

THE CHURCH AROUSED

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A SERMON
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*“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest,
 and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”
 Ephesians 5:14*

WE have not time this evening to enter into the question as to where this quotation came from. There does not appear to be one exactly like it in the compass of the Old Testament. But we must remember that the apostle very frequently quotes the spirit of texts rather than the words of them.

In the eighth and in the tenth chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews we find him quoting the same passage, but not in the same words, showing us that he, as an inspired man, felt himself able to deal rather with the spirit of a passage than with the precise words of it. There may, therefore, be no such passage in the Old Testament verbally, but as there are several which have the spirit of the exhortation, Paul was justified in saying, “God hath said so-and-so.”

Besides, the passage may not be a quotation at all. The apostle may mean to say that Christ said that to him, that Christ said that by him, that Christ intended even then, while he was handling the pen and writing, to say the words which he then wrote—“He saith so-and-so.”

We have no time however, to go into that matter. It is a more important question, perhaps—To whom is this text addressed? Nine times out of ten when it is preached from, it is taken as though it were addressed to the ungodly. It is a very proper text to address to the ungodly, but I do not see that the context permits it. There are some who would think it altogether unscriptural and unsound to address these words to those who have no spiritual life. We are not of their number.

If we see a man ever so deadly asleep we believe we are commissioned by God to preach the Gospel to him and to say, “Awake, thou that sleepest.” And though more and more persuaded of the want of moral sensibility in man and the desperate character of his depravity, we are not amongst those who fear to preach to dead sinners, but dare to say, even to the dead, “Thus saith the LORD, Ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD, Ye dry bones, live!”

We can therefore, very well take this text, and address it to the ungodly. But this is not intended to be a sermon to the unconverted. It appears to me to have been addressed to the church of God at Ephesus, to have been the language of Paul to God’s own people, warning them not to fall into the same habits as did the children of darkness, but to come out and show themselves to be God’s people.

I know the objection will be raised that they are told to come forth from the dead. But I do not see that that is any obstacle at all, for albeit that the people of God may not be spiritually dead in the sense in which the ungodly are, yet how often do we speak of ourselves as feeling as if we were dead and speak of our graces and of our piety as though they were come into a cold and dead state.

It is comparative death that the apostle here means, and we may use the words employed here as we would use them in common conversation, and say that though there are some quivers of spiritual life in the breast of every believer, yet there are multitudes who are outwardly dead as to their usefulness, and there are Christians and churches too of whom we may say, without at all libeling them, “You are dead; awake thou that sleepest.”

Whatever objection there may be to addressing the text to the converted, there will be far more difficulty in addressing it to the unconverted, and I think there ought to be no hesitation in directing it to

either. To raise difficulties is very easy, but meekly to try to learn what the Savior would say is far better.

I intend tonight, then, to use the text to you Christians, you church members, you professors, and the first thing we shall take is *the state of mind into which many Christians get*. Secondly, *what Christ has to say to them about this state*, namely, “Awake, and arise from the dead.” And then thirdly, *the gracious promise with which we are encouraged to make the effort*. “Christ shall give you light.”

I. First then, let us notice THE STATE OF MIND INTO WHICH A CHRISTIAN MAY SOMETIMES GET.

The state of mind into which a genuine Christian may fall, and if a genuine Christian, much more a spurious one—he may be asleep, and in a modified sense, even dead.

Let me begin describing this state of mind by mentioning *the insidious character of it*.

A Christian may be asleep and not know it. Indeed, if he did know it he would not be asleep. It is a part of sleep for men to be in an unconscious state, and when a Christian begins to slumber perhaps he dreams that he is rich and increased in goods. But he is not at all likely to take up a lamentation to himself and say, “I am asleep,” for if a man could say, “I am asleep,” I think it would be pretty tolerable evidence that he was awake and the fear of being asleep, the very dread of being asleep, would be proof at any rate, of some degree of wakefulness.

Often and often when young people come to me and say, “Oh! sir, I am afraid I am a hypocrite,” my answer generally is, “Then I am not afraid of it, for when you are afraid of such a sin as that it is not at all likely that you are guilty of it.” Some of you, then, tonight, may be in a very sleepy state, but for this very reason you will not think so.

