

AWAKE! AWAKE!
NO. 163

A SERMON
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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS

“Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”
1 Thessalonians 5:6

WHAT sad things sin has done. This fair world of ours was once a glorious temple, every pillar of which reflected the goodness of God and every part of which was a symbol of good, but sin has spoiled and marred all the metaphors and figures that might be drawn from earth. It has so deranged the divine economy of nature that those things which were matchless pictures of virtue, goodness, and divine plenitude of blessing have now become the figures and representatives of sin.

'Tis strange to say, but it is strangely true, that the very best gifts of God have by the sin of man become the worst pictures of man's guilt. Behold the flood! breaking forth from its fountains—it rushes across the fields, bearing plenty on its bosom. It covers them awhile and soon it does subside and leaves upon the plain a fertile deposit into which the farmer shall cast his seed and reap an abundant harvest.

One would have called the breaking forth of water a fine picture of the plenitude of providence, the magnificence of God's goodness to the human race—but we find that sin has appropriated that figure to itself. The beginning of sin is like the breaking forth of waters.

See the fire! how kindly God has bestowed upon us that element to cheer us in the midst of winter's frosts. Fresh from the snow and from the cold we rush to our household fire and there by our hearth we warm our hands and glad are we. Fire is a rich picture of the divine influences of the Spirit, a holy emblem of the zeal of the Christian.

But alas! sin has touched this, and the tongue is called “a fire.” “It is set on fire of hell,” we are told, and it is evidently so when it utters blasphemy and slanders. And Jude lifts up his hand and exclaims, when he looks upon the evils caused by sin, “Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth.”

And then there is sleep, one of the sweetest of God's gifts, fair sleep—

“Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep.”

Sleep God has selected as the very figure for the repose of the blessed. “They that sleep in Jesus,” says the Scripture. David puts it amongst the peculiar gifts of grace—“So he giveth his beloved sleep.” But alas! sin could not let even this alone. Sin did override even this celestial metaphor, and though God Himself had employed sleep to express the excellence of the state of the blessed, yet sin must have even this profaned, ere itself can be expressed. Sleep is employed in our text as a picture of a sinful condition—“Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

With that introduction I shall proceed at once to the text. The “sleep” of the text is *an evil to be avoided*. In the second place, the word “therefore” is employed to show us that there are *certain reasons for the avoiding of this sleep*. And since the apostle speaks of this sleep with sorrow, it is to teach us that there are some, whom he calls “others,” *over whom it is our business to lament*, because they sleep, and do not watch, and are not sober.

I. We commence, then, in the first place, by endeavoring to point out the EVIL WHICH THE APOSTLE INTENDS TO DESCRIBE UNDER THE TERM SLEEP.

The apostle speaks of “others” who are asleep. If you turn to the original you will find that the word translated “others” has a more emphatic meaning. It might be rendered (and Horne so renders it), “the

refuse”—“Let us not sleep as do *the refuse*”—the common herd, the ignoble spirits, those that have no mind above the troubles of earth.

“Let us not sleep as do the others”—the base ignoble multitude who are not alive to the high and celestial calling of a Christian. “Let us not sleep as do the refuse of mankind.” And you will find that the word “sleep,” in the original, has also a more emphatic sense. It signifies a deep sleep, a profound slumber. And the apostle intimates that the refuse of mankind are now in a profound slumber. We will now try to explain what he meant by it.

First, the apostle meant that the refuse of mankind *are in a state of deplorable ignorance*. They that sleep know nothing. There may be merriment in the house, but the sluggard shares not in its gladness. There may be death in the family, but no tear bedews the cheek of the sleeper. Great events may have transpired in the world’s history, but he knows not of them. An earthquake may have tumbled a city from its greatness, or war may have devastated a nation, or the banner of triumph may be waving in the gale, and the clarions of his country may be saluting us with victory—but he knows nothing.

*“Their labor and their love are lost,
Alike unknowing and unknown.”*

The sleeper knows not anything. Behold how the refuse of mankind are alike in this! Of some things they know much, but of spiritual things they know nothing. Of the divine person of the adorable Redeemer they have no idea. Of the sweet enjoyments of a life of piety they cannot even make a guess. Towards the high enthusiasms and the inward raptures of the Christian they cannot mount.

