

The Sleeping Church

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Date: 29 December 2013

[0:00] The night is far spent, the day is at night, and the day is at night.

Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Amen. Please be seated. This is the Word of God.

Knowing that it is high time to awake out of sleep. One of the big problems of our time is sleeping Christians. Sleeping, sleeping Christians.

A sleeping, sleeping church. The church has fallen asleep. While Christians sleep, the enemy works. Souls are being lost, and the church is failing to fulfil God's mission.

And many of these days of playing games, playing church, caught up in the toys and the trinkets of the world, preoccupied or spiritually asleep. And we are told it is high time to awake out of sleep.

[1:22] It is a real problem. Sleepy Christians. Many are slumbering and sleeping. Many have grown fatigued. Weary in well-doing. Some have perhaps fallen into the drowsiness of sin.

And what a travesty it is to be sleeping on the job. Sleeping when we ought to be awake. I know where I work, it's a 24 by 7 operation.

There's people in the service that I'm responsible for that look after people 24 hours a day. And in some of these places, there's people on duty all hours of the night.

And they're expected to stay awake. They have to stay awake. And if someone is found to have fallen asleep, it's a very serious matter.

It's dismissal or certainly discipline. And it's not allowed. It's a sacrilegious offence to fall asleep when we're at a post, when we're at a place of duty.

[2:22] And it should be likewise for the Christian church. Sleeping on duty. Sleeping on the job is a very serious matter. What happens when someone is asleep?

When someone is asleep, there's a coldness. It's a fact that when a person sleeps, their body temperature decreases by one or two degrees.

Reducing the amount of energy used. What about spiritually? Perhaps it might reflect that coldness towards the thing of God. So the things of God. That coolness.

That cooling off. That lukewarmness towards the things of God. Let's look at some other signs about sleep. Signs about sleep. You know, I did some research for this sermon today.

I had a sleep this afternoon. But that was a sanctified sleep. You know, the pastors are allowed to have a sleep on a Sunday, a siesta. And sometimes I get my best sermon inspiration that way.

[3:22] But, you know, I did some research for this sermon about sleep. And what does it mean to be in a state of sleep? Now, I don't want you trying it out.

Just wait until you get home for this. But when you're asleep, some things are noticeable. Some things can be noteworthy when you are asleep. When you are asleep, you have a loss of sensitivity. A loss of sensitivity. So when you're asleep, you don't know what's going on around you. You don't know what's going on around you. There is a loss of sensitivity.

Your eyes close and you can't see what's going on. And you become insensitive with your other senses. For example, your sense of taste, a touch, a smell, of hearing.

You know, it's been noted that we need smoke detectors that stand the alarm because you can't smell the smoke when your house is burning down. You have to be awakened from your sleep because your sense of smell is dulled when you're asleep.

[4:26] And so these senses of taste, touch, smell, of hearing, they're all compromised when we are asleep. Sensitivity. Sensitivity.

What happens then when we are spiritually asleep? Spiritually asleep. We can all grow dull with our spiritual senses. Now, the Word talks about having our senses exercised to discern.

We've got spiritual senses and a spiritual sensitivity. And if we're part of the sleeping church, if we're a sleeping saint, we lose those sensitivities, that spiritual sensitivity.

We lose touch with God and with His Spirit that can minister to us and through us. We become desensitized to the things of God. And when we, physically speaking, are asleep, we lose the sense of being in danger.

Now, you wouldn't know if someone had just broken into your house if you were asleep. Consider what happened with Samson, with Samson's fall.

[5:38] Samson didn't get drunk. He didn't commit murder. He didn't steal. He just succumbed to sleep. He succumbed to sleep.

And his hair was cut. His sign of strength was cut while he was asleep. When we are asleep, we are vulnerable. Many people have been killed in their sleep.

David's men took the spear of sleeping sore. Eutychus fell asleep while Paul was preaching and fell from the third loft and died. Of course, he was raised to life again.

There was a sensitivity that was dullened. They were vulnerable in these circumstances. We know there was a man who had his temple nailed to the ground when he was asleep, wasn't there?