And brethren, *a man who is asleep may be kept in very good countenance by his neighbors*. His fellow Christians may not be likely to accuse him of it, for probably they are in the same state, and if you put a number of sleeping people together they are not likely to be very active in rebuking one another, so that this state of mind is very dangerous and very insidious.

A man may be in a church where nearly all the members are asleep, and they say that the other churches in the neighborhood are fanatical, enthusiastic, and a great deal too earnest, and thus all these people are sleeping to the same tune and comforting one another in it. Oh! then, may God help them, for they are in a very perilous state!

A person, too, who is asleep, *may have taken care before he went to sleep to prevent anybody coming in to wake him*. There is a way of bolting the door of your heart against anybody. If you get into certain views of doctrine you can very easily go to sleep, and your doctrines will stand as sentinels at the doors to prevent anybody from awakening you.

Beware of Antinomianism! If you once drink a draught of that it will send you into such a sleep as you may never wake from. If you fall into certain hyper-Calvinistic views you will have a reply ready to the rebuke of the most earnest of God’s servants. You will begin to judge them instead of judging yourselves, and accuse them of being unorthodox while you believe yourselves to be sound, and so you are, but only in the sense of being sound asleep.

This sleepiness in the Christian is exceedingly dangerous too, *because he can do a great deal while he is asleep that will make him look as if he were quite awake*. For instance, some people *talk* in their sleep, and many professors will talk just as if they were the most active, the most earnest, the most gracious, the most warm-hearted people anywhere.

I say to you what I mean when I declare that I have heard people in this very house *pray* in their sleep. I do not mean in their natural sleep, but in their spiritual sleep. I could tell by the droning way in which they prayed, and by their repeating some phrases that I had heard them use before, that they were not awake to the duty, that they were not really praying, throwing their souls into it, but praying because they were asked to do so, and so just went through it, their souls being asleep all the time.

And many a man has sung a hymn in this house asleep too. His heart has never been awakened to the true melody of praise, yet he has got through the hymn somehow, his lips making a sound, but his heart

never singing at all, he himself awake enough to catch the notes, but his heart not awake enough to drink into the true spirit of thanksgiving. So, you see, it is hard for a man to know he is in this state, since he can talk when asleep even as others do.

What is more wonderful, some people can *walk* in their sleep, ay, and walk in dangerous places, where waking men would be unsafe. They by some strange influence seem to walk steadily and calmly along the eddies and turn by the dangers beneath. Even the howling of winds abroad seems to be inoperative upon their senses, and they therefore have a kind of security which more wakefulness would remove from them.

And oh, the fatal security of some professors, and the way in which they will dally with the world and yet keep up an outwardly consistent character. Oh! the manner in which some Christians will go as near to the fire of sin as well may be, and be scorched by it and yet not burned. Oh! some of you are good, excellent, moral people in the judgment of men, but nevertheless, as Christians you do not seem to be awake to the interest of Christ's kingdom.

And as a man can thus talk in his sleep, and walk in his sleep, there is another thing he can do better than other people, namely, *dream* in his sleep. He is the man to concoct plans, and find out new inventions. He can sketch out methods for building chapels, oh! so rapidly. He can find ways of bringing out ministers, and doing all sorts of things, and yet he is asleep all the while. The waking man does it, and proves that he is awake by doing it, but the slumbering man only calculates, so many pence a week, so many subscriptions, and the thing will be done, but there is never a brick to show.

He dreams deliciously, but as for activity it is not there. He could always manage a Sunday school, or build a Christian interest better than anybody else, but no Sunday school or Christian interest ever does spring up under his hand, because the man's whole activity shows itself in inventions which are never executed and in plans which are never carried out.

I say then, that it becomes very dangerous, because sometimes these dreaming people do dream good things, and they get carried out by some practical person, while they themselves are asleep all the while. As we have often seen a sleeping drayman with his horses going on with their load, so they can make others work while they themselves sleep.

And the worst of it is that when these sleeping people get into a nice comfortable position in the Christian church they can fill it very well, and they are the last people in the world to get out, because, sleepy as they are, they know when the bed is soft and warm.

And oh! when sleeping ministers get into the pulpit, what a curse they are to us! and when sleepy church officers once get into their places there is no moving them, but here they are and they seem to fill the place quite well, while all the while it is as though the sentinel's box were filled with a slumbering man, and consequently the army is not guarded and an attack may be made upon a sudden.

