

# Imperatives for the Christian Life - Be Alert

*1 Corinthians*

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Well, good evening. It is good to see you tonight.

I am going to ask you, please, to turn to the book of 1 Corinthians chapter 16. We read beginning with verse 13.

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.<sup>1</sup>

Let's go to our God in prayer.

*Father in heaven, we thank you that you are the one who rules over everything. We thank you that you have rule over our lives today. As we each have lived our own life and as we have conducted ourselves in the world today, Lord, our life has been in your hand. A plan, a purpose is being worked out. And for this we are forever grateful. We thank you that you have brought us to know you, that you have forgiven all of our sins and taken them out of the way, brought us into a right relationship with yourself by uniting us with our Savior, your Son and that as far as our position in him is concerned, we are seated with him in the heavenly places. The end of our live is certain. Where we are headed is certain. So, Lord, what you are doing in us today and what you have done in the past since you have saved us, it all is moving toward an end and we thank you for this. We ask that tonight, Lord, you would teach us, that you would bring your Word home to our hearts in a way that only you can, that it would be impactful, life changing. Lord, if we have been sleepy and dull in our walk with you, I pray that tonight we would be awakened and in a fresh way, Lord, fully committed to what it means to walk with Jesus. We ask you for this tonight in Jesus' name. Amen.*

If I were to say to you that something is imperative for you, this is an imperative, what do you think of when I use that word, imperative? It is imperative that you see the doctor regularly. It is imperative that you do this or you do that. What do you think of when you hear that word?

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:13-14.

Well, something that is a must, right, something that is necessary. Tied to that you could say something that must be important. We don't say something is imperative if it is inconsequential. We don't say something is imperative if it doesn't really matter.

Well, when you talk about the Greek language and you talk about the imperative mood, you are talking about something that is normally a command. It is a mood that considers something as being potential. It is possible. And the person giving the command wants the person being addressed to actualize it. This is potential action and I want you to take it. I want you to do this.

It is interesting to take note of how Paul ends his letters. What he does here is not uncharacteristic of him. He does this in more than one letter. He is coming to the end of this letter to the Corinthians and as he comes to the very end, there are two things that he does. He gives us five rapid fire imperatives and then he talks about relationships.

Well, what we are going to do is set our focus tonight on the imperatives. But before we look at these five imperatives, you see them there in verses 13 and 14.

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.<sup>2</sup>

Each one of those is an imperative. Before we look at those imperatives, first let it just sink in that there is such a thing as commands to the believer. There are commands for us. There are imperatives for us. And we ought to just stop and ask. Do we really look at anything in our Christian life as being an imperative? Is there anything right now in your walk with God that you look at as being urgent? It is a must. It is something you must do, something you must engage in. Is there anything in your walk with Christ that you stop and realize, look. God has addressed me. There is some action that is potential for me to take and he wants me to actualize it. He wants me to take action on it.

Well, right here we have five imperatives for Christian living. These are imperatives. That is why I want us to begin just letting it sink in. These are imperatives. These are necessities. These represent things that are a must for us.

Well, we are just going to take time tonight to deal with the first one, because the first one is worthy of that much attention.

As he ends this letter and he... it is though he is saying that here are some things that I want you to remember, you know? I am signing off and here are some things that you must not forget.

The first thing he says in verse 13 is, "Be watchful."

That means to be alert. It means to stay awake. That is what we are going to talk about tonight under five headings. We are going to talk about, number one, what must we be

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

alert to? If we look at the Bible and we look at how this particular Greek word is used and we ask what has God told us in his Word to be alert to, we are going to see seven things in the New Testament that we are told to be alert to.

So what are we to be alert to? That is the first question we will seek to answer.

The second question is: What does it mean to be alert? Once we realize what we are to be alert to, then we need to ask, well, what will it look like if I am alert to those things? What does it mean to be alert?

Third, we are going to ask and seek to answer the question: How do people fall asleep spiritually? How do people fall asleep? If you have to tell God's people to be alert, that means that Christian people have the potential to not be alert even though we are born again, even though we belong to the Lord. It is possible for a believer not to be obeying this commandment, not to be alert.

So how do people fall asleep?

Fourth, what are some evidences that we are asleep?

And then, finally, the last question is: How do you wake up?

But first let's just let the Word of God speak to us as we ask this question. What does God want us to be alert to? This is an imperative. Be awake.

