

Time To Wake Up

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[0 : 0 0] on our walk with the Lord. And I'm sure it's one of the things that so often we lament in our own lives is how poor we feel our walk with the Lord is.

As a well-known hymn says, Oh, for a closer walk with God, or a closer walk with the Lord. And how true that is, because every believer, when they, very often they stop and they're reflecting upon their own lives and they're having a time with the Lord, they say, Oh Lord, I just wish that I could walk closer to you.

I wish that I could walk in a more intimate and personal way with you. Because so often we feel, while that is our desire, we feel that so often we lag behind, we feel that we're straying, that we're not walking with the Lord as we should.

Because we've got to remember at the very beginning that's what God made us for, to walk with us. We read of how at the very beginning God walked with Adam in the cool of the day.

Beautiful picture that we have here of the Lord enjoying the fellowship of his creation with Adam. But of course we know that the fall caused that walk to stop.

[1 : 1 6] In fact, rather than walking with God, we find Adam running from God. So this is what sin does. Instead of walking with, we run away from.

And it's only in and through the Lord Jesus Christ that again, that we can find ourselves coming back to the place where we walk with God. And in fact, the Bible says, can two walk together except they be agreed?

And that is so true spiritually because we cannot walk with God unless we are agreed with him. And the way that we come to be agreed with him is by accepting the great offer of Jesus Christ his son and receiving Jesus as our saviour.

And then, that is where the walk begins again. But of course, so often, we don't know how to walk. And that's one of the things that so often the Bible is teaching us, telling us how to walk and showing us the way to walk.

So, a lot of Paul's writings are dealing with the whole area of walking. Now, in the previous verse, Paul has been, of course, talking about the works and the deeds, the works of the flesh and the deeds of darkness.

[2 : 3 1] And then he says in verse 13, but when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. And this, I think, Paul is talking here of the searchlight of the Holy Spirit, where the Holy Spirit shines in upon our heart and reveals to us just what we're like.

And again, there's many examples in the Bible of just that very thing, but I think one of the great examples is in the life of Job. Remember that man, Job, who was a good man. But, the powers of darkness were given an open door to Job's life.

And we read of the destruction of everything that was precious to Job. And where he lost his family, he lost his wealth, he lost his reputation, he lost virtually everything he had.

And it's really sad when you read the first two or three chapters of the book of Job. And then, to crown it all, Job's friends, they come and they batter him with words.

And they're telling him that he must be a real hypocrite, that this wouldn't have happened to him unless, obviously, he was a hypocrite. And a large part of the book of Job is Job defending himself.

[3 : 43] And showing that he's not a hypocrite, that he's a righteous man, that he's a good man, and he defends himself. And, your sympathies are all for Job, because we know that Job was an exceptionally, exceptionally good man, he was a saint.

But then, near the latter part of Job, we find that it's God is then dealing with Job alone. And it's like God puts the searchlight, the spotlight, into Job, into his heart.

And Job begins to discover himself. And he begins to see the bitterness, and the resentment, and the pride, and the anger, and all these things that he couldn't see before.

And instead of trying to justify himself, and make out that he was a good man, we find Job repenting in dust and ashes. Even although all that has happened to Job, he finds as the searchlight of God comes in upon him, that he's not who he thought he was.

That's what God's Spirit does. Opens up, reveals to us, shows us, just who we really are. And so, that's what we have here, because this word exposed, in verse 13, but when anything is exposed, it has the idea of convicting.

[5 : 06] And that's what the Holy Spirit does. He convicts us by showing us just what is there. And then, Paul moves really to looking at the work of Jesus himself.

Because that's what we have here, that therefore it says, awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead. Now, when it says, Paul says, therefore it says, this isn't a direct quote from anywhere.

People are of different opinions. Some think that it was a hymn that was sung in the early church, or that it is a summary of different parts of scripture. Some think that it's a summary of, for instance, Isaiah chapter 60, verse 1, where we have, they arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

But, whatever it is, it isn't a direct quote from anywhere, but it is very much a summary, really, of what the gospel is. And, a lot of people think that this is very much an evangelistic sermon.