Oh! sirs, I do fear that one half of Christian people nowadays are in this sleepy state, and yet if they were told so to their face, they would be very angry with the men who had the honesty to tell the truth.

Perhaps some here are not awake, and if so they will be the ones offended, and I shall therefore be like Swift, who said, "No doubt this is a capital sermon in church to those who are awake, but it is of no use to those who have been asleep while I have been preaching it." It is just that. The brother to whom this applies most will be just the person to fold his arms and say, "We are well, and let us leave well alone." It is insidious in the last degree. I have thus endeavored to show the deceptive character of this evil.

But in the next place, *what is the evil itself?* I do not know that I can describe it, but perhaps you have felt it, and certainly you must have seen it. It is an *unconsciousness of one's own state*, and a carelessness of such a kind as not to want to be conscious of it. The man takes everything for granted in religion. Whether he is a Christian or not, does not arouse in him any question. He believes he is, thinks he is, and that is enough for him. He does not want to come to close dealings. He does not like the preacher who makes him try the foundations. He would rather not have such unpleasant points put to

him. He says, like the man who sleeps on the mast, "A little more rest, and I will awake." I fear that many of us get into such a state as that.

Then he also becomes indifferent to the state of other men. The man who is asleep does not care what becomes of his neighbors, how can he while he is asleep? And oh! some of you Christians do not care whether souls are saved or damned. It little concerns some Christians what becomes of St. Giles, or Bethnal Green, or Golden Lane. It is enough for them if they are comfortable. If they can attend a respectable place of worship and go with others to heaven, they are indifferent about everything else.

And whether there shall be an increase of darkness or of light in England does not seem to concern some Christians, nor even some ministers. I know some very good and eminent professors in their way, who seem to me, at least in my poor judgment, as if it did not matter to them whether half of England went to hell, or whether all went to heaven. No doubt they would be very pleased if the thing did happen that many were saved, but as to waking themselves up to the value of souls, and to engage in earnest effort and humble prayer, they are too much asleep for that, and are insensible to the state of others.

And they seem too, to be *perfectly immoveable by all appeals*. The best argument is lost on a sleeping man. You might convince him if he were awake, but what can you do with him while he still slumbers? Hence it is, that many a Christian enterprise has no assistance from professed believers, because and only because they are asleep. They might help it, they ought to help it, but they do not help it. They profess to be the servants of Jesus Christ, but they do not serve Him, because they are indifferent, and because they are much given to slumber.

And then this slumbering spirit *spreads itself* over everything else. The sleeping Christian does not enjoy the Word. If he reads it the text seems meaningless. If he hears it he thinks the preacher does not preach as he used to do. If he goes to sing with others, he throws no heart into it. If he joins in the prayer meeting he goes in and out, but he does not wrestle with the angel of mercy.

As to his own closet, it is full of cobwebs. As to his own heart, he has not had an inspection of it for many a day, because the man is got into a slumbering state. How often one can often detect churches slumbering by the way in which they drawl out the hymns, and their protracted prayers, which after all, are no prayers at all. There is a heartlessness in the manner in which everything is gone about. Then these brethren get unhappy, and afterwards they get to be quarrelsome. Do not let that be the case with any of us here.

Then there are some who get their Christianity into such a state that they are so nearly dead that they are always looking after evidences. We get into a low and miserable state because we are in a sleepy state. Where this continues long, a Christian church comes to be a positive nuisance. These are strong words to use of any church, but it is so. I know villages where it would be easy to establish a Baptist church if it were not unhappily the case that there is one already there which does no good, and which prevents anybody else from doing anything.

A pulpit may sometimes be the emblem of a curse. It may stand there, the chapel may stand there, and earnest ministers in the neighborhood may say, "We cannot go there because good brother So-and-so is there," and good brother So-and-so may simply be a naughty one who occupies the place without bringing any return to his Master.

You ask me how I can describe this state so well. I answer, because I have been in it myself, and have to mourn that I cannot thoroughly wake myself up even now. And oh! I am quite sure there are some of you who might well join with me in that mourning.