Talk to them of divine doctrines and they are to them a riddle. Tell them of sublime experiences and they seem to them to be enthusiastic fancies. They know nothing of the joys that are to come. And alas! for them, they are oblivious of the evils which shall happen to them if they go on in their iniquity.

The masses of mankind are ignorant. They know not—they have not the knowledge of God. They have no fear of JEHOVAH before their eyes. But blindfolded by the ignorance of this world, they march on through the paths of lust to that sure and dreadful end—the everlasting ruin of their souls.

Brethren, if we be saints, let us not be ignorant as are others. Let us search the Scriptures, for in them we have eternal life, for they do testify of Jesus. Let us be diligent. Let not the Word depart out of our hearts. Let us meditate therein both day and night that we may be as the tree planted by the rivers of water. “Let us not sleep as do others.”

Again, sleep pictures *a state of insensibility*. There may be much knowledge in the sleeper, hidden, stored away in his mind, which might be well-developed if he could but be awakened. But he has no sensibility—he knows nothing. The burglar has broken into the house—the gold and silver are both in the robber’s hands. The child is being murdered by the cruelty of him that has broken in.

But the father slumbers, though all the gold and silver that he has, and his most precious child, are in the hands of the destroyer. He is unconscious—how can he feel, when sleep has utterly sealed his senses!

Lo, in the street there is mourning. A fire has just now burned down the habitation of the poor, and houseless beggars are in the street. They are crying at his window and asking him for help. But he sleeps, and what knows he, though the night be cold, and though the poor are shivering in the blast? He has no consciousness. He feels not for them.

There! take the title deed of his estate and burn the document. There! set light to his farmyard! burn up all that he has in the field—kill his horses and destroy his cattle—let now the fire of God descend and burn up his sheep. Let the enemy fall upon all that he has and devour it. He sleeps as soundly as if he were guarded by the angel of the Lord.

Such are the refuse of mankind. But alas! that we should have to include in that word “refuse” the great bulk thereof! How few there are that feel spiritually! They feel acutely enough any injury to their body, or to their estate, but alas! for their spiritual concerns they have no sensation whatever! They are

standing on the brink of hell, but they tremble not. The anger of God is burning against them, but they fear not. The sword of JEHOVAH is unsheathed, but terror does not seize upon them.

They proceed with the merry dance, they drink the bowl of intoxicating pleasure. They revel and they riot—still do they sing the lascivious song—yea, they do more than this. In their vain dreams they do defy the Most High. Whereas if they were once awakened to the consciousness of their state, the marrow of their bones would melt and their heart would dissolve like wax in the midst of their bowels.

They are asleep, indifferent and unconscious. Do what you may to them. Let everything be swept away that is hopeful—that might give them cheer when they come to die—yet they feel it not. For how can a sleeper feel anything? But “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

Again—the sleeper *cannot defend himself*. Behold yonder prince. He is a strong man, ay, and a strong man armed. He has entered into the tent. He is wearied. He has drunk the woman’s milk. He has eaten her “butter in a lordly dish.” He casts himself down upon the floor and he slumbers.

And now she draws nigh. She has with her, her hammer and her nail. Warrior! You could break her into atoms with one blow of your mighty arm, but you cannot now defend yourself. The nail is at his ear, the woman’s hand is on the hammer, and the nail has pierced his skull—for when he slept he was defenseless. The banner of Sisera had waved victoriously over mighty foes, but now it is stained by a woman. Tell it, tell it, tell it! The man, who when he was awake made nations tremble, dies by the hand of a feeble woman when he sleeps.

Such are the refuse of mankind. They are asleep. They have no power to resist temptation. Their moral strength is departed, for God is departed from them. There is the temptation to lust. They are men of sound principle in business matters and nothing could make them swerve from honesty—but lasciviousness destroys them. They are taken like a bird in a snare, they are caught in a trap, they are utterly subdued.

Or mayhap, it is another way that they are conquered. They are men who would not do an unchaste act, or even think a lascivious thought—they scorn it. But they have another weak point—they are entrapped by the glass. They are taken and they are destroyed by drunkenness. Or if they can resist these things, and are inclined neither to looseness of life nor to excess in living, yet mayhap covetousness enters into them.