Awake to what?

Well, the way that this word is used most often in the New Testament in terms of its context is telling us to be awake to the fact that our Savior is coming again. Tonight, Christian, God wants you to be fully alert, sensitive to, aware of, responsive to the idea, the truth that your Savior has promised to come back.

Matthew 24:42.

Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.<sup>3</sup>

Mark 13:35 says:

Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or in

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<sup>3</sup> Mathew 24:42-44.

the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”<sup>4</sup>

Same Greek word. These are just two examples of many examples found in the gospels where we are told to stay awake when it comes to the return of Jesus.

Can we be honest with our selves tonight? Isn't it easy in the midst of our busy lives, in the midst of our daily schedules, in the midst of all of our earthly responsibilities to forget that Jesus is coming again. I mean, we know it intellectually. If asked about it we can certainly affirm our belief in the fact that he is coming, but If you and I are actually honest about how we are thinking throughout the day and what our mind is on and what we call to mind often, we would have to admit, I am afraid, that we will go sometimes an entire day and not even consider the fact that this might be the day that Jesus returns. And how would it change the way that we live if we remembered that every day, if we were really awake to it.

Second we are told in God's Word that we are to remain alert against temptation. This words I used to tell us to be alert to the fact that we can be tempted.

You remember when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane and he asked his disciples to watch with him and he went over after spending some time in prayer and what were they doing? They were asleep.

Well, when he was encouraging them to watch with them, listen to what he says, Matthew 26:41.

“Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”<sup>5</sup>

Be alert to the fact that you are living in a world where you will be presented with temptations to sin. In other words, we can fall prey to sin sometimes by simply being asleep to the fact that sin is being offered to us. We can sort of stumble our way into things we ought not to be in because are not alert to the fact that there is real temptation, that we must not only resist, we must reject.

Were you tempted today in some fashion? Have you been alert to temptation? Are you aware of it when it happens? Maybe it was a temptation to say something you shouldn't say. Maybe it was a temptation to think in a way you ought not to think. Maybe it was a temptation to hold on to some attitude that ought not to be in your heart. Maybe it was a temptation to be dishonest in some fashion.

I don't know what it was, but are you alert to the fact that temptations will present themselves?

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<sup>4</sup> Mark 13:35-37.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 26:41.

I think if you are never aware of temptation it is not because you are never tempted. It is because you are just not alert to it.

Third, the Bible tells us we are to remain alert, especially the elders of the church are encouraged to remain alert regarding apostasy. We are to remain alert to the truth that there will be people who profess the name of Jesus who are not truly believers and who will depart from the faith and in doing so will seek to influence others against the gospel.

You want to know what alertness looks like? Well, look at the life of the man who is giving this teaching here, the apostle Paul, because the Bible tells us in Acts 20:29 that Paul said this to the Ephesians elders.

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.<sup>6</sup>

Paul has spent three years warning them about this reality.

Don't you know that at some point during that three year period they had to think to themselves, "We have heard this, Paul. We have heard this. I mean, why do you keep telling us about this"?

He says, "I admonished people night and day, three years."

Why do you keep telling us about this?

Because Paul was alert to the real danger of this and the fact that it will come. It is not it may come. It does happen. People do depart from the faith. They do leave the faith, walk away from Jesus and walk away from the Church and influence others against the gospel. This happens.

We are not to be caught off guard by it. We are not to be surprised by it. We are not to be unprepared for it.

Paul was alert. For three years he was talking about the real danger of it. and now that he is leaving the Ephesians elders, seeing them for the last time, he is saying, "I want you to stay awake for this."

Fourth. We are to remain alert in the ministry of prayer. If I were to ask you tonight: Where are some areas in your walk with God that you sense the greatest struggle with apathy? Where in your walk with the Lord do you sense the greatest struggle with sometimes being spiritually sleepy, dull. I mean, and what is the opposite of being alert?

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 20:29-31.

Well, it is being asleep. It is being dull. It is being insensitive. It is being, you know, not aware.

Well, where are some areas in your walk with God that you really struggle with apathy? One area can be prayer, can't it? It is so much easier to do something than it is to pray. To get up and be busy and be active rather than get quiet and be alone and get on your knees and approach the throne of God's grace and pray on behalf of others and intercede on behalf of others.