I can't think of his name. But there's different circumstances. And we know even in the physical world, sometimes people get killed while they're asleep. They take a gun and shoot them while they're asleep because there's a vulnerability.

[6:40] There's a loss of sensitivity. How about, brothers and sisters, tonight that we check out the vital signs, as it were, check out our spiritual sensitivities.

Are we sensitive to God? Sensitive to the Holy Spirit? Sensitive and receptive to the Word of God? How is our sensitivity to God today?

Are we not sensitive? Sensitive, perhaps distracted. That can be one thing. Or maybe intoxicated by the world and the things of the world.

We must cut loose from sin. Take note of the loss of sensitivity. Secondly, when you're asleep, you may notice a loss of consciousness.

A loss of consciousness. When a man is sleeping, when he grows sleepy, he becomes unconcerned about what is going on around him. A loss of consciousness, a loss of concern.

[7:39] It's said that sleep leads to a decreased responsiveness to external stimuli. So in other words, you're not responsive to the things that are around about you.

You become dull into it. And you switch off when you're asleep. Now I'm watching you here, brothers and sisters. I'm praying that you don't go to sleep. Alright? I'm not picking on anyone.

But don't go to sleep. Because it's a loss of consciousness. I want you to be conscious tonight about these things. There's a decreased responsiveness to things. We switch off.

We're not conscious about what things are going on around us. We're not conscious of where we are even. You know, sometimes, who's ever gone on a holiday and gone to sleep in a strange bed and then you wake up and wonder, Whoa, where am I?

This isn't my bedroom. You know, we're not conscious of where we are and what's going on around about us. And the sleeping church tomb can have a loss of consciousness. It's as if we become deadened.

[8:37] Deadened. And we take on a death-like slumber. Spiritually, when we're sleepy, we lose consciousness of spiritual things. We can grow unconcerned.

Unconcerned to pray. Unconcerned for perishing souls. These things no longer move us. There's an unconsciousness.

There's a lack of consciousness. There's a lack of concern. We lose that spiritual consciousness that we once knew. When you sleep, you can't hear that well.

When you're spiritually asleep, you can't hear the Word of God. You know, we switch off when we're spiritually asleep. Your consciousness is affected, even distorted when you sleep.

What happens when you sleep? You, starts with D. Dream. Your dream. You might doze, but your dream. Generally, your dream.

[9:33] So your consciousness is affected, even distorted. You lose touch with what is real. You know, you could become someone really famous in your dreams. You know, in your dreams.

You know, you can become someone other than your real self in your dreams. Your sense of what is real, you lose touch with it. And when someone is asleep, sometimes they dream.

So in other words, they lose their sense of judgment. They can imagine things. And their dream world can become so real, but it is not. You know, there's times I look back and I've got certain memories in my mind and I wonder, did I dream that or did it really happen?

You know, who's ever thought like that? Your dream is so vivid, so real, that you wonder, wow, did that really happen? How about spiritually now?

Do we lose consciousness? Consciousness of the eternal. Consciousness of the things of God. Do we fail to see things as they really are? Do we sometimes have a dream world idea of our Christian life that's far from the reality of it?

[10:41] Carnality can creep in. Like with Samson. Samson is a type of a carnal Christian. Well, some would dispute whether there is such a thing as a carnal Christian. But certainly there was a carnality to the life of Samson.

He thought that he could have it both ways. He thought he could feed his carnal appetites, his love of ease, of the things worldly that he could enjoy, this pagan woman that he wanted to hang with, his carnal appetites, and he thought that he could still hold on to and cherish his spiritual blessings. But he was wrong. He couldn't have it both ways. While he was sleeping peacefully on Delilah's lap in Judges 16, verse 19, the Philistines cut off his hair.

He lost his anointing while he slept. What about the church today? What about this church? About you and I? If we are asleep spiritually, we will compromise our separation.

We will lose our consciousness of God. We will lose our anointing. That connection with God, that communion with him is lost when we doze off, as it were, spiritually.

[12:05] A sleeping church is carnal. Becoming a carnal church, ineffective. A sleeping church is a silent church.

We do not bear witness when we are asleep. We are urged through the word of God to be vigilant, to be sober, to watch, to be watchful.