By the name of prudence, it slides into their hearts, and they are led to grasp after treasure and to heap up gold, even though that gold be wrung out of the veins of the poor, and though they do suck the blood of the orphan. They seem to be unable to resist their passion. How many times have I been told by men, “I cannot help it, sir, do what I may. I resolve, I re-resolve, but I do the same. I am defenseless. I cannot resist the temptation.”

Oh, of course you cannot, while you are asleep. O Spirit of the living God! wake up the sleeper! Let sinful sloth and presumption both be startled, lest haply Moses should come their way, and finding them asleep should hang them on the gallows of infamy forever.

Now, I come to give another meaning of the word “sleep.” I hope there have been some of my congregation who have been tolerably easy whilst I have described the first three things, because they have thought that they were exempt in those matters. But sleep also signifies *inactivity*. The farmer cannot plow his field in his sleep, neither can he cast the grain into the furrows, nor watch the clouds, nor reap his harvest.

The sailor cannot reef his sail or direct his ship across the ocean whilst he slumbers. It is not possible that on the Exchange, or in the mart, or in the house of business, men should transact their affairs with their eyes fast closed in slumber. It would be a singular thing to see a nation of sleepers, for that would be a nation of idle men. They must all starve.

They would produce no wealth from the soil. They would have nothing for their backs; nought for clothing and nought for food. But how many we have in the world that are inactive through sleep! Yes, I say inactive. I mean by that, that they are active enough in one direction, but they are inactive in the right.

Oh, how many men there are that are totally inactive in anything that is for God's glory or for the welfare of their fellow creatures! For themselves, they can "rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness." For their children, which is an alias for themselves, they can toil until their fingers ache—they can weary themselves until their eyes are red in their sockets—till the brain whirls and they can do no more.

But for God they can do nothing. Some say they have no time, others frankly confess that they have no will—for God's church they would not spend an hour—whilst for this world's pleasure they could lay out a month. For the poor they cannot spend their time and their attention. They may haply have time to spare for themselves and for their own amusement, but for holy works, for deeds of charity, and for pious acts they declare they have no leisure. Whereas, the fact is, they have no will.

Behold you, how many professing Christians there are who are asleep in this sense! They are inactive. Sinners are dying in the street by hundreds. Men are sinking into the flames of eternal wrath, but they fold their arms. They pity the poor perishing sinner, but they do nothing to show that their pity is real.

They go to their places of worship. They occupy their well-cushioned easy pew. They wish the minister to feed them every Sabbath, but there is never a child taught in the Sunday school by them. There is never a tract distributed at the poor man's house. There is never a deed done which might be the means of saving souls.

We call them good men, some of them we even elect to the office of deacons, and no doubt good men they are. They are as good as Anthony meant to say that Brutus was honorable, when he said, "So are we all, all honorable men." So are we all, all good, if they be good. But these are good, and in some sense—good for nothing.

For they just sit and eat the bread, but they do not plough the field. They drink the wine, but they will not raise the vine that does produce it. They think that they are to live unto themselves, forgetting that, "No man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself." Oh, what a vast amount of sleeping we have in all our churches and chapels.

For truly if our churches were once awake—as far as material is concerned—there are enough converted men and women, and there is enough talent with them, and enough money with them, and enough time with them, God granting the abundance of His Holy Spirit, which He would be sure to do if they were all zealous—there is enough to preach the Gospel in every corner of the earth.

The church does not need to stop for want of instruments, or for want of agencies—we have everything now except the will. We have all that we may expect God to give for the conversion of the world, except a heart for the work, and the Spirit of God poured out into our midst. Oh! brethren, "Let us not sleep as do others." You will find the "others" in the church and in the world—"the refuse" of both are sound asleep.

Ere, however, I can dismiss this first point of explanation, it is necessary for me to say that the apostle himself furnishes us with part of an exposition. For the second sentence, "let us watch and be sober," implies that the reverse of these things is the sleep, which he means.