I am constantly reminded of the fact that when the apostles appointed those men who really served sort of as the first deacons, they said, "...that we may devote ourselves to the ministry of prayer and the Word."

It is interesting to me they said prayer first. Prayer.

Colossians 4:2 says this.

"Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."<sup>7</sup>

You have got to be watchful in prayer. You have got to be alert in prayer. There has got to be an intensity in prayer. It is the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man that avails much. Sleepy prayers don't mean anything because sleepy prayers aren't prayers. You know, we can be sleepy in a lot of religious areas, can't we? Sleepy as we come to church, sleepy as we sing songs, sleepy as we preach the Bible, sleepy as we do whatever it is we do. No you will know when you are alert and awake because your heart is engaged.

Be watchful in it. In what? In prayer. Prayer is not to be a sleepy endeavor. We don't sleep walk through prayer any more than we are to sleep walk through anything else in the Christian life.

Ephesians 6:18 says:

"...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication."<sup>8</sup>

What does it mean, by the way, praying in the Spirit? It means you are praying in a way that your surrendered to the lordship of Christ. You are being empowered by the Holy Spirit even as you pray, led by the Spirit even as you pray.

"To that end keep alert with all perseverance."<sup>9</sup>

I mean, you are not just mindful of the fact that you are to be alert in prayer, but you

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<sup>7</sup> Colossians 4:2.

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 6:18.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

persevere in the idea that you must be alert in prayer. You remind yourself every day. You remind yourself every prayer that I must be awake to God as I engage him in prayer.

“To that end keep alert with all perseverance making supplication for all the saints.”<sup>10</sup>

You see, we are not just praying for ourselves and our situations and our circumstances and our plans. We are to be praying for one another, praying of the Lord’s Church, praying of the Lord’s people, interceding for others.

We are living in a very selfish generation where everyone seems to ask, “What is in it for me? What am I getting out of it? Who cares about me? Who thinks about me? Who prays for me?”

And I just want to turn that around tonight and ask us: Who are you praying for? Who are you concerned about? Who are you reaching out to? Who are you investing in?

Stay alert with all perseverance making supplication for all the saints.

Fifth, we are to remain alert, according to Scripture, we are to remain alert to the true nature of this world.

Well, this is where we can get caught off guard. This is where we can become dull and insensitive and sleepy. We forget that we are really living in a wicked environment. We know it. We can say it. We can see it intellectually, but we become comfortable in a world that is God hating. The world is not our enemy in this sense. The world is our mission field. We understand that, but we should still hate the things that are hateful to God.

Do we begin to view the world as something benign? If we are not careful, do we begin to view things that are really spiritually dangerous to us as though they are not really that dangerous?

You know, I go see that movie and it is full of all of that bad language, but, you know, I am a big boy. I mean, it doesn’t really have that much effect on me. I am able to filter it out.

Folks, listen. What goes into your mind is going to have an effect on your life and if you think that that is benign and has no effect on you, you are just wrong. And that is just one example of many things that are really dangerous to the believer. But I wonder if we view it as dangerous.

This is in the context of looking for the return of Jesus, but listen to what 1 Thessalonians 5:4 says. Listen.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.<sup>11</sup>

The picture is we are living in this dark world, but we aren't of the darkness. We have been awakened. We have been brought forth from the dead and now we are alive and we are children of light and of the day and we are looking for the day when Jesus returns so that as we live in this dark world, we don't live like those who are in the darkness. We live like those who are in the day. And the sinful kind of behavior that characterizes the children of darkness such as drunkenness should not characterize a child of light. It shouldn't even be named among us.

But what happens is we fall asleep and we act like this isn't really darkness. It is just normal.

Sixth, hand in hand with that the Bible tells us we are to remain alert to the reality of our enemy. We are to be awake all the time to the fact that we have a real enemy. His name is Satan.

You see, behind the darkness, behind the Spirit of the age, behind the behavior that characterizes the sons of disobedience, there is the god of this world, the ruler of this age Satan. There is real demonic activity. In fact, there are doctrines of demons.

1 Peter 5:8 says this.

“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”<sup>12</sup>

Do you pick up on that? Do you know that? Do you live your life every day realizing that, that there is a real dangerous enemy on the loose? And the only safety you have in is in Jesus? It is all the safety you need. It is enough, but nonetheless, you dare not fall asleep.