Brethren, let us think of that word, ETERNITY, and how is it that we do not feel its power more? Think of the judgment, think of the terrors of that tremendous day when Christ shall appear upon the great white throne. Remember the wrath of God. Remember the pit which He hath digged. Think of the glory of Christ, of the robes of whiteness, and the tearless eyes of the blood-washed. Can we think of these things, and yet be cold, callous, and indifferent? Shall we always lie at this poor dying rate?

May God grant that these weighty themes may have such an effect upon us as they must have if we are awake, and no longer seem to be indifferent matters because we ourselves are so nearly asleep, so nearly dead.

Now, two or three words upon what makes this evil of Christians being asleep a great deal worse. It is this, *they are Christ's servants, and they ought not to be asleep*. If a servant is set to do a certain duty, you do not continue him in your service if he drops off asleep. Remember the virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom. It was not wrong for them to be asleep at midnight. It was the proper time for sleep. But it was wrong for them to sleep, seeing that the bridegroom was come, and that they had gone out to meet him.

It was wrong for them to sleep, and as I thought this matter over I thought that you, and I, and every Christian who is asleep, we are very much like the apostles at the gate of Gethsemane. There was their Master sweating great drops of blood in awful agonizing prayer, but where were they? Helping Him? Casting their prayers into the treasury? Oh! no, not they! Watching against His adversaries and guarding Him against surprise? No, not they.

There is the bold Peter, who said he never would forsake his Master, but his head is on his bosom. There is John, who has sincere affection for his Lord, but his eyes are fast closed, and James also is fast locked in the arms of sleep. And it is very much the same with us.

Christ is up yonder interceding, and we are down here sleeping, the most of us. Christ is up there showing His wounds, and pleading before the Father's throne that He would visit the sons of men, and give Him to see of the travail of His soul, and here are we, not watching against His enemies, nor helping Him by our prayers, but are busy here and there wasting precious time while immortal souls are being lost.

We are sleeping like men in the midst of harvest when the grain is waiting for the sickle. Our sickles are laid by, and we stretch ourselves beneath the shadow of some spreading tree and sleep, though black clouds are gathering and the rain which will spoil the corn is certainly coming on, we, hired to do the day's work, still sleep on. It is not so with you all, but it is so with many of us.

It is so bad for us to be asleep too, because *it is quite certain that the enemy is awake*. You recollect old Hugh Latimer's sermon, in which he says that the devil is the busiest bishop in the kingdom? "Other bishops," saith he, "may not visit their dioceses, but he does. He is always at it, day and night." There is no waste of time with him. If we could send the devil to sleep we might take a nap ourselves, but we never can, and therefore we ought to be awake.

Christian man, while you are sleeping, remember time is running on. If you could stop the hands of time you might afford yourselves a little leisure. If you could, as we say, take him by the forelock, you might pause awhile. But you must not rest, for the tremendous wheels of the chariot of time are driven at such a fearful rate that the axles thereof are red-hot with speed, and there is no pause in that tremendous rush. On, on, on it goes, and a century has fled like a watch in the night. Time stays not, how can you loiter, Christians? And meanwhile, souls are being lost.

Have you ever seen some of those marvelous pictures which illustrate Dante's "Inferno"? You may have seen one picture in which the artist represents souls as being driven about by wandering winds. I would change the picture, and represent souls going along as in a mighty river. Millions of them passing by the banks of time every hour, many of them snatched out of the current by angelic hands, and landed safely upon the shore. But oh! how many of them go onward to an awful cataract, a cataract of souls plunging over into eternal woe!

As men stand to listen to the roar of Niagara, and to see the flowing foam thereof, so I would ask you to look at the cataract of death, and to see the multitudes of souls passing down it. A million a month in China alone, and how many millions in other parts of the world are passing into eternity, unshrived, unabsolved, unwashed in the Savior's blood. Oh! men and brethren, and yet we sit down and sleep! God forgive us! God forgive us!

I do think that the very devil, if he were saved, would not sleep. If the fiends of hell could be washed in blood and made new creatures, I think their restless activity which makes them go about like roaring lions seeking whom they may devour, would turn into another channel, and they would go about to win souls.