"Let us watch." There are many that never watch. They never watch against sin. They never watch against the temptations of the enemy. They do not watch against themselves, nor against "the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life." They do not watch for opportunities to do good. They do not watch for opportunities to instruct the ignorant, to confirm the weak, to comfort the afflicted, to succor them who are in need.

They do not watch for opportunities of glorifying Jesus, or for times of communion. They do not watch for the promises. They do not watch for answers to their prayers. They do not watch for the second coming of our Lord Jesus. These are the refuse of the world—they watch not, because they are asleep. But let us *watch*—so shall we prove that we are not slumberers.

Again, let us "*be sober*." Albert Barnes says, this most of all refers to abstinence, or temperance in eating and drinking. Calvin says, not so—this refers more especially to the spirit of moderation in the things of the world. Both are right. It refers to both. There are many who are not sober. They sleep,

because they are not so, for insobriety leads to sleep. They are not sober—they are drunkards, they are gluttons. They are not sober—they cannot be content to do a little business—they want to do a great deal. They are not sober—they cannot carry on a trade that is sure—they must speculate. They are not sober—if they lose their property, their spirit is cast down within them, and they are like men that are drunk with wormwood.

If on the other hand, they get rich, they are not sober—they so set their affections upon things on earth that they become intoxicated with pride, because of their riches—become purse-proud and need to have the heavens lifted up higher, lest their heads should dash against the stars. How many people there are who are not sober!

Oh! I might especially urge this precept upon you at this time, my dear friends. We have hard times coming and the times are hard enough now. Let us be sober. The fearful panic in America has mainly arisen from disobedience to this command—“Be sober,” and if the professors of America had obeyed this commandment, and had been sober, the panic might at any rate have been mitigated, if not totally avoided.

Now, in a little time you who have any money laid by will be rushing to the bank to have it drawn out, because you fear that the bank is tottering. You will not be sober enough to have a little trust in your fellow men and help them through their difficulty, and so be a blessing to the commonwealth. And you who think there is anything to be got with lending your money at usury, will not be content with lending what you have, but you will be extorting and squeezing your poor debtors that you may get the more to lend. Men are seldom content to get rich slowly, but he that hastens to be rich shall not be innocent.

Take care, my brethren—if any hard times should come to London, if commercial houses should smash, and banks be broken—take care to be sober. There is nothing will get us over a panic so well as every one of us trying to keep our spirits up—just rising in the morning and saying, “Times are very hard, and today I may lose my all, but fretting will not help it. So just let me set a bold heart against hard sorrow and go to my business. The wheels of trade may stop. I bless God my treasure is in heaven. I cannot be bankrupt. I have set my affections on the things of God. I cannot lose those things. There is my jewel. There is my heart!”

Why, if all men could do that, it would tend to create public confidence. But the cause of the great ruin of many men is the covetousness of all men and the fear of some. If we could all go through the world with confidence, and with boldness, and with courage, there is nothing in the world that could avert the shock so well.

Come, I suppose the shock must, and there are many men now present who are very respectable, who may expect to be beggars ere long. Your business is, so to put your trust in JEHOVAH that you may be able to say, “Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will I not fear.”

And doing that, you will be creating more probabilities for the avoidance of your own destruction than by any other means which the wisdom of man can dictate to you. Let us not be intemperate in business, as are others, but let us be awake. “Let us not sleep”—not be carried away by the somnambulism of the world, for what is it better than that—activity and greed in sleep? “But let us watch and be sober.” Oh, Holy Spirit help us to watch and be sober.

II. Thus I have occupied a great deal of time in explaining the first point—What was the sleep which the apostle meant? And now you will notice that the word “therefore” implies that there are CERTAIN REASONS FOR THIS.

I shall give you these reasons. And if I should cast them somewhat into a dramatic form, you must not wonder—they will the better, perhaps, be remembered. “Therefore,” says the apostle, “let us not sleep.”

We shall first look at the chapter itself for our reasons. The first reason precedes the text. The apostle tells us that, “We are all the children of *the light* and of the day; *therefore* let us not sleep as do others.” I marvel not when, as I walk through the streets after nightfall, I see every shop closed and every window-blind down. And I see the light in the upper room significant of retirement to rest.

