

Wakey, wakey!

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Date: 31 May 2026

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[0 : 00] We can turn back now to our reading in Isaiah chapter 51. We're going to look at verse 9 down to chapter 52 there as we go into that chapter.

Reading again at verse 9, Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord. Awake, as in the days of old, the generations of long ago.

What woke you up this morning? Was it just a natural stirring as you'd had a good sleep and just came round when it was time to wake up? Or was it an alarm clock perhaps that woke you up? Or maybe it was the noise of maybe people, children or other people around or even animals outside or inside barking or other noises.

There's so many things that can wake us up in the morning or indeed through the night as well. But did the Word of God wake you up this morning? Have you read God's Word today and has it had that impact on you where it's like an alarm clock going off, where it has woken you up?

It's spoken to you in a way that maybe you've never seen before. A word or a passage or something that you've never noticed. It's had that impact on you of just stirring you, giving you a bit of a shock, waking you up.

[1 : 27] God's Word is powerful and it can have that effect. And as we read here in chapter 51 and into chapter 52, there are three verses in this reading and maybe they stood out for you when you notice the title of the sermon today being Wakey Wakey.

You think, well, where do we see that in this passage? Well, we see it in three places. The verse that we read there, verse 9, There's a wake-up call there.

Then in verse 17, you see it again. Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem. Another wake-up call there. And then in chapter 52, verse 1, Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion. Three times you see it there. Wake up, awake, awake. And you see it as you read through God's Word.

That's what God's Word does to us. It wakes us up. It's always speaking to us. Sometimes it speaks gently to us.

[2 : 43] Other times loudly, but always with a purpose to get our attention, to get us to listen. But the question is, are we listening? Are we listening to what the Word of God is saying to us?

Are we listening to it in the days in which we're living? Well, in Isaiah's days, he was speaking to the people then. And he was asking for them to respond, to wake up.

Because they were in the midst of great trials. They were in the midst of times of despair in many ways. There were so many things going on that was leaving them feeling downcast.

And they were being given this wake-up call. And if we have a wake-up call, what does that mean? Well, it's something that's kind of bringing us to our attention.

Bringing us to realize that there's something important. Something that requires action. For example, you can have wake-up calls in different ways. If you're staying in a hotel.

[3 : 46] Maybe you're staying at an airport. You're catching a flight the next morning. And you ask for a wake-up call. So you get a call early in the morning to make sure that you're up.

It's up to you what you do with it. Do you listen to it? Or do you ignore it and just go back to sleep? Well, there's consequences. If you ignore it, you maybe miss your flight.

Other times, we can get a wake-up call in life by something happening to us. Perhaps you're someone who likes to drive fast. Many of us, when we first pass our test, you enjoy that sense of freedom.

Going out in the car, driving at speed. Feeling indestructible. But a wake-up call comes. When you lose control, you crash the car.

That should be a wake-up call. You need to slow down. You need to pay more attention. And surely that's what God does to us again and again. Whether it's through his word or whether it's through what happens around us.

[4 : 48] His works of providence to us. Again and again, God gives us a wake-up call. He speaks to us in a powerful way. And we need to take action.

We need to listen for things to change. What is our action to be? What can make a difference? Or who can make a difference? Do we need to wake up?

Who needs to wake up? These are the kinds of questions that we see in Isaiah 51 and 52 here. And that we're going to look at together this morning. These wake-up calls that shout out loudly to us. Three of them. In the verses I mentioned, verse 9, 17, and verse 1 of chapter 52. We're going to look at each of these and think, well, what is it saying to us?

Well, verse 9 there, first of all. Awake, awake. Put on strength, O arm of the Lord. This first wake-up call is a challenge to faith.

[5 : 52] Who is being challenged to wake up here in verse 9? Read it again. Awake, awake. Put on strength, O arm of the Lord. Awake as in the days of old.

It's not God saying to the people to wake up here first. It's the people saying to God, God, why are you asleep? Is it not time that you woke up?

Awake, awake. Put on strength, O arm of the Lord. Awake as in the days of old. What are they saying here? They're saying, God, why are you sleeping?

Are you not seeing the great need that we are in? Are you not seeing the devastation that is all around us? Why are you asleep in it all? Have you ever said that in your own life, in your own experience, in our own day?

Where is God in the midst of everything? Is God sleeping? Or even as some would say, well, God, if he was real, God is gone. God is dead. God is not dead.