We are urged to be alert. 1 Peter 1, verses 15 through 17, it says, But as he which hath called you to be holy, sorry, I'll say that again.

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation or conduct or way of life. Be holy in all your way of life.

Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy. And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons, judges, according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

[13:06] Be holy, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Our sojourning, taking a sojourn is taking a journey. It's travelling.

Spend the time of your earthly travels, of your earthly journey here in fear. That's what Peter's saying. Spend your time on earth in holy fear.

We must shake ourselves from sleep, brothers and sisters, and regain our sense of the consciousness towards the things of God. So we've seen some of the characteristics of sleep.

A loss of sensitivity, a loss of consciousness. Also, we see that sleeping is associated with sloth.

Sloth. It's another characteristic of sleeping. When you're asleep, you are associated with sloth. It's not always, it's not saying every time you sleep, you're slothful, but I'm sure you understand what I'm saying.

[14:11] The slothful sleep. And sleep is related to inactivity.

Slothfulness or sloth. It means idleness. It means that inactivity that's lazy and related to laziness.

Overdone sleep is related to idleness. We're not saying that all sleep is bad. Don't get me wrong.

But we're talking about the sense of the sleep that is taking away from that alertness that we are to have as God's people.

And throughout the book of Proverbs we see sloth contrasted with diligence. So sloth or laziness contrasted with the opposite diligence.

In other words, righteous work and good work, activity, healthy, good activity. Diligence being about an active and about doing something.

So God's people are called to have a sense of duty and exercise diligence. The opposite of that is sloth. Slothfulness. Doesn't mean we've got to be full on, full steam every waking minute.

[15:25] But there's a sense where God commends us to be diligent, to be actively doing something with our life, making it count. But the spiritually sleepy Christian brings shame.

read two Proverbs, there's many references. The one who is slothful or lazy is failing in his spiritual duty. For example, we read in Proverbs 10 verse 5, it says, He that sleepeth in harvest, in other words, the one who's sleeping when he should be out there cutting the grain and bringing it in and about the work of the harvest, when it's harvest time, we're to get up early and get out there and harvest while it's reaping time.

He that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame. It's a shameful thing. When we should be at work, it's shameful to be asleep.

And the lazy fritter their time away. They waste their time. Friends, we've only got one shot at this life. We've only got one shot. We've only got one day at a time, lived one day at a time.

We want to make the most of our time, redeem the time because the days are evil. Make the most of them. And the lazy just waste their time by lounging around and have nothing much to show.

[16:48] Proverbs 12, 24, it shows the stark contrast between the diligent and the slothful. Here's those two again. The hand of the diligent shall bear rule, but the slothful shall be under tribute.

So the hand of the diligent, the one who is active in doing things shall be rewarded, shall bear rule, but the slothful, the lazy, shall be under tribute. This has the sense of being forced to work as a slave.

You know, they're under a burden of slavery, of tribute. Which will we be? Diligent or slothful? The sleeping church is guilty of the sin of sloth.

It's a sin. Now, the Catholics put it as one of the deadly sins, sloth. You know, of course we don't go by their list, but there's a truth there. I can give them that one. You know, sin, sloth is a sin.

And we see it there in the sleeping disciples of the garden. When they should have been praying, what were they doing? The sleeping disciples.

[17:56] And what a picture of the sleeping church. They neglected their duty. They should have been standing in the place of prayer, but they were slothful and slumbering and sleeping.

Slothfulness, it's a wasteful thing. It's a great loss. In Proverbs 18, verse 9, it says, He also that is slothful in his work, is brother to him, that he's a great waster.

Who's ever known people that are wasteful? You see what people put in their hard waste. What a waste. They could have given that to someone. Slothfulness is related to wastefulness.

It's a waste. Don't waste your life. Don't waste your life, brother, sister. Make it count. Make it count. He that is slothful is brother to him, that is a great waster.

We've only got one chance at this life. Galatians 6, verse 7, it says, Be not deceived. God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

[19:07] For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. But he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

It depends what we sow. We can reap to the flesh. In other words, just have a carefree, careless, Christless life.

Or we can sow to the spirit. Let the things of the spirit of God, the things that God would be pleased with, let those fill our lives and fill our thoughts and our actions.