I wonder not that a half an hour later my foot-fall startles me and I find none in the streets. Should I ascend the staircase and look into the sleepers' placid countenances, I should not wonder. For it is night, the proper time for sleep. But if some morning at eleven or twelve o'clock, I should walk down the streets and find myself alone, and notice every shop closed, and every house straitly shut up, and hearken to no noise, I should say, "'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing. What are these people at? 'Tis daytime and yet they are all asleep."

I should be inclined to seize the first rapper I could find, and give a double knock, and rush to the next door, and ring the bell, and so all the way down the street. Or go to the police station and wake up what men I found there, and bid them make a noise in the street. Or go for the fire engine and bid the firemen rattle down the road and try to wake these people up.

For I should say to myself, "There is some pestilence here. The angel of death must have flown through these streets during the night and killed all these people, or else they would have been sure to have been awake." Sleep in the daytime is utterly incongruous. "Well, now," says the apostle Paul, "you people of God, it is daytime with you. The sun of righteousness has risen upon you with healing in His wings. The light of God's Spirit is in your conscience. You have been brought out of darkness into marvelous light. For you to be asleep, for a church to slumber, is like a city a-bed in the day, like a whole town slumbering when the sun is shining. It is untimely and unseemly."

And now, if you look at the text again, you will find there is another argument. "Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love." So, then, it seems it is *war-time* and therefore, again, it is unseemly to slumber.

There is a fortress yonder, far away in India. A troop of those abominable Sepoys have surrounded it. Bloodthirsty hell-hounds, if they once gain admission, they will rend the mother and her children, and cut the strong man in pieces. They are at the gates—their cannons are loaded—their bayonets thirst for blood and their swords are hungry to slay.

Go through the fortress and the people are all asleep. There is the warden on the tower, nodding on his bayonet. There is the captain in his tent, with his pen in his hand and his dispatches before him, asleep at the table. There are soldiers lying down in their tents, ready for the war, but all slumbering. There is not a man to be seen keeping watch. There is not a sentry there. All are asleep.

Why, my friends, you would say, "Whatever is the matter here? What can it be? Has some great wizard been waving his wand and put a spell upon them all? Or are they all mad? Have their minds fled? Surely, to be asleep in war-time is indeed outrageous. Here! take down that trumpet—go close up to the captain's ear and blow a blast, and see if it does not awake him in a moment.

Just take away that bayonet from the soldier that is asleep on the walls, and give him a sharp prick with it, and see if he does not awake." But surely, surely nobody can have patience with people asleep when the enemy surround the walls and are thundering at the gates.

Now, Christians, this is your case. Your life is a life of warfare—the world, the flesh, and the devil are a hellish trinity, and your poor nature is wretched mudwork behind which to be entrenched. Are you asleep? Asleep, when Satan has fireballs of lust to hurl into the windows of your eyes—when he has arrows of temptation to shoot into your heart—when he has snares into which to trap your feet?

Asleep, when he has undermined your very existence and when he is about to apply the match with which to destroy you, unless sovereign grace prevents it? Oh! sleep not, soldier of the cross! To sleep in war-time is utterly inconsistent. Great Spirit of God forbid that we should slumber.

But now, leaving the chapter itself, I will give you one or two other reasons that will, I trust, move Christian people to awake out of their sleep. "*Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!*" Then comes the ringing of a bell. What is this? Here is a door marked with a great white cross. Lord, have mercy upon us! All the houses down that street seem to be marked with that white death cross. What is this?

Here is the grass growing in the streets. Here are Cornhill and Cheapside deserted. No one is found treading a solitary pavement. There is not a sound to be heard but those horse hoofs, like the hoofs of death's pale horse upon the stones, the ringing of that bell that sounds the death-knell to many, and the

rumbling of the wheels of that cart, and the dreadful cry, “Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!”

Do you see that house? A physician lives there. He is a man who has great skill and God has lent him wisdom. But a little while ago, whilst in his study, God was pleased to guide his mind and he discovered the secret of the plague. He was plague-smitten himself and ready to die, but he lifted the blessed vial to his lips and he drank a draught and cured himself.

Do you believe what I am about to tell you? Can you imagine it? That man has the prescription that will heal all these people. He has it in his pocket. He has the medicine which, if once distributed in those streets, would make the sick rejoice and put that dead man’s bell away.