[7 : 01] And God is not sleeping. But that's the way we can so often feel and so often see him. What we have to remember here is that in Isaiah's time, as I mentioned earlier, in the book of Isaiah, you see it, a warning of disaster coming up to chapter 39.

And then from chapter 40 onwards, that sense of the Lord is going to comfort. The Lord will comfort if the people will return to him. Isaiah 40, these wonderful words of the beginning of the chapter. Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. And yet, there seems to be no comfort. Comfort. Comfort seems so far removed.

Because the people that are being spoken about here are in disarray. They're in a terrible plight. You see that as you read on in chapter 51.

Just look at verse 19 there. These two things have happened to you. Who will console you? Devastation and destruction. Famine and sword. Who will comfort you?

[8 : 12] So these things have happened in their midst. There is desolation. There is destruction. And the people are saying, God, why are you sleeping in the midst of all of this?

There is no response. God is seeing as if he doesn't care for them. And the people are then finding themselves in the situation of doubt.

And that's why they're saying, they're afraid. Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord. They're afraid. They're mourning.

They're devastated. There's so much going on. And they think God doesn't care. Are you like that today? Do you feel that sense of fear?

That sense of sorrow? That sense of doubt? That sense of despair? And God isn't interested. God doesn't care about me. God doesn't care about our nation or the world.

[9 : 17] Do you think that is true? Is this how we are to come to God? Have you forgotten us, O Lord?

Well, surely not. We could easily allow doubts to creep in. We could easily allow fear to overwhelm us. But God has not forgotten.

And you see that in his response in verse 12 to verse 16. I, I am he who comforts you. In verse 13, and have, you have forgotten the Lord, your maker who stretched out the heavens, laid the foundations of the earth.

You have forgotten just who God is. How he is able to comfort. How he is able to remind us he has made all things.

But they are saying, yes, Lord, but you did it in the days of old. Then you go back to verse 9. Awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces and pierced the dragon?

[10:29] Rahab and the dragon there are looking probably to Egypt, that powerful nation that overwhelmed the people in the past. And yet God took care of them, brought them out of Egypt.

You see in verse 10, the one who dried up the sea, they crossed the Red Sea. By the power of God divided it. So God had done great things in the past.

We can look at ourselves and say, well, God did great things in the past for us. But now has he forgotten us? Well, God doesn't sleep.

And we have to remember who God is. That he has power to do all these things that he has done in the past.

It's the same power today. He is still the one who we forget is the maker who stretched out the heavens, who laid the foundation of the earth. He has all of these things in his hand.

[11:28] Does God sleep? Can we accuse him today saying, wake up, Lord, wake up. Do you not care? Well, look at Psalm 121.

What does it say there? He will not let your foot be moved. He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

He does not sleep. So we don't have to cry to him to wake up. Have you ever been driving your car? You've been on a long journey or driving late at night and you start to feel drowsy.

You start to feel sleepy. It's a dangerous thing when you start falling asleep at the wheel, when your eyes start just closing. It's a fearful thing.

That's the kind of thing that the people are saying here. But God, God, you're asleep at the wheel. You're not interested in the direction we're going. You're not interested in our safety. But God is never asleep at the wheel.

[12:32] He's always there in control, even when it seems beyond us. Just like the disciples in Mark chapter 4 when they were caught in that storm.

They were out in the boat and Jesus was asleep in the stern, asleep on a cushion. And they said to him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? But he woke.

He rebuked the wind and the waves. It was a great calm. And he said, Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? That's the challenge of this wake-up call here.

Awake, awake, O Lord. It's not to wake him up. He was asking, Do we have faith? Do you have faith in him today? Do you believe?

Do you believe? Have you still no faith? Yes, we can look around and see so much disarray. We can look at ourselves and see our own hearts, our own sin.

[13:30] We cannot say to God, You awake. Do you not care? He does. Because as he says in verse 12, I, I am he who comforts you.

That is as true for us today as it was then. Then we have to move on to our second wake-up call in verse 17. Wake yourself.

Wake yourself. Stand up, O Jerusalem. Here we see a wake-up call a challenge to listen. It's who it is that needs to wake up.

Well, it's not God. So God is saying here in this verse, it is you. It's you, my people, who need to wake up. Wake yourself.

Wake yourself. Stand up, O Jerusalem. The reason God gives for their failure here is that they were not trusting in him.

[14:31] In verse 18, there is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne. There is none to take her by the hand among all the sons that she has brought up. There is no one to help.

