter Church (Christians living now) is in our eyes

in comparison as nothing. Haggai promises, "The glory of this latter house [the end-time Church ] shall be greater than of the former [the early Church], saith the Lord of hosts . . . " (Haggai 2:9).

I believe we will begin to enter into the greater glory as we awaken now at the close of the age. We are living in the end-times. Whenever I have to be up at an early hour it is my custom to set the alarm clock. The unpleasant "bzzzzzzz" is usually not appreciated as it disturbs my sleep. Nevertheless, when I arrive on time it is worth all the unpleasantness. Joel, the restoration prophet, speaks to those in the Church Age: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and *sound an alarm* . . . " (Joel 2:1). Those who heed this call and awaken will rise to new power and glory. They will occupy a place in God's end-time army which Ezekiel foresaw (see Ezekiel 37:10). An army is awakened by reveille - "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion..... There are soldiers, mighty men with powerful ministries, asleep everywhere. Many wonderful ministries are dormant at this hour due to spiritual sleep. May the trumpet blow and the alarm sound! ". . . *wake up the mighty men*. . . "(Joel 3:9).

There are many Christians, however, who will not heed this call. They will turn off the alarm and go back to sleep. At the judgment seat of Christ the words of the prophet Amos will be directed toward them. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion . . . " (Amos 6:1). It will be a sad day for the sleeping saint.

There is a very special blessing for the awakened believer at the close of the age. Isaiah speaks:

***"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:1-3).***

A mistake often made in traditional church circles is to look only at the end-time prophecies which speak of the evil that will increase as the age draws to a close. Sin, earthquakes, rebellion, etc., are majored on as signs of the times. While much of this is the teaching of Scripture, this view represents only half of the picture. It will be the Church's finest hour. Daniel speaks of this time period and says..... but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Daniel 11:32). Solomon saw the Church as "terrible as an army with banners [a mighty army]" (Song of Solomon 6:10). At the very close of this dispensation Jesus will present to Himself a GLORIOUS CHURCH (see Ephesians 5:27). "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that

the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed . . . " (Amos 9:13). This speaks of a harvest which has never before been equaled!

Isaiah speaks to the end-time Church saying, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee." This signifies a new power and glory for all who will arise! They will radiate "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). We will go from the present glory into a greater glory, "from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18), and will enter into a new dimension with God!

The exact opposite will be going on in the world system at the same time. Isaiah continues, "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people..... The unsaved will face a terrible time just ahead on God's calendar. They will find themselves groping in darkness, unable to find their way..... but the LORD shall arise upon thee [the renewed Church], and his glory shall be seen upon thee." As a result of His glory being seen on us " . . . the Gentiles [symbolic for the unconverted] shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

The Word tells us here that while things get worse for the world they will become better for the Zion of this day. As a result of seeing the blessings of God upon us many of the kingdom of darkness will see a great light and be translated into the kingdom of God! Yes, great things are ahead for all who awake!

## THE ROCK WHO WAS A REED

Jesus knew His hour had come. The grim prospect of bearing the sin of the whole human race weighed heavily upon His shoulders. The righteous nature shrank from being made sin for us (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). It was for this hour, however, that He had come into the world (see John 12:27).

We often forget the human side of the Saviour. He felt weakness and perhaps even the inability to carry out the Father's plan. It was for this reason that Christ departed to the Mount of Olives to a place named Gethsemane. The Eleven accompanied Christ and He said to eight of them, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder" (Matthew 26:36).

He took His three most ardent followers, who were destined to become pillars of the Church, and went further into the garden. To Peter, James, and John He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and *watch with me*" (Matthew 26:38). It is implied in this verse that Jesus needed their intercessory support just as Moses had once needed Aaron and Hur to stay up his hands (see Exodus 17:12). Where Moses' helpers succeeded, however, Jesus' disciples failed. Jesus had to bear the burden of His hour alone.