If you're going to preach this sermon, you preach it purely as an evangelistic sermon. That you're preaching, and you're speaking to people who are dead in their trespasses and sins, people who are far away from the Lord, and this is a call to them, to heed the Lord, to rise up, and to begin to follow the Lord.

[6 : 33] And, while it is very, while we could justifiably preach an evangelistic sermon on that particular text, we've got to remember the context of it. And, this is a letter that Paul is writing to Christians.

So, Paul is addressing Christians in these words. Not unbelievers, but believers. So, Paul is addressing, and he's saying, the Christian can be a somebody who's dead.

The Christian can be somebody who is sound asleep. Still a Christian, but sound asleep. And so, we've got to, we can look at it in both these ways, because, Paul, remember, at the very beginning, it's obvious it's to Christians he's writing, because he says, therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us.

So, you see, it is very obvious that Paul is writing to believers here. So, Paul is showing that a Christian can be asleep.

And Christians can be asleep sometimes without knowing it. When, when we go to sleep, we're not thinking all the time, oh, you know, I'm asleep just now, this is good.

[7 : 50] When we sleep, we're not aware. You know, sometimes you say, well, you can nod off to sleep. And you may be waking without jolt and say, oh, I nodded off to sleep there.

When you're awake, you know you're not sleeping. But when you're asleep, you don't really know that you're not awake. So, you see, the same can be true in a spiritual sense as well.

Because we can be, we can be slumbering Christians and not really aware of it. And we can become very comfortable as slumbering Christians.

And very often, a Christian begins to slumber by neglecting the most basic things in the Christian life. For instance, and probably the number one thing, is your own personal, private devotions.

I believe that that's where slumbering always begins. When you stop your daily reading with the Lord, your daily prayer, it is the most essential thing to feed upon the Lord Jesus.

[8 : 54] It's much harder to become a slumbering, sleeping Christian if you have, if you're daily exercised. Not simply going through the motions.

Because a sleeping Christian, a slumbering Christian, actually can go through the motions of opening the Bible, of reading a few verses, of mumbling a few words in prayer, morning and night.

And if you said to them throughout the week, what did you read? They said, I can't tell you. What did you pray about? I can't tell you. See, that's indicating a slumbering sleep.

Your exercise, however short it must be, however short it is, it must be an exercise that's got life in it. Otherwise, it's not bringing this good.

But you know, a slumbering, sleepy Christian can become very cozy and very comfortable. You can still be going to church, but you stop listening. You know, supposing, for instance, at home and you say, oh, I'm really tired.

[9 : 55] I want to have a wee nap. And you can maybe say, all right, I'm going to lock the door and switch the phone off so I won't be disturbed for a wee while. Because you just say, oh, I'm going to slumber.

You know, the Christian can do that as well. You can reach the place where you begin to get cozy and comfortable and you begin to switch off. And you can come to church and you're switched off.

You've learned, you've come into this state now where you come in and your mind is closed and you're in a switch off mode. And it's going on week in, week out.

And that's the way you're living. And it's no use. Now the thing is, you're still appearing to everybody else unless maybe to the very most discerning people.

You're still appearing to everybody else to be a vital, vibrant Christian. And you and I know that people talk in their sleep. Well, the Christian can be a slumbering, sleeping Christian and still able to talk the talk.

[10 : 55] Some people walk in their sleep. The Christian is still able or the slumbering Christian can still do the Christian walk. so that you can be appearing to everybody to be involved, to be alright.

but still there's this, you're not where you once were. You're slumbering. You're sleepy. You're drowsy. And that's, that's the kind of church that Satan wants.

Satan wants a church full of slumbering, sleepy, drowsy Christians. He's not too bothered about that kind of church. Because he's saying to himself, ah, they're not going to do much for it.

they might be doing this and that. But there's no real heart in it. Not too worried about that church. Satan's always worried about the churches that, where there's Christians who are wide awake and they're active and they're prayerful, they're vibrant, they're Bible reading.

Much more worried and concerned about them. So we find that there's this, this cry, awake, go sleeper. And the problem is that sometimes if we've slumbered off to sleep and we get a jolt and the Lord gives us a jolt and maybe we've been slumbering for a wee while and we get this jolt and we think that everything will be as it once was but it's not.