Are we to go like snails in the course of good, whilst swifter than the roe or the hart men fly in the road of evil? Shall it always be so? The Christian pastor may forget the villager, but the parish priest will not. The Christian minister may not proclaim the Gospel, but from the oratory of the monks there will be no uncertain sound. Christian women may forget to visit the sick, but the so-called sisters of mercy will be there. You may turn aside, Christian, if you please, from your position in the ranks of Christ, but you will not find the servants of Satan so unfaithful.

Oh that such restlessness might come upon us, that we might have an insatiable hungering to do good and an awful passion to bless our fellow men, that we might yearn and sigh because others will not repent and turn to God. The Lord send us such an awakening, if not, our sin of sleeping is terrible indeed.

Now, what is it that send us to sleep? I have heard some say that *it is having too much business*. I do not believe it. I do not find that you London Christians, as a body, are more asleep than country Christians. In fact, if I had my choice I might select my country brethren for a great many virtues, but certainly not for the virtue of being wide awake. For, alas! in many of our country churches nothing can be conducted in a more slumbering manner.

I do think that of the two I would rather have you business men, with your pulses quickened by having so much to do, than I would have you go into the obscurity of the country where there is so little to stir the blood. I believe those who have the most worldly business can often serve God better than those who have but little.

But still, we must never throw our sins upon the providence of God. What is it then? I think I will tell you. First, we are inclined to slumber from *the evil of our nature*. This invests our sin with a double guilt. Master, deliver us from the guilt and then from the power of sin. All the while we are thus asleep about divine things, we are wide awake like the rest of the world about other things.

I have sometimes remarked the way in which men will speak out in the shop most distinctly, and mumble in the prayer meeting. I have sometimes thought I have seen persons who at the sound of a shilling seemed to open their ears and start up, be just as much the opposite way when it came to doing things for Christ—first and foremost for this world, and last for the world to come—toiling like the ants to gain this world's dross, but as idle as a butterfly in regard to divine things. And this is so sad, because it proves that it is not want of power to be active, but want of will.

Next, it is very easy to send a man to sleep *if you give him the chloroform of bad doctrine*. That has sent half our Baptist churches to sleep. They have been taught that man is not responsible to God. They have been taught clear fate, and nothing better, and they have gone to sleep. And who indeed, can take a dose of that without slumbering?

Then, *the sultry sun of prosperity* sends many to sleep. You are prospering too much. God seems to be too favorable to you in providence, and then the soul begins to sleep. Fullness of bread is a strong temptation to a Christian. It has been asserted in high church papers that our youth, our young men and women, are dissatisfied with our services and system, and they are going to ritualism. I do not believe it. My observation goes to show it is not the case.

There are some attenders of our places of worship who were with us when they were poor, who, having amassed a fortune, have retired to suburban villas and turned to places where they heard the Gospel alien to that which they heard when times were different with them.

But it is not the case with the young men and women of our churches. I do not believe the blame rests with them. It is the power of wealth which comes to them. I admire that prayer of Mr. Whitefield's for a young man who has come into possession of a large property, that God would give him grace to persevere under such a trial.

Then in some people it is *the intoxication of pride*. Get proud of your spiritual condition, and that will soon send you to sleep. In others it is the want of heart which is at the bottom of everything they do. They never were intense, they never were earnest, and consequently they have such little zeal that that zeal soon goes to sleep.

This is the age of the Enchanted Ground. He that can go through this age and not sleep must have something more than mortal about him. God must be with him, keeping him awake. You cannot be long in the soporific air of this particular period of time without feeling that in spiritual things you grow lax, for it is a lax age—lax in doctrine, lax in principle, lax in morals, lax in everything—and only God can come in and help the Pilgrim to keep awake in this Enchanted Ground.

These then, are some of the things to guard against. My time, unfortunately, is almost gone, and therefore I can only say a few words upon the second point.

II. What saith Christ to His people who are asleep? He saith, “AWAKE THOU THAT SLEEPEST, ARISE FROM THE DEAD.”

Let me have a little quiet talk with you then in the Master’s name. Remember *that Jesus speaks this in love*. You never knew him do or say anything that was not in love. Has there ever been anything which has come either from His hand or His lips which has not been in love? Oh! then, believe that He would not have said, “Awake!” if it were not the kindest thing He could possibly say to you.

He loves you then, though you love Him so little and go to sleep in His very presence, and it is His love which shows itself to you in the best possible way by that startling word, “Awake! Awake! Awake!”