These are strong words here. God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Be not deceived. You've got to be awake and alert to that one. What are you sowing? He says to you who are slothful, wake up!

[20:10] A person who is asleep is in a state of inaction. They earn nothing and they gain nothing worthwhile. And you can't bring in the harvest while you're asleep.

You might do it in your dreams, but not in reality. It's a waste. What about the sleepy Christian? It's easy, brothers and sisters, to be just like the disciples, the closest ones to our Lord, the ones he's invested three years full time of his teaching.

They should have been as bright as a button, shouldn't they? Yet they couldn't pray with him for one hour. Will we be slothful and lazy?

God commands diligence and condemns neglect. We must overcome laziness. Make today a turning point for your life. Make it a turning point.

Make it a New Year's resolution even. Now don't wait until New Year's Day. Make it now. Make it now. Overcome laziness. Do not neglect so great salvation.

[21:22] We've seen some things so far. We've seen the characteristics of the sleeping. We've seen such things as their preoccupation with a lack of sensitivity, of consciousness, of an alliance with slothfulness.

Another thing that is associated with sleeping is immobility. Immobility. When you're asleep, you're largely immobile.

You're not really walking around doing anything, but mind you, some people can. They're amazing. Sleepwalkers. We're not talking about that. But when someone sleeps, they're generally lying down. Their posture is one that they're flat out doing nothing other than breathing and, you know, just basic maintenance of their body.

So there's a loss of function when we're asleep. The bodily movement is reduced and bodily functions are partially suspended. So what is the characteristic?

[22:24] A sleeping person is characterized by inaction. Inaction. Their voluntary muscles become inactive. So sleep is a period of reduced activity.

Some Christians have become inactive. You know, I've had seasons of that. When we become inactive, we once cared for serving the Lord, but other things took his place.

We once cared about things that were spiritual, but then we became idle towards those things.

Once attending the prayer meetings, once involved in the work of the church, now become a comfortable pure warmer.

Inactive. Inactivity. You know, one of the real dangers of isolating ourselves from fellowship is the danger of falling to sleep. We need one another.

We need to come to church and get stirred up. And we need to come to church and stir others up in a good way. Provide them unto love and to good works, to activity. We've examined the problem of sleepiness.

[23:30] The sleeping church, sleepy saints. Now let's look. What can we do about it? What can we do about this fundamental, contemporary, spiritual problem of the sleeping church?

What are we going to do about the sleeping church? It's our duty to wake up, to rouse ourselves and others. We need a new awareness of God, a renewed sensitivity, a renewed consciousness of who our God is, of Calvary, of his great love where which he has loved us, of the great grace with which he has saved us.

let's hear his wake up call church. Let's hear his wake up call. The call to the church today is wake up to that new awareness of God.

Friends, we see the diluted gospel is everywhere around about. There's a tsunami of worldliness sweeping across our churches of our land.

And look at what the best sellers are in the Christian bookstores. You know, the top ten down there at the Christian bookshop. It reflects the carnality of the churches.

[24:44] It reflects the decline across the churches, a decline from godliness and truth. What's popular isn't always right. And churches can just become little coffee clubs, coffee and cookies.

But the Lord Jesus is coming soon. People, Jesus is coming soon. He's about to return to planet earth and some are fallen asleep. We must wake up.

Wake up Australia. One Thessalonians fire is in that context of our Lord's returning. One Thessalonians fire, Paul says, we are not of the night nor of the darkness.

Let us not sleep as do others. We need to sound an alarm. It is high time to awake. It is time to awake.

When you've got to get up for work, you can't hit the snooze button. You might maybe hit it once, but no, you've got to get up. You've got to turn that knob in your head to say, yeah, I've got to get up whether I feel like it or not.

[25:51] I've got to get out of bed. That's what we need to do spiritually, brothers and sisters. It's high time. It's time to awake. Let's stop making excuses.

Making excuses, why not? Why should I not? Excuses, excuses, excuses. I found a really good website. If you're looking for an excuse why I can't get to church, there's a website you can get 187 reasons why.

187 excuses why you can miss church. I'll give you the website later if you're interested. You might need it sometime. 187 excuses.