[12 : 16] We're kind of like Samson. Remember when Samson, when he had fallen asleep with Delilah and she woke him and said, ah, Philistine's there on you. It's after she had got his hair cut.

And Samson got up, remember as he thought every other time. He thought he was as he was before he shook himself and he went out to beat the Philistines up. But this time, the Lord had left him on his own.

He couldn't do it. It wasn't as it was before. And although the Lord had not abandoned Samson altogether, that power that God had given him had gone.

And sometimes we will find that if we've been slumbering for a while, we've drifted off and we're away and we're not, that when the Lord does begin to stir us up, we find it's not as it used to be.

And we find that we've got a hill to climb to get back. Because you don't get back overnight to where you were. Sometimes there's this struggle. So it's very important that we don't allow ourselves to wander off.

[13 : 24] And the funny thing is that I suppose the generation that we live in, it's much harder in many ways to walk as closely with the Lord as in previous generations.

For the simple reason is that we have so much. Now I know that there are many people today who have very little. I know we're living in a day where again there's poverty and there are people so many homeless and such like.

But by and large compared to how we're going back generations back with the whole area of where we have so much in the way of social services and such like that weren't there in the past.

People long ago maybe in the time of your grandparents, your great grandparents, they often didn't know where their next meal was coming from. They were utterly dependent so often on the Lord.

There was this living day by day upon the Lord that He would provide. And for them it wasn't a question of whether I'm going to walk with the Lord today or not.

[14 : 29] They were walking with the Lord because they had to. And in some ways it's harder for us where we have so much there for us to have the guard down and to become complacent.

And it's very easy for our souls to settle in the world because the world has a huge pool and a huge draw upon it. And so often it sucks us in.

It's very invasive. It dulls people. I remember there was a lady, my mother was, where we used to live way back. She was very friendly with this lady.

She was a very spiritually minded woman. And I used to phone a lot and occasionally my mother would go and spend a weekend with her. She always used to love her Christian company, her Christian fellowship.

But then as she used to phone every so often, she said, I used to hear her it wasn't to me she was saying, but I used to hear her talk to my dad. She said, I don't know what's wrong with this lady. I can't get close to her anymore.

[15 : 32] It's just there's a, when I tried to, we talk about spiritual things, she's just, she's not interested. Anyway, she went then to stay with her. And this woman, I've got to remember back in the day, had got a telly.

They were in tellies then. She'd got a television and she'd become an absolute TV addict. I'm not, there's nothing wrong with a television, don't get me wrong, that's not the point of the story. But it was on from first thing in the morning to last thing at night and that's all she was doing.

She was just glued and absorbed everything all the time. And unknown to her, she hadn't stopped being a Christian. But it had taken away the spark.

It had become too duller. It had begun to affect her spirituality. She wasn't aware of it. But she'd become a slumbering Christian because she just absorbed everything all day.

And this is, you see, we live in this very powerful world. And that's why it's harder to maintain this walk, to be alive and vibrant because we're bombarded with the world that's around us.

[16 : 45] And we've got to remember, of course, that we have the enemy of our souls who's always trying to get us to slumber and sleep. And you and I know that we can be wide awake reading something, involved with something and then say, you know, I'm going to draw aside for a little and I'm going to read God's word.

We've often done that. And the moment you do, the moment you pick up God's word or a good book, a heaviness comes into your eyes. It wasn't there before.

You're reading the paper, you're reading a magazine and you're really, well, that's really interesting, you're wide awake. And then you say, oh, before I go out or whatever, I'm going to pick up this book and have a wee read.

And we've got to remember that this is one of the things that Satan does. He causes us to become drowsy with a spiritual heaviness. Jesus' disciples wanted to pray with him in the garden, but they couldn't.

They were being overcome with a spirit of heaviness and sleep. Every time Jesus came back, he said to them, watch and pray, I'm going over there to pray. Every time he came back, they were sound asleep because there was this heaviness had come on them.

[18 : 01] And he said, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. And we've got to remember that. That's what Satan does. He brings his drowsiness into a prayer life.

Have you ever found that? You start to pray and just your concentration goes, you start wandering, come into church and you say to yourself, I'm going to concentrate today. And then you're hearing the voice and your mind's away and the devil's a master.

if he doesn't make you drowsy of bringing something before you that will worry you or something that you're going to be doing, why it's a way ahead and I'm thinking about this. And he brings all these things, anything to stop us focusing.