Let me quote from the Gospel writers' phrases which depict the great emotional agony Jesus suffered:

***"And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy" (Matthew 26:37).***

***"And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy... And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground..." (Mark 14:33, 35).***

***"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44).***

So great was the task before Him that He " . . . prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him" (Mark 14:35). We can see where Jesus had often borne the burdens of the disciples. In His hour of need they failed to reciprocate the blessing of burden-bearing. He faced His struggle all alone. It was a crisis more real than any we face. He surely felt totally abandoned upon the cross when He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

There were a total of three periods of prayer in the garden. His trusted three did not watch in prayer with Him (see Matthew 26:40, 42, 44). When He came to them the first time, the second time, and the third time He found them sleeping on each occasion. His appeals to them for prayer went unheeded. The weariness of their flesh overcame them. The unselfishness of Christ was displayed, for His concern was not so much for His needs, but rather for their spiritual edification. He knew that they too would be tried. One in particular, Simon Peter, would be sifted like wheat (see Luke 22:31). It was especially to Peter that Christ urged prayerfulness:

***"And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:37-38).***

*"And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping. . . . "* I suspect they are not the only disciples who were caught sleeping when the Master came to them! In a spiritual sense there have been many times when I too was sleeping when Jesus came by the Spirit to bless me. I was too spiritually insensitive to heed His still, small voice. Only the judgment seat of Christ will reveal what great avenues of service were forever passed by due to spiritual slothfulness. *" . . . he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame" (Proverbs 10:5).*

*" . . . and saith unto Peter, Simon . . . "* There is a tremendous spiritual lesson here. He said unto Peter, "Shnon..... Peter was the name Jesus gave this Galilean fisherman. He was only known as Simon before Jesus met him. Luke records, "Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) . . . " (Luke 6:14). Everyone knows that Peter literally means *a rock*. Few have stumbled upon the meaning of Simon. When you see what Simon means you will better understand the contrast Christ gave this disciple when He renamed him Peter. Simon means *a reed*! Isn't this noteworthy? Christ named the reed a rock! A reed is weak and easily bent by the blowing winds. It cannot support much weight and is not strong. A rock, on the other hand, is strong.

Before Jesus came into his life he was only a reed - shifting, weak, compromising, and overcome by fleshly habits. One day Christ looked at Simon and said, "Follow me, and I will *make you* . . . " (Matthew 4:19). Christ was making this reed into a rock.

We could interpret "[He] saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou?" as "He said unto Rock, `Reed, sleepest thou? "

In a figurative sense each one of us is a Simon Peter. We are a reed-rock. According to our reborn spirit we are a rock. " . . . Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). According to our flesh, however, we are a reed that is easily blown. Paul distinguished between these two natures. Concerning his spiritual nature he said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Contrasting his lower nature he conceded, "For I know that in me (that *is, in my flesh,*) dwelleth no good thing.. . ." (Romans 7:18). Believers all through the ages have known the struggle between flesh and spirit. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). "Spirit" in this verse should not be capitalized, according to many scholars, for Paul was not referring to the Holy Spirit but to the believer's spirit.

I am a Simon Peter, weak and strong, reed and rock, lower nature and new creation. This does not mean, however, that I cannot live a victorious life. The secret is to bring THE FLESH INTO SUBJECTION TO THE SPIRIT. This is the purpose of prayer, study of the Word, and other spiritual disciplines. They enable us to be spiritually, rather than carnally, minded.

Jesus reminds Peter of his fleshly weaknesses when He addresses him as Simon. Allow me to paraphrase Mark 14:37-38 further:

***"And he came to them and found them sleeping, and he said unto Rock, `Reed, why are you of all people sleeping? I am amazed that you cannot pray for even an hour! Why, Reed, you shouldn't be sleeping; you should be praying. Otherwise you will slip and fall when you are tempted. It is true that the spirit part of you (the rock nature) truly is ready and willing to die with me as you said a few hours ago. But the flesh part of you (the reed nature) is weak and unless you bring the flesh into subjection you will deny me when you are tried.' "***

In the body of Christ today there is much accent on what we are in our recreated spirit (more than conquerors, joint-heirs, seated in heavenly places, etc.). This is the Word and I teach these truths often. There is very clearly, though, a need to see that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7). Many who have sat under overcomer truths have later discarded them when faced with real-life pressures. Unable to correct a difficulty in their walk they reject the truths of victory. The problem does not lie with the truths themselves but rather with only a portion of the truth being presented. We must learn that we have to apply the cross to our flesh.