But are they, do they stack up really? This is eternal stuff. It's an eternal transaction. It's an eternal relationship with God.

These things are eternal. They're precious and critical. It's easy for us to make excuses. Why should I not be a diligent Christian?

[26:59] Why should I not have a little bit of sleep and slumber and be a bit carefree and carnal in my Christian walk? But if we consider God's fiery eyes searching us in judgment then we will wake up.

God rebukes the watchmen who sleep. In Isaiah 56 verse 10 there's a rebuke there to the watchmen. Now those who should be preaching his watchmen are blind.

They are all ignorant. They are all dumb dogs. They cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Now I'm sure he wasn't talking about the sanctified siesta that I had today but we're talking about those dumb dogs, these watchmen who should have been sounding the alarm saying hey look there's danger here.

The ones who would man the ramparts and the watchtowers around the walls of the city and raise the alarm. They were sleeping on the job. As useless as a dog that can't bark.

You know just as well put it down. It's not much use. To be sleeping when we're meant to be working and awake is a sin. Ephesians 5 14 it says wherefore he saith awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light.

[28:22] The only answer is to awaken out of sleep. God wants us to wake up the sleeping Christians to wake up the sleeping church. Awake awake put on strength at arm of the Lord.

Isaiah 51 verse 9. So friends I urge you today in an encouraging way I say to you I spur you on as my brother as my sister in Christ to be awakened to be awakened up to the dangerous sleep.

There's disastrous results for sleeping spiritually. We see as I've talked about in a workplace where you have to be awake. People's lives can be at stake.

Someone could suffer for your slumbering when you're meant to be awake. Imagine a century asleep at his post when the enemy forces come.

What a travesty. What a tragedy. We cannot afford to sleep when we're meant to be on duty. And friends we are meant to be on duty.

[29:25] Occupy when? Till I come. Our Lord gave a parable of how some men were sleeping and the enemy came and sowed some false believers.

The picture was of weeds getting sown in a field and the spiritual connotation was of the enemy sowing false believers amongst the real.

So when you gather in a church community not everyone is a Christian in the gathering. And the truth of it here was that when we're asleep the enemy gets busy.

That's the danger. Let's not sleep at our post. In 1 Corinthians 15 34 it says awake to righteousness.

sinner and sin not. It's been said that a sleeping saint is no more useful to the Lord than a dead sinner. We don't want to be dead.

[30:26] We don't want to be sleeping. We're missing out on what God wants to do with us. It's disobedience isn't it? So sleep is thankfully there's a good thing about sleep. If we're asleep we can be woken up.

sleep is relatively easy to reverse. That's a good thing isn't it? So while there's still time to seek God we can reverse the situation if we're a sleepy Christian.

It's as distinct from being in a coma or hibernation as some animals have. Sleep is relatively easily reversible. So thank God.

Friends if you're a sleepy Christian if we're a sleepy church tonight there is hope for us but we must respond to God in watchfulness. In Revelation 3 the Lord addresses the angel of the church at Sardis and he says be watchful and strengthen the things which remain.

Be watchful. There's many verses. Have a look through your concordance of watch, watchful, watchfulness and such like. There's a need to watch, to be alert.

[31:37] We know that we're told to be sober, be vigilant. There's a sense of that having your eyes wide open, have your eyes peeled.

A wake up call tonight. Friends, let's all be challenged to a deeper walk. However spiritual you might be, we can do more can't we?

However godly you might be, let's press on, press in, go deeper with God as it were in that spiritual life. Return to that spiritual life and power.

I know when I was a younger Christian, I used to have a lot more zeal. God, I really think that in some ways, that I was more zealous than I am now.

And we can all think, I just think, well, I could do better, I could do a lot better. And I guess if we're all honest enough, honest with God, we could think, was there a time that I was more devoted, that I was more spiritual than I am now?

[32:42] Can God grant me that refreshing of spiritual life and power that I once had? Refresh it, renew it again, revitalise it, revitalise my prayer, revitalise the preaching, the fellowship thing, that we'll care about things like sin, righteousness and judgement.