Verse nine says, “Resist him, firm in your faith knowing that he same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”<sup>13</sup>

In other words, Peter is saying here, you know, your suffering that you are going through could open a door for Satan to take advantage in your life. You need to think biblically.

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Peter 5:8.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Peter 5:9.



You need to resist the enemy. You need to know that your suffering is not extraordinary. There is the same kind of suffering going on among your brothers throughout the world. You need to think biblically.

Where does the enemy attack us? He attacks us, first and foremost in the realm of our thinking. To be alert to his activity is to know we cannot trust our own thoughts. We cannot trust the world's thoughts. We must rely and live on the thoughts of God. What does the Bible say?

Seventh, what are we to be awake to? We are to remain alert against spiritual apathy. What does it mean to be apathetic?

You say, "I don't care what it means to be apathetic."

What does it mean to be apathetic? It means you don't care. You just really don't care that much.

I want you to look to something with me. Look at Revelation chapter three. If you don't think that apathy can happen in the Church, then listen to what the Lord says to this church. Revelation chapter three.

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die.'"<sup>14</sup>

Interesting as I think about Hosea sermon from Sunday morning, right? There is spiritual death followed by social decay, followed by the ultimate end. He says you are dead, verse one, but he also says there are things about to die in verse two.

...for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.<sup>15</sup>

We realize that the Church in its visible sense in the earthly sense is mixed. We have true believers here tonight, no doubt. In a crowd this size there are some who are not truly saved. The warning is one of the need to repent. The warning is one of the need to wake up so that in the realm of the Church as it gathers you can have spiritual death and spiritual apathy. You can know the truth. You can teach the truth. You can be formally committed to the truth and be asleep to the truth all at the same time.

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<sup>14</sup> Revelation 3:1-2.

<sup>15</sup> Revelation 3:2-4.

I want you to think about this and I want you to think about this and I want you to remember this, folks. We think about the true and living God. We are talking about someone who is infinitely glorious, right? Worship is something profound, isn't it? Well, guess what? That means this. Let's just think for just a moment about our singing as an illustration. You could do the same thing with preaching.

To worship God rightly, then, would mean that the substance of what we sing or the substance of what we preach should reflect the profound nature of God. To gather together in the name of worshipping this God who is infinitely glorious and then sing things or preach things that are vapid and empty, is dishonoring to God and it is not in keeping with what worship really is, right? If you agree with that, would you say amen?

We get that usually. But let me ask you if we get this. You can sing a message that is profound in its substance, but empty it by the manner in which you sing it. Or you can preach a sermon that has great depth of theology to it, but you can actually empty it of its meaning by the way that you deliver it.

You worship this profound God not only with a profound message, but it ought to be accompanied by a profound commitment. If he is glorious, our singing ought to reflect the fact that we think he is glorious. And if he is glorious, our preaching should reflect the fact that we believe he is glorious. And our listening should reflect the fact that we believe that he is glorious.

You can fall asleep by not caring, being apathetic about glorious things and the glorious one that we are called to worship and live for.

This leads to the second question. This is what we are to be alert to, right? Alert to Christ's return, alert to the reality of temptation, alert to the reality of apostasy, alert to he... in the ministry of prayer, alert to the true nature of this world, alert to the reality of our enemy, alert to the fact that we must not be apathetic.

So that leads to a second very important question. What does it mean to be alert?

I say to you and you could say to me tonight, let's wake up. All right. What would that mean let's wake up.

Well, first of all it means that we are going to be mindful of these things. If you are alert to the return of Jesus you can't be alert to the return of Jesus if you never think about it. You can't be alert to the true nature of this world if you never consider it.

So to be alert will mean that these things actually occupy a prominent place in our thinking. Whatever it is we have talked about the Word of God has instructed us about tonight, to be alert to it is going to have to mean that we think about these things. We meditate on these things.

If you are going to obey this imperative tonight and be awake, then you are going to have to think about the things that God has told you are important to him and to you.

Not only does it mean we are mindful of these things, second, it means we will be committed to these things. We must care, you see? If you don't care, you are not awake. You can think about things you don't really care about. You can discuss things you don't really care about. So to be awake to the return of Jesus means I am not only aware of it, think about it, can talk to you about it, but I actually live my life, I care about the fact... I live my life in light of the fact that Jesus is returning. It has engaged my heart.

Third, this means, to be alert means I sense the importance of it. I sense the urgency of it.