Jesus seemed surprised that Peter could not pray an hour. It must have been the first of many such surprises! In fact, the Lord is probably surprised when someone does pray an hour! It is interesting that Christ expected the disciples to be able to pray for long periods before they received the baptism with the Holy Spirit. How much more does Christ expect Spirit-filled believers to pray for hours regularly.

In a restricted sense Jesus Himself was a reed-rock. His spirit delighted in doing the will of the Father. His natural makeup shuddered at the cup the Father gave Him to drink. Nevertheless, by prayer and spiritual discipline, He was able to say, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matthew 26:42). Jesus prevailed when He was tried because He aligned His emotions to the Father's will. Peter failed to exercise spiritual devotion and thus succumbed to the flesh. He slept when he should have prayed.

Samson is a type of the carnal Christian. He evidently believed he could entertain carnal appetites and retain spiritual blessings. It was while he was sleeping on Delilah's lap that the Philistines cut his hair (see Judges 16:19). *He lost his anointing while he slept.*

The church at Corinth slumbered in carnal sleep. The apostolic exhortation to them sounded an alarm. "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (1 Corinthians 15:34). The Greek word for awake here means to actively arouse one from a drunken stupor. This involves a vigorous shaking. The Greek for awake in other New Testament passages we have considered is a more gentle word. Some of God's people have been drugged into a carnal sleep. They need a vigorous shaking. Such was the church at Corinth. Others have been lulled into a state of drowsy sleep and need only to be mildly awakened. This is the Greek word used for awake to the churches at Ephesus and Rome (see Ephesians 5:14; Romans 13:11).

" . . . drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags" (Proverbs 23:21). The Scriptures speak of the robe of righteousness, the garment of praise, the best robe, and beautiful garments (see Isaiah 52:1; 61:3, 10; Luke 15:22). Paul exhorts us to put on humility, longsuffering, love, etc. (see Colossians 3:12-14). The tragedy is we fall asleep and the moths go to work. When we awaken we find that our "garments are moth-eaten" (James 5:2). Have you ever had holes in your love? We must not allow ourselves, under any circumstances, to drift off to sleep.



## SLEEPING SHEPHERDS BEGET SLEEPING SAINTS

When we look all around us and see sleeping saints there is a reason for it which we cannot overlook. The ancient prophet cried..... like people, like priest . . . " (Hosea 4:9). God's people slumber because the ministries of the Word are not sounding the alarm. Once again the prophets speak a timely word for preachers across our land. "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isaiah 58:1). There are very few who will dare to upset the ecclesiastical applecart. Occasionally we find one here, one there who will lift up his voice like a trumpet. The Old Testament prophets foresaw much of what would transpire during the age of grace. Once again Isaiah speaks:

***"All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter" (Isaiah 56:9-11).***

"All ye beasts of the field" speaks of every kind of demon in the world. "Beasts" symbolize evil spirits often in the Word. Jesus said, "The field is the world. . . " (Matthew 13:38).

"Come to devour" is an example of divine sarcasm. God doesn't want beasts to devour His flock, but there is no defense to withstand them. The shepherds are asleep. "Devour" is typical of satanic forces and of Satan himself who "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

" . . . yea, all ye beasts in the forest." Twice in this verse we see the phrase "all ye beasts" and it speaks of every imaginable kind of satanic spirit. Evil forces are continually coming against the Church today. The thieves are stealing from us what rightfully belongs to us. Individual Christians all over the land are plagued by fear, evil, and torment.