So there's a constant battle going on against the enemy of our souls. And so this is why this cry comes to us to waken up.

Apparently, history will tell us and I don't know how this happened, but it was said that Napoleon's army, that there were times when they were able to march. They walked through the night sometimes asleep.

[19 : 10] They had become so used to these long marches that, and I don't know if they were actually what we would call really asleep, but they were able to somehow to keep going.

And if they weren't sound asleep, they were kind of not really conscious properly of what they were doing. It's quite an extraordinary thing. But I'll tell you one thing, even if they were able to walk and cover the ground, have a sleep, they couldn't fight like that.

You'd have to be awake, you have to be alert. You're finished, you can't fight when you're sleeping. You might be able to walk when you're sleeping, but you can't fight. And so it is in the Christian life. We might be able to walk after a fashion while we're asleep, but we can't wrestle, we can't fight, we can't press, we can't do these things.

And so this is why the call comes to arise. And so it would also appear from the Bible that before the Lord Jesus Christ returns, that the church is going to have a real struggle with slumbering and sleeping.

Because you will find that Jesus so often he gives the warning. He says, I'm going to return all of a sudden. I don't want you to be slumbering and sleep.

[20 : 30] I want you to be awake. I want you to be prepared. I want you to be watching. Because I'm going to come as a thief in the night. I'm going to come suddenly. And in fact he gives stories, for instance, a parable of the ten, the wise and the foolish virgins, the bridesmaids.

And remember it says that the ten of them, the wise and the foolish, they all, all of them, they slumbered and slept. And then all of a sudden bridegroom arrives.

And there's a cry comes up. And it tells us that the wise, although they had fallen asleep, their lamps, they trimmed their lamps, it would appear their lamps had almost gone out, but they hadn't.

There was still oil in their lamps. But of course the foolish had no oil. And they didn't get in to the marriage. But at that particular point it would be very hard to distinguish who were the church and who weren't.

Who were the believers and who weren't. Because they were all slumbering and sleeping. And Jesus is saying that's kind of, is that how it's going to be when I return?

[21 : 40] A sleeping, slumbering church? And so we find all these warnings coming. And that's why the cry is, away go sleeper and arise.

And this cry of course was made to all. And the funny thing is that those who are most likely to hear it are those who are awake. Those who are already awake. And it's very often those who are awake that will take this cry to themselves.

But Jesus gives this cry to all his people because he loves his people too much. He loves you. He loves you. As we read there later on how it says husbands love your wives.

How are husbands to love their wives? Well it tells us as Christ loved the church. And how did Christ love the church? He loved the church self sacrificially.

He loved the church so much that he gave his life. He couldn't do more. Absolutely to the very furthest point. And that's the love that Christ has for all his people.

[22 : 46] That's the love that Christ has for you today. And he wants you to enjoy the fullness of his presence, of his companionship, of his love.

He wants to walk with you. He wants you to remember how it used to be. Remember how we used to share together. Well that's how I want it to be.

And we've got to remember that the Holy Spirit is so sensitive. You know there are times where the Lord draws really close to us. And we say, ah, this is good.

This is how it used to be. I love this. And you feel the presence of the Lord and the power of the Lord. And sometimes by the end of the next day you're saying, well, it's gone.

It's all gone. And you see, we tend to forget how sensitive the Holy Spirit is. how easily grieved the Holy Spirit is.

[23 : 47] We can grieve God's Spirit by what we say and by what we do and what we give our mind to, by all these things. So we're so often up against it at all fronts.

But again, there's this great cry to awake, O sleeper. And the cry is actually very personal. O sleeper, awake, O sleeper. And it's personal.

It's individual. individual. Because it's to you. This is not a general cry as such, although it's to all the Lord's people. But the language, the grammar of it is it's individual.

It's personal. It's to you. It's to me. And let's remember even today the way the Lord first came to us. The very first time that we had.

And you might have started as a child. You might have started as a little person. You might have, you know, that's one of the problems that some people have in the church. Is that they say, I can't remember a time when I didn't actually love the Lord.