Is it important that you believe that Jesus is coming back? Is that important? Is it urgent? Should it affect your affections?

So to be awake will mean I think about it, I care about it and I sense how important this is.

But the fourth thing and the clincher is if I am awake, I am taking action. I am actually acting on these. I am mindful of it. I care about it. I sense the importance of it and the urgency of it. Therefore I am living my life in light of it.

If prayer is really important, then I pray. If believing that Jesus is coming again, perhaps even today, if that is really important, then I live my life today in light of that possibility and promise. If knowing that the enemy exists and he is prowling about like a roaring lion, if that really is something I am supposed to be alert to, that means I live my life today knowing that he is there and knowing that temptation is real and knowing that I must rely on the Lord today.

You see, we take action. It can be compared to someone asleep in your house and you walk in and you tell them, "Wake up." And they roll over and open a half open eye and say, "Ok, I will get up." And you walk out of the room and they don't get up. Twenty minutes later you walk back in and say, "Hey, you have got to get up."

Oh, oh, ok. I hear you. I am going to get up.

They never get up.

That is not being awake, is it? You may describe it as having been stirred, having been prompted a little bit, but you are not awake until you get up out of that bed and you begin to be active.

What happens to us as we come into a church service and we get stirred a little bit. We get jolted a little bit. We get our senses sort of piqued a little bit, but if we are not careful, we walk out of these doors and we take no action on what we have heard and the book of

James describes that as being someone who is not wise to say the least. Hearers, but not doers who are self deceived.

Third question. How do people fall asleep spiritually? I mean if this is something a believer—you are looking back here at our text, 1 Corinthians 16:13—if this something a believer must be told by the apostle Paul at the end of this letter, “Be awake, be alert,” well, that means that we... there is the real danger of us not being alert.

Have you ever been alert? I mean, if you are saved you have been, right? Sensitive to the reality of God, sensitive to the power of his Word, sensitive to the fact that lost people are all around you, sensitive to these things. Well, are you sensitive tonight? If not, what happened?

One thing that happens is we fall asleep and we take precious things for granted.

It is interesting to me that a passage where we are taught to be alert in prayer, he says we are to persevere in it with thanksgiving. He ties alertness in prayer to the idea of being thankful.

You see, our prayers can become apathetic and not really prayers as soon as we forget just how blessed we are. And it is going not happen in every realm.

Ah, don't really care about reading the Bible.

Well, have you stopped to really realize how blessed you are to have this? What it is you have? How precious it is? How it has come down to you? What you hold in your hands?

You didn't pray today, perhaps. I mean, do you even stop to realize what it is to pray, that in Jesus Christ we have access to the very throne of God? We have been ushered by Christ into the very presence of God and God invites us to a throne of grace where he promises us we will find help in our time of need and we don't pray? He tells us the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man will avail much and we don't pray. We don't know what prayer is if we don't pray.

We have been saved, we say. All of our sins have been forgiven. We have been reconciled to the Lord. We have come from death to life and darkness to light and bondage to freedom and we are surrounded by people who are on their way to hell and we never open our mouth and say word to them about the gospel. How can we say we really understand what salvation means?

You see what has happened to us is these precious, precious things don't seem precious when we are asleep.

But here is another way we can describe how we fall asleep. It is as simple as this. We just are not believing God. Spiritual apathy is the result of a lack of faith. If you believe that Jesus is coming back it changes the way you life. If you believe that the devil is real

and is your enemy, it changes the way you live. If you believe that temptation is real and destructive it will change the way you live. If we don't believe God about time and eternity, it changes the way we view the world. If we don't believe God about what will really truly satisfy our hearts and we will keep digging into the garbage can of the world trying to fill the void. Keep coming up empty.

If we don't believe God about our own weakness and our absolute dependency upon him, we will keep living proud, self sufficient, which are non-sufficient lives. We take precious things for granted and we don't listen to God and believe God, that is how we fall asleep.

Fourth question. What are some evidences that we are asleep? Anybody been asleep here lately? What are some evidences of it? Let me give you some signs that you are asleep.

When you are apathetic about profound things. It is profound to worship the Lord, isn't it? I mean, according to Scripture isn't that something profound? Are you excited about it? Do you really look forward to being with the Lord on a personal level, to get up in the morning or to spend time with him in the evening and to open his Word and to engage him in prayer and to learn things from what is a God breathed book. Is that something you are enthusiastic about? Or apathetic? If you are apathetic you are asleep.