But he is asleep! He is asleep! He is asleep! O you heavens! why do you not fall and crush the wretch? O earth! how could you bear this demon upon your bosom? Why not swallow him up quick? He has the medicine. He is too lazy to go and tell forth the remedy. He has the cure and is too idle to go out and administer it to the sick and the dying!

No, my friends, such an inhuman wretch could not exist! But I can see him here today. There are you! You know the world is sick with the plague of sin, and you yourself have been cured by the remedy which has been provided. You are asleep, inactive, loitering. You do not go forth to—

*“Tell to others round,
What a dear Saviour you have found.”*

There is the precious Gospel—you do not go and put it to the lips of a sinner. There is the all-precious blood of Christ—you never go to tell the dying what they must do to be saved. The world is perishing with worse than plague—and you are idle! And you are a minister of the Gospel. And you have taken that holy office upon yourself, and you are content to preach twice on a Sunday and once on a weekday, and there is no remonstrance within you.

You never desire to attract the multitudes to hear you preach. You had rather keep your empty benches and study propriety, than you would once, at the risk of appearing over-zealous, draw the multitude and preach the Word to them.

You are a writer—you have great power in writing. You devote your talents alone to light literature, or to the production of other things which may furnish amusement, but which cannot benefit the soul. You know the truth, but you do not tell it out.

Yonder mother is a converted woman—you have children and you forget to instruct them in the way to heaven. You yonder, are a young man, having nothing to do on the Sabbath day and there is the Sunday school. You do not go to tell those children the sovereign remedy that God has provided for the care of sick souls.

The death-bell is ringing e’en now. Hell is crying out, howling with hunger for the souls of men. “Bring out the sinner! Bring out the sinner! Bring out the sinner! Let him die and be damned!” And there are you professing to be a Christian and doing nothing which might make you the instrument of saving souls—never putting out your hand to be the means in the hand of the Lord of plucking sinners as brands from the burning!

Oh! May the blessing of God rest on you, to turn you from such an evil way, that you may not sleep as do others, but may watch and be sober. The world’s imminent danger demands that we should be active and not be slumbering.

Hark how the mast creaks! See the sails there, rent to ribbons. Breakers ahead! She will be on the rocks directly. Where is the captain? Where is the boatswain? Where are the sailors? Ahoy there! Where are you? Here’s a storm come on. Where are you?

You are down in the cabin. And there is the captain in a soft sweet slumber. There is the man at the wheel, as sound asleep as ever he can be. And there are all the sailors in their hammocks. What! and the breakers ahead? What! the lives of two hundred passengers in danger and here are these brutes asleep? Kick them out. What is the good of letting such men as these be sailors, especially in such a time as this?

Why, out with you! If you had gone to sleep in fine weather we might have forgiven you. Up with you, captain! What have you been at? Are you mad? But hark! the ship has struck—she will be down in a moment. Now you will work, will you? Now you will work, when it is of no use, and when the shrieks of drowning women shall toll you into hell for your most accursed negligence in not having taken care of them. Well, that is very much like a great many of us, in these times too.

This proud ship of our commonwealth is reeling in a storm of sin. The very mast of this great nation is creaking under the hurricane of vice that sweeps across the noble vessel. Every timber is strained and God help the good ship, or alas! none can save her. And who are her captain and her sailors, but ministers of God, the professors of religion? These are they to whom God gives grace to steer the ship.

“Ye are the salt of the earth.” You preserve and keep it alive, O children of God. Are you asleep in the storm? Are you slumbering now? If there were no dens of vice, if there were no harlots, if there were no houses of profanity, if there were no murders and no crimes, oh! you that are the salt of the earth—you might sleep.

But today the sin of London cries in the ears of God. This behemoth city is covered with crime and God is vexed with her. And are we asleep, doing nothing? Then God forgive us! But surely, of all the sins He ever does forgive, this is the greatest, the sin of slumbering when a world is damning—the sin of being idle when Satan is busy, devouring the souls of men. “Brethren let us not sleep” in such times as these, for if we do, a curse must fall upon us, horrible to bear.