[24 : 52] I can't remember a time, thank the Lord that that's the way it's been for you. But some people struggle with this because they're looking, they hear other people talk and they have a clear testimony.

They're able to say, well, I know that I was dark and now I'm light. But for me it seems to be kind of blurred. Well, all I'll say is this, as life has gone on for you and you have choices that are set out before you, why is it that you're still following this particular road?

Why is it that you're still following the way of the Lord? It's because, like Peter said, to whom else can we go? Because you have the words of eternal life.

This is in your heart and you know that deep down there's no one else that you want. And let me tell you, only a Christian can feel like that.

It tells us in the word that the others saw no beauty in him, that they should decide him. But you decide him. He's there in your heart and it won't go away.

[26 : 05] He won't, it's not it won't go away, he won't go away. That's why you're still the way you are. And sometimes it's harder for people like that to be able to come to this place and say, well, I am a Christian.

Because they've kind of felt like this all the way along. But if you felt like that all the way along, it is because of that love that is there and it's deep down there.

Sometimes you're not so aware of it, but it's just his love is always there. And so it's this love that is drawing you all the time. And he's calling, he's calling us all today.

And it tells us this, arise, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. You and I know how much we love the sun.

We've had a few sunny days in the summer. We've had a reasonable summer all in all. But there's been a few really sunny days. And you know, there's something beautiful about when it's just a really sunny day.

[27 : 13] And the sun is shining down, and there's warmth, and everybody feels better. Even grumpy people have a wee bit of a smile on their face. Because it makes you feel a wee bit better.

Well, how much more when the sun of righteousness will arise, and he will shine down his love upon you. There is healing in your soul.

And there's this sense of this belonging to him. And he's saying, that's what I want. Arise, and I will shine my love down upon you. And as I shine on you, I will shine through you.

And that's what we're required in the Bible. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and so glorify your Father which is in heaven. So this is a call that is coming to us all today.

That we might awake and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. And may I say to anybody here today who doesn't know Jesus as their Savior, that anybody who is still outside, and yet you're here in the presence of Christ with his people, what a wonderful opportunity.

[28 : 26] beauty. Because Jesus is offering himself to you in the gospel today. And he says, I'm here, I'm here for you. And you today, I want you to ask the Lord and say, Lord, I want you to come into my heart, into my life.

Shine your spirit into my heart. Come into my soul and live with me. And you know, once the Lord comes in, he stays forever. One of the favorite words John always uses it, abiding.

Abiding comes to live forever. May that be how it is for you and me today. Let us pray. Lord, we pray to bless us.

We give thanks for our time together, for being under your word. We pray that your word will go deep into our souls. We pray as we come to a communion season, and the next Lord's Day, if spared, we'll be sitting at your table.

We pray that we might be prepared in heart, that we might arise, and that we might, even if we're slumbering, that we might become revitalized within our souls, and that we will enjoy communion and fellowship with you.

[29 : 39] Be with all the preachers who come and pray that you will bless them, and that they will be a blessing to us, and that they will be blessed in themselves as they proclaim your word.

We pray to bless all that we are as a congregation. We pray again in light of, after the communion, the planned visitation of Mackenzie Park area. We ask, Lord, that those who go around will be received graciously, and that many doors will be opened, and that it might please you, Lord, that people will come to church, and that people will be saved.

We commit all to your care and keeping. Do us good, we pray, and bless a cup of tea, coffee in the hall after forgiving us of sin, in Jesus' name. Amen. Let us conclude our service singing from Psalm 43 in Sing Psalms, Psalm number 43 in Sing Psalms, from verse 3 to the end, the tune is Mar-El, Psalm 43.

On page 54, just three stanzas. Psalm 43, 3 to the end, O send your light forth and your truth.

O send your light forth and your truth, let them direct me in your grace, and bring me to your holy hill then to your sacred dwelling place.

[31 : 51] Then to God's altar I will go, to God my joy and my delight, and I will praise you with the harp, O God, you are my God of might.

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why are you so disturbed in me?

trust God, O my God of might. Trust God, for I will praise him yet, my Saviour and my God is he.

Now may the grace, mercy and peace of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.

God bless you. God bless you. Amen.