When you don't desire what you know you should desire.

Anybody there tonight? I know I should desire it. I know I should feel this way about it. But if I am being honest with my own life right now and my own heart, I am not desiring it.

You know, John Piper wrote a book, what was it entitled? *What to do when you don't desire God*, I think. And it is a great title and I think it acknowledges the fact that we can all be at that place sometimes when we know we should desire things that we are not desiring, but that is a sign that we are not awake.

When we don't fear what we know we should fear. We know intellectually that sin is deadly and dangerous and we know the Bible has identified that as sin, but for whatever reason we are not running from it. When we don't flee from what we know we should flee from.

Or you can turn that around. When we don't pursue what we know we should be giving our life to.

How do you wake up? How do you obey this imperative? You listen.

What is an imperative? In the Greek text what is an imperative. It is a command, isn't it? God commands us. The Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul in verse 13 says, "Christian, be watchful."

To obey this tonight will mean you say, “Yes, Lord. I hear you through your Word and I will by your grace that you supply that you have given me in Christ I will listen to you.”

Those seven things I mentioned you saw. We took them all right out of the New Testament text. This is what the Holy Spirit told us to be awake to. There are other things as well, I am sure. But these seven things are clearly identified in the New Testament. So you will say, “Yes, Lord. I will be alert to the return of my Savior. I will be alert to the reality of the enemy. I will be alert to the reality of temptation. I will be alert to the need to be sensitive to you in prayer, et cetera. I will listen to you.”

How do you wake up? You listen.

Second, though, you take action. I thought about this. I want to do something that I don't know that I have ever done here, but we are going to do it tonight. How many of you would agree that we ought to be alert to the fact that there are lost people all around us. If you agree with that would you say yes? That is better, sometimes, than amen, isn't it? We get [?] yes.

All right. And here is what we are going to do. This week, because we can talk about evangelism. We can talk about it, but the question is: If you know Jesus, do you know the gospel? Yes? Yes. So around you is someone who needs to hear the gospel and you have the good news. So this week I want us to share the gospel with someone. It gives us seven days from this Wednesday to next. And we are going to pray. We are going to ask the Lord to give us that opportunity. To open that door and then we are going to walk through that door as God provides it to us and we are going to share the gospel with someone. And next Wednesday night before I stand up to preach I am going to ask for testimonies of people who actually shared their faith. And they are not going to be, you know, 30 minute ones unless it is really glorious then we may have a 30 minute one, but we are going to give you the opportunity stand up and give glory to God because he woke you up in this area and you have actually taken action on it.

We can talk about the need to pray, but, beloved, to be alert in prayer means you pray. We can talk about needing to be alert to the Word of God, but taking action means you are going to read it.

How do you wake up? You don't lay in bed and say, “I am awake.” You get up out of the bed and you do something. So you listen. You take action.

But, third, you are going to remain awake. You are going to have to be diligent. You have to continue to be alert. Remain alert and this takes diligence.

One writer commenting on this Greek word says it could be rendered this way. Listen.

“Be on our guard might be rendered be diligent in carrying out the will of God. Be diligent.”

Look at 1 Corinthians 15. We are going to finish with this. Look at verse 58 and here is a good example of what it means to be awake. Verse 58.

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”<sup>16</sup>

What does it mean to abound? It means... it is excess. We could say it this way. You are fully invested. You are fully committed to doing the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. God doesn't deserve half hearted anything. And what this passage calls us to is whole hearted living for Christ.

Examine your life. Examine your ministry. Examine your service and ask. Is it whole hearted?

Let's pray.

*Father in heaven, we all struggle with this. We are so often like your disciples that couldn't even watch for one hour. I thank you that you know our frailty. You know, Lord, our weakness of our flesh. So often our spirit is willing, but our flesh is weak. And yet I pray that by the grace you supply and have given us in Jesus we would hear your command tonight, we would take action on this command tonight and we would be diligent in this command tonight and we would remain awake. Lord, let us not be asleep, but be fully awake as we serve you. Thank you that you brought us out of spiritual death and you made us alive and brought us into light so that now we are children of the day and of the light. Help us not to live like children who are in the dark, but to be sober minded, fully alert until Jesus comes or until we go home. We ask you for this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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<sup>16</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:58.