Sometimes a mother’s love lulls her child to sleep, but if there is a house on fire the mother’s love would take another expression and startle it from its slumbers, and Christ’s love takes that turn when He says to you, “Awake! Awake! Awake!”

Again, since Jesus says this to you, be assured that it is *His wisdom* as well as His love that makes Him say it. He knows that you are losing much by sleeping. The thief is pilfering while you are resting. The sower of the bad seed is scattering it in the field, while you, who ought to have watched, are going away to those unhallowed sleeps. He would not have you be a loser, He would have you be rich and increased in goods spiritually, and thus it is His wisdom that bids Him wake you. It is a wise voice, and a tender voice, which says to the Christian—“Awake!”

It is a voice, too, *which you ought to own*, for it is backed up by the authority of the person from whom it comes. It is your Lord who says, “Awake!” What has He done for you? Shall I ask you what He has not done for you? You owe everything to Him. That robe that is now washed would have been black but for Him.

Ah! some of you who are here today, oh! how much do you owe! I know, as I look around on you, what God’s grace has done for you. Oh! brother, your voice was the loudest in the tavern. Many a time have you reeled home from the gin palace, your mouth could once curse and swear, but you are washed.

And as for myself, how much do I owe to the grace of God! The most stubborn and self-willed of mortals cowed down before the feet of Christ to take and accept Him on His own terms!

And ah! there be some of you who, like the Magdalen, would sit and wash His feet with tears and would be glad to wipe them with the hairs of your head! Some of you mothers here owe all your children’s souls to Him as well as your own. He saved your darlings. He has brought them to put their trust in Him.

Oh! we are over our head and ears in debt to Christ. We are what good Rutherford used to call “drowned debtors to Christ!” Oh the depths of our obligation! Oh, how high should be the heights of our gratitude since He has done so much for us! If He says, “Awake!”—oh! Master, we would not only awake, but we would crave Your pardon a thousand times that ever we should have fallen into this sinful sleep.

It is your Lord that speaks. It is your Master that cries, “Awake! Awake!” Oh! loyal hearts and virgin souls, by the lilies of your love, and by the roses of His blood with which He bought you, Awake! Awake! Awake! and ask for an earnestness which you may never lose again.

Further, *this is a voice which has been very often repeated*. Christ has been saying, “Awake! Awake!” to some of us many hundreds of times. You were sick, were you, a few months ago? That was Christ, as it were, shaking you in your sleep and saying, “Awake, My beloved, awake out of thine unhealthy slumbers!” You had a loss in business the other day, and you bemoaned it very much. Perhaps that too, was the Master saying, “Awake!” A dear child was taken from your home to heaven. It was Christ saying to you, “Awake!”

And we have had many awakenings in this house of prayer. I am sure our Monday evening prayer meetings have often been a voice to us—“Awake! Awake!” Sometimes a sermon too, has come home from God to our hearts with—“Awake! Awake! Awake!”

Oh! shall we never awake? Shall Christ stand always at yonder door with its rusty hinges, and shall He always say, “Open to me, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is wet with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night”? Shall He always be shut out? Will we never open the door to Him and say, “We wake, Lord, we wake! Come in and sup with us that we may sup with Thee”?

Now, it seems to me in the text, *as if it were a personal cry*. Did you notice the singular pronoun—“Awake, *thou* that sleepest”? It does not say, “Awake all of you,” but “Awake thou!” Shall I pick you out one by one? There are too many of you for that. But I might say, my dear venerable, grey-headed friend, if there is any tendency in you to slumber, Jesus says, “Awake *thou*.”

And you maiden, you who have given your heart to your Savior in your young days, He says, “Awake, thou that sleepest!” And you, young man with many talents, which you do not lay out for Christ as you ought, He says, “Awake, thou that sleepest.” And to the most slumbering of us, He seems to say it most loudly and most lovingly, “Awake, thou that sleepest.” May such a warning come home very personally!

And to close this point I may add that *He puts it very pressingly in the present tense*, “Awake,” saith He, “awake now.” Oh! it is very easy to say, “I hope I shall awake one day.” But He says, “Awake now!” It is not what you will do in a few years hence, but now, now, now! I say not that the word “now” is in the text, but it is there truly, too, in spirit.