The blame for the flock's suffering lies squarely with the watchmen (ministries) in the body of Christ. The watchmen have abandoned their responsibilities. Isaiah explains, "His watchmen are blind..... This is to say that as in Eli's day when there was no open vision (see 1 Samuel 3:1) there is no revelation knowledge of the Word in operation in many ministries..... anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see" (Revelation 3:18).

" . . . they are all ignorant..... These ministries are unwittingly tools with which the enemy destroys God's heritage. Shallow in the Scriptures, they cannot impart truth to the flock. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge . . . " (Hosea 4:6). It is the shepherd's responsibility to feed the flock (see 1 Peter 5:2). One way so many pastors and evangelists are "ignorant" is in direct connection with spiritual gifts. "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant" (1 Corinthians 12:1). (I am using the term "shepherds" as representative always of all the fivefold ministries as listed in Ephesians 4:11.)

" . . . they are all dumb dogs..... The word "dumb" means speechless. This explains why "they cannot bark" or cannot, as Paul exhorted Titus, " . . . speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Titus 2:15). To "bark" would also include the forcible resisting of Satan in Jesus' name, chasing him away from the sheep. These are a few of the responsibilities of any Word ministry in the body of Christ.

Don't think these watchmen can do nothing. There are a few functions at which they are specially skilled. They are very capable of "sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber." These words picture idleness, laziness, and slothfulness. They denote a lack of genuine care for the people. Those who are called to a Word ministry will face a much stricter judgment when we stand before Christ. This is why James warns us "My brethren, be not many masters [literally, teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1). "Condemnation" speaks of judgment. As a teacher of the Word I will one day give an account to God of everything I have taught and the way I have fulfilled my ministry. This is an awesome feeling and produces a reverential fear of God.

Not only are the sleeping saints unaware that Satan approaches while the ministries fail to watch, they are also unaware that the enemy will not only come to devour but also to deceive. There are "false brethren" (see 2 Corinthians 11:26) among us due to a satanic seeding of the field.

***"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way" (Matthew 13:24-25).***

Tares look like wheat and can often be mistaken for wheat. The counterfeit looks enough like the genuine as to be thought genuine. Many are fooled.

The tares at first looked like wheat. As the growing season continued, however, the wheat brought fruit and the tares did not (v. 26). The grain only appeared on the real wheat. Jesus said..... by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20).

Since we were not alert enough to guard against the enemy's advances we must now tolerate the tares all around us. This seems to be the intended meaning of the rest of the parable:

***"So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matthew 13:27-30).***

As we have seen all along these pages, there are disastrous results of sleeping spiritually. While men slept the enemy sowed false believers among the real. It is not the Lord's fault that there are so many hypocrites in the Church. It's ours - we've been sleeping at our posts.

## ***In Closing***

### LET US WATCH

There are many dangers of spiritual sleep as we have seen in this book. There are beautiful blessings for staying alert in the kingdom of God. After analyzing the dangers alongside the blessings anyone would prefer the blessings. There is a condition to meet. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:6). There are two phrases in particular to draw out of this verse. One deals with the negative side - what we are not to do. The other deals with the positive side - what we should do. LET US NOT SLEEP is the negative thing that we must be sure *not* to do. LET US WATCH is the positive aspect and is something we must be careful we do. "As do others" denotes that there will be those who go right on sleeping. Don't let them influence you!

*To watch* involves walking circumspectly, occupying till Jesus comes, carrying out the will of God, and guarding against spiritual weariness, monotony, and carnality. To save space please look up these references on your own: Ephesians 5:15-16; Luke 19:13; and Jude 20, 21. *To watch* means to be continually "*Looking unto Jesus* the author and finisher of our faith . . . " (Hebrews 12:2).

Let the words of Christ ring in your heart (Mark 13:35-37):

***"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all,***

***Watch. "***

**Don't let this book die.**

**Pass it along to a friend.**