

Aroused from Sleep (Ephesians 5:6–18)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (2/14/2021)

Introduction

1. The principle established in Romans 1:28: “*Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.*” Because of this, “*We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things*” (Romans 2:2).
2. There is nothing new under the sun but there are patterns that repeat themselves throughout history (Romans 1:18). Men, deceived and being deceived, sin and seek to justify their sinning.
3. Sinners love to suppress the truth, which is especially true of those in power because they operate through lies. Christ-followers act on truth and walk in the light, a light that exposes evil. Thus, Paul exhorted Timothy: “*All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived*” (2 Timothy 3:12–13).
4. For this reason, those in power who rule by lies must silence the truth because it is a threat. Search the Bible and you will find that if you follow Jesus, you will be persecuted, but not for what you might think. The enemy will not persecute you because you follow Christ, but because you are a *bigot*—you are an unloving extremist, intolerant, self-righteous, and uncooperative. You will be “*like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things*” (1 Corinthians 4:13).
 - a. What do we do when we are threatened with suffering at the hands of evil rulers? We carry on. We stay in the race and “*run with endurance the race that is set before us.*” “*Here is a call for the endurance of the saints*” (Revelation 14:12). The rulers mean it for evil; God means it for good.
 - b. Conversely, the Lord uses persecution to awaken his sleeping church.
 - 1) Those who truly belong to Him will respond correctly (Acts 5:41).
 - 2) Those who are mere professors fall away (Matthew 13:20, 21).

I. What is Wakefulness

1. The enemy wants you asleep and unaware. You cannot resist him strong in faith if you are not fully alert and vigilant. We are living in dangerous times (2 Timothy 3:1, 13, 14). Being awake spiritually means being alert to your own condition, the environment in which you live, and the will of God as revealed in Scripture (2 Timothy 3:1).
2. In salvation the Holy Spirit awakened us from our sleep of death and brought us into the glorious life of Christ.
 - a. We will never again fall into the deep sleep of sin that leads to death. Our Savior, who awoke us, will keep us awake until He comes again. But here is a hard truth: keeping us awake is often very painful.
 - b. We are prone to *carnal drowsiness* that mimics our former sleep to some degree. We are often in danger of falling asleep in the watchtower, forgetful that the night is far spent, and the day of Christ’s judgment is at hand. While we are in this state of carnal half-sleep, we are useless to God and His kingdom. We may be blameless in our conduct, but it is unimpressive and uninfluential. We give weak and lifeless testimony to God’s goodness.

3. The Lord warned against the spiritual deadness of Sardis (Revelation 3:3). God does not want this to be the situation for any of His churches. We are exhorted constantly in Scripture to be *awake* and *watchful*. We are children of the light. We do not have the luxury of being “*at ease in Zion.*”
 - a. Be warned, however, there is a false wakefulness in seeming spiritual activity.
 - b. The true wakeful spiritual life is different in its intensity and depth.
 - c. Before this wakeful life is attained, we will be called on to suffer the rebellion of our flesh—our carnal natures. They will not let us surrender and present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy to God, which is our reasonable service. His chastening, however, arouses His people from their slumber, making them more energetic and more prayerful. Nothing quickens us to prayer like trial.

II. Biblical Wakefulness

1. Biblical wakefulness arouses us to prayer (Matthew 26: 41; Colossians 4:2; Lamentations 2:19).
2. Biblical wakefulness arouses us to righteousness.
 - a. Peter’s failure
 - 1) A portent—Peter in the transfiguration (Luke 9:32, 35). In his drowsy wakefulness, Peter hastily suggested a plan to honor those appearing in the glory. The Lord cut him off with the challenge, “*This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!*” (v. 35).
 - 2) Later, Jesus warned Peter, when he asserted his prideful confidence (Luke 22:31, 32).
 - 3) Peter failed again, sleeping when Jesus told him to watch and pray (Matthew 26:40, 41). He subsequently denied Jesus. Nevertheless, the Lord graciously pursued Peter and restored Him to fellowship, but not until He humbled and broke his prideful self-confidence. He also informed him that when he was old, he would suffer martyrdom. The Lord concluded His post-resurrection instruction to Peter with, “*Follow me*” (John 21:19). Peter obeyed.
 - b. Are you sleeping at the wrong time (1 Corinthians 15:34)?
3. Biblical wakefulness arouses us to watch for His return (Matthew 24:37–51; Mark 13:32–37, Luke 21:34–36).

Conclusion

1. Scripture warns us that those who rule us are more likely to be servants of Satan, and he wants to devour you. He wants to keep you from serving your Lord and doing His will. But Jesus warned: “*Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!*” (Revelation 16:15).
2. The church in America has enjoyed a wonderful freedom from severe persecution. The world hates us, but God has granted protection from their carrying out their rage against us, until now.
3. For those who are watchful, there are clear signs that the church is about to see horrible persecution. Unless God mercifully allows us to recapture our religious freedom guaranteed in our constitutional republic, we need to heed the Savior’s warning: “*Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on.*”

“*And what I say to you I say to all: **Stay awake**” (Mark 13:37).*