“Awake.” If I say to a man “Awake!” I do not mean that he is to awake in an hour’s time, that should be absurd, but I mean him to awake now. And Jesus says this to us—friends who know His love and who have been visited by His grace, He says to us—“Awake now, my beloved, and come forth to serve Me.”

III. But I must close, and the last point is, THE PROMISE WITH WHICH CHRIST ENCOURAGES US TO AWAKE.

The promise is, “Christ *shall* give thee light.” What does that mean? Why, light may mean sometimes *instruction*. We are often in the dark and puzzled about difficulties, but do you know half the difficulties in the Bible spring from a cold state of mind. But when the heart gets right, the head seems to get right too, in a great measure.

I remember a person puzzling himself fearfully with that passage in Scripture about Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. He went and looked at Dr. Gill about it, he went to Thomas Scott about it, and he went to Matthew Henry about it, and these good divines all puzzled him as much as they could, but they did not seem to clear up the matter.

The good man could not understand how Jesus Christ could say as He did, “How often would I have gathered thee, but thou wouldest not!” One day he received more grace, and got to have a love for souls, and then the old skin of narrow-mindedness which had been large enough for him once began to crack and break, and he went to the passage then and said, “I can understand it now, I do not know how it is consistent with such and such a doctrine, but it is very consistent with what I feel in my heart.”

And I feel just the same. I used to be puzzled by that passage where Paul says that he could wish himself accursed from God for his brethren's sake. Why, I have often felt the same, and now I understand how a man can say in the exuberance of his love to others, that he would be willing to perish himself if he might save them. Of course it never could be done, but such is the extravagance of a holy love for souls that it breaks through reason, and knows no bounds. Get the heart right and you get right upon many difficult points.

Again, I think the light here meant is a further kind of light, not merely the light of direction, guidance, and knowledge, but chiefly *the light of joy*. Oh! there be some of you who are generally in the dark. You do not know whether you are Christians or not half of your time. You are spelling out your evidences and so on. I compare you to a man who is almost drowned. He is alive, but how do they know it? Why, they have to hold a glass up to his mouth, and if there is a little steam then they say, "Yes, he breathes." Well, there are some of you who need such an experiment as that tried upon you, for nobody would know that you are alive except by some very delicate test.

The Christian existence is within you, but the manifestation is so feeble that it is not seen. You do not know whether you are alive! Why, nobody ever doubts whether he is alive. A man in health never says, "I do not know whether I am alive or not." He goes to work, he takes his plow and drives it across the field, or goes to his business and works all day long, and he knows he is alive by what he does.

And if some of you Christian people would only wake up from your sleepy state, and begin to labor for God, and to love souls, you would get such joy flooding through your spirits as you never knew before. It would be as though heaven had wound up its floodgates and let the river of the water of life come bursting into your soul, and instead of being like a dry, howling wilderness there would be a standing pool of water, nay, a place in which the ships of your joy, and the galley with oars of your delight, might sail for many a day. More grace and more peace, more light and more joy, I pray God that you may have these.

I have often prayed to God that I might not be the pastor of an army of invalids. I would be glad enough to comfort them and do my best to make this a hospital for them, but I want to be the captain of an army of soldiers, and to turn this place into a barracks for them. I want you to go out every day from Monday till Saturday, and on Sabbath too, fighting for Christ, contending for the faith, seeking to gather in outcasts, looking after the poor and needy, helping the weak and feeble, comforting the disconsolate, and putting out all your strength in your Master's cause. We have enough churches in London where they sleep.

Oh! may God deliver us from having this place to be a huge cemetery, and make us to be a great house, a great city, from which shall go forth the hosts and armies of the Lord to do battle for Him. May God send His Holy Spirit to abide amongst us in all His plenitude, and He shall have the glory.

Now you see all this sermon is to the Christian. I tried to preach to seekers this morning, and gave them their turn then. But if there be one here who has not found the Savior, I must add this word to him. The way of salvation is this—Trust Christ and you are saved.

Christ suffered in the place of His people. God laid their sin on Him, and punished Him as if He had been them, and whosoever trusts Christ is forgiven, he is saved. And when he is saved then I invite him to exert his strength for his Master, but till then look at home and then look at Jesus, and God grant that this look at yourselves and at your Savior may be the means of your salvation, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPHESIANS 5

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.