There is a poor prisoner in a cell. His hair is all matted over his eyes. A few weeks ago the judge put on the black cap and commanded that he should be taken to the place from whence he came, and hung by the neck until dead. The poor wretch has his heart broken within him, whilst he thinks of the pinion, of the gallows, and of the drop, and of after-death. Oh! who can tell how his heart is rent and racked, whilst he thinks of leaving all and going he knows not where?

There is a man there, sound asleep upon a bed. He has been asleep there these two days, and under his pillow he has that prisoner’s free pardon. I would horsewhip that scoundrel, horsewhip him soundly, for making that poor man have two days of extra misery. Why, if I had had that man’s pardon, I would have been there. If I rode on the wings of lightning to get at him, I should have thought the fastest train that ever run but slow, if I had so sweet a message to carry, and such a poor heavy heart to carry it to. But that man, that brute, is sound asleep, with a free pardon under his pillow, whilst that poor wretch’s heart is breaking with dismay!

Ah! do not be too hard with him—he is here today. Side by side with you this morning there is sitting a poor penitent sinner. God has pardoned him and intends that you should tell him that good news. He sat by your side last Sunday and he wept all the sermon through, for he felt his guilt. If you had spoken to him then, who can tell? He might have had comfort, but there he is now—you do not tell him the good news.

Do you leave that to me to do? Ah! sirs, but you cannot serve God by proxy. What the minister does is nought to you. You have your own personal duty to do and God has given you a precious promise. It is now on your heart. Will you not turn round to your neighbor and tell him that promise? Oh! there is many an aching heart that aches because of our idleness in telling the good news of this salvation.

“Yes,” says one of my members, who always comes to this place on Sunday and looks out for young men and young women whom he has seen in tears the Sunday before, and who brings many into the church, “Yes, I could tell you a story.”

He looks a young man in the face and says, “Haven’t I seen you here a great many times?” “Yes.” “I think you take a deep interest in the service, do you not?” “Yes, I do—what makes you ask me that question?” “Because I looked at your face last Sunday and I thought there was something at work with you.”

“Oh, sir,” he says, “nobody has spoken to me ever since I have been here till now, and I want to say a word to you. When I was at home with my mother, I used to think I had some idea of religion, but I came away, and was bound apprentice with an ungodly lot of youths, and have done everything I ought

not to have done. And now, sir, I begin to weep, I begin to repent. I wish to God that I knew how I might be saved! I hear the Word preached, sir, but I want something spoken personally to me by somebody.”

And he turns round, he takes him by the hand and says, “My dear young brother, I am so glad I spoke to you. It makes my poor old heart rejoice to think that the Lord is doing something here still. Now, do not be cast down, for you know, ‘This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’”

The young man puts his handkerchief to his eyes and after a minute, he says, “I wish you would let me call and see you, sir.” “Oh! you may,” he says. He talks with him, he leads him onward, and at last by God’s grace the happy youth comes forward and declares what God has done for his soul, and owes his salvation as much to the humble instrumentality of the man that helped him as he could do to the preaching of the minister.

Beloved brethren, the Bridegroom comes! Awake! Awake! The earth must soon be dissolved and the heavens must melt! Awake! Awake! O Holy Spirit arouse us all and keep us awake.

III. And now I have no time for the last point and therefore I shall not detain you. Suffice me to say in warning, there is AN EVIL HERE LAMENTED.

There are some that are asleep and the apostle mourns it.

My fellow sinner, you that are this day unconverted, let me say six or seven sentences to you and you shall depart. Unconverted man! Unconverted woman! You are asleep today, as they who sleep on the top of the mast in time of a storm. You are asleep, as he who sleeps when the water-floods are out, and when his house is undermined, and being carried down the stream far out to sea. You are asleep, as he who in the upper chamber, when his house is burning and his own locks are singeing in the fire—knows not the devastation around him.

You are asleep—asleep as he that lies upon the edge of a precipice, with death and destruction beneath him. One single start in his sleep would send him over, but he knows it not. You are asleep this day. And the place where you sleep has so frail a support that when once it breaks, you shall fall into hell—and if you wake not till then—what a waking it will be! “In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.” And he cried for a drop of water but it was denied him.

“He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” This is the Gospel. Believe in Jesus and you shall “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

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.