Because God's judgement is about to fall. It's just around the corner. And where does it start? At the house of God. The judgement must begin at the house of God.

In other words, the family of God. God's people, God's children, his household of faith. He looks at us and judgement starts here.

So we need to stay away brothers and sisters. Judgement is about to fall. Now when I was having my spiritual siesta this afternoon, I just had some last minute preparation time for this sermon and I saw something that stood out to me and it really hit me between the eyeballs.

And I thought, this is an important spiritual truth to leave you with tonight because it occurs in a couple of places and it's quite noteworthy. I thought that when I saw this, for example, we started with the scripture, Romans 13 11, it's high time to awake out asleep.

[34:14] Next verse says, let us put on the armour of light. The answer for the sleeping Christian, for the sleeping church, is put on the armour of light.

Put on the armour of light. And then it goes on, verse 14, put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust thereof.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. It's got the sense of clothe yourselves with Christ. Let him clothe you, dwell in him. Now, when I'm trying to go to sleep, I've got this strange obsession lately.

You might think me really weird and you're going to have nightmares about it when you think about it later. But I wear a beanie, and I put it over my eyes, and it helps me feel, it makes it darker for me. Plus it keeps my bald head a bit warmer. And so putting this beanie on my head, and making my eyes covered, helps me to sleep. Why?

[35:22] Because I'm blocking out the light. Blocking out the light. That's why Christians are asleep. Because we're blocking out the light, the armour of light.

It's what should clothe us. Keep the light on. Julie likes to have the light on. Sometimes you've got a night light. I like it to be pitch black. It helps me to sleep. When it's black, when it's dark.

But spiritually speaking, consider, when we put the light on, we wake up, don't we? Put the light on. Sometimes when we're going off our holiday, and we've got to get up early, Julie puts the light on really early in the morning, and it wakes me up.

Isn't that a good thing, isn't it? Put the light on. That's what we need to do. Let's restore that light, the reverence of God, the fear of God, the things of God. Let's put the light on, and put on the armour of light.

It's interesting, as I say, because this occurs also in the 1 Thessalonians 5 reference. 1 Thessalonians 5. I'll just refresh myself here, because I only just noticed this, and I just scribbled it down in my last-minute thoughts.

[36:31] 1 Thessalonians 5, where it says, you're not in darkness that this day overtake you, as a thief. You are all children of the light. Children of the light, and the children of the day.

This is 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 5. We are not of the night, nor of the darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober.

Interesting, isn't it? The light is there too. The light is there. And it goes on verse 8. In the same context, it says, let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breast plate of faith and love, and for in hell, the hope of salvation.

Wonderful, isn't it? Let's not sleep, as do others. Let's put on the breast plate, the armour, the helmet. Clothe yourselves with the armour of light.

So both passages, while it talks about the spiritually sleeping, should be roused and rebuked. The same references speak of the armour of light.

[37:49] God. So I'd say that's quite a telling consideration. Let us not sling, as do others, but let us watch and be sober.

This word watch, it's got the sense, be constantly on the alert. Constantly on the alert. Let us watch. And secondly, be sober.

Be sober, someone's put it, be mentally and spiritually well balanced and self-controlled. Spiritually and mentally well balanced and self-controlled. Let us watch and be sober and let's put on the armour of light.

Judgment is coming. Brother and sister tonight, what a shock awaits many. They're going to be shocked. They're going to be slumbering and sleeping. They're going to be like the foolish virgins who were not prepared when the Master came.

What a shock, what a surprise awaits many who are sleeping and slumbering. We need to wake up now to be wide awake, to be vigilant, to watch and be sober, to watch and pray.

[38:51] This word watch, it means to walk circumspectly. In other words, have your eyes all about you and occupy till Christ comes, carry out the will of God, soldier on despite spiritual weariness that we can all have moments of.

Now it is high time to awake, out of sleep. For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. Friends, to close, I urge you today to be encouraged by this message that it's high time, time's short, it is the last hour.

We know time is precious. Make it count. Be amongst the diligent. Be amongst those who will be active and alert and awake and watchful and wearing the armour, clothed with the uniform.

Put on Christ. Put on the armour of light. Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. Let us pray. Let us pray.