They've been trying to find their help, to find their trust in people around them, their leaders. But there's none. There's no one. So the Lord is waking them up, saying, Wake yourself.

Wake yourself. Stand up, O Jerusalem. You cannot go on trusting in those who are unable to help you, those who are leading you into confusion, destruction, away from the Lord.

There is no point to that. Earlier in this, I say in chapter 43, you see there how the people have responded. They have turned away from God.

In chapter 43, verse 22, Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob, but you have been weary of me, O Israel. And then in verse 26, it says, Put me in remembrance.

[15 : 37] You did not call upon me. You have been weary of me. Put me in remembrance. Wake up, he's saying. Wake up.

Who are you trusting in? What is going to help you? Who is going to help you? Are we trusting in the Lord who says, I, I am he who comforts you?

When we go on by ourselves, when we lose sight of who God is, we fall away from him more and more into sin. It happens so easily.

And what happens when we do that is when we lose sight of God, our sin overwhelms us. You see in verse 17 there, You have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have been drunk to the dregs, the bowl, the cup of staggering.

What is this cup that he's talking about? It's a cup of God's judgment. This is what sin brings upon us. Drunk it to the dregs.

[16 : 44] In other words, every last drop has been drunk out of it and it leaves us staggering. It's that image of being drunk. And that's what happens here when there's no comfort.

You're found, as it were, lying on the ground almost. In verse 21, Therefore hear this, you who are afflicted, who are drunk but not with wine.

We are drunk with the wrath of God. We are lost in our sin. That cup of wrath is upon us. And the comfort of God seems a million miles away from us.

And we look at our world and we see the condition, the state that it's in. The world is overrun with war, with hatred, with famine, with anger, with trouble.

There is all of these things going on. We are seeing this cup of wrath. We are seeing nations trying to overwhelm other nations.

[17 : 54] We look at the church or the churches around the world. We see empty pews. We see a discouraged people. We see a lack of people involved in the church.

We look at our own denomination. We see vacancies, lack of ministers. We see all of these things. We could go on. We could go on. And is it for us to say, God, why are you sleeping?

Or is it for God to say to us, wake up yourselves. Wake up yourselves. Stand up, O Jerusalem. Take heed of my word.

Take heed of my call to you. Wake up. It's not God who is sleeping. It is us. He is crying out to us to wake up and put on his power.

To put on his strength. We can feel helpless just now. We can look to God. To God and all that he has done for us.

[19 : 02] And to remember him, who he is and what he has done for us. The letter to the Ephesians says in chapter 5, verse 14, Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will shine in you.

We need to wake up and look to Christ. And as we do, he can shine in us and on us and through us. But we need to take heed of what he is saying.

Wake up. Do you want Christ to shine in you today? What difference does it make? Well, as you look at this section, you go into verse 22.

Thus says your Lord, the Lord your God, who pleads the cause of his people. Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering, the bowl of my wrath.

You shall drink no more. He is able to remove it. And it's the same as he is able to do with our sin. As we come and confess it before him, as we heed his word, as we look to ourselves and think, I am but a sinner before God.

[20 : 18] Well, how can I be right? It's to look to Christ. And as we think of coming, approaching a communion weekend, God willing next weekend, we come to do this in remembrance of him.

What has he done for us? Well, this cup of wrath, he has drunk. He has taken it for us so that we might take of the cup of his grace, of the cup of his love, the cup that is life through faith in him.

He takes it, the cup of wrath, away so we can have that cup of salvation. Are you awake to that?

Are you awake to the need that you have of this Christ who takes away your sin, who says, awake, awake, stand up. It is time to take heed.

Well, the third and final wake-up call we see here is a challenge to trust. And we see this in verse 1 of chapter 52.

[21 : 31] Awake, awake, awake. Put on your strength, O Zion. Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.

Put on your strength, O Zion. Put on your beautiful garments. He calls to their attention the fact that trouble is not that he is asleep, but that they are asleep again.

They have not put on the power which he has to offer. Put on your strength, O Zion. If a wake-up call should make us realize that we need to take action, well, what is the action that we need? It's to see that he is our only help. He is the only one that we need. Put on your strength, O Zion. What is that strength?

That is the strength of the Lord. God is saying, I have power. I am not asleep, but you have not sought my power. You have not sought me.

[22 : 43] You have not looked for me. You have underestimated me. You have not believed me. You have not understood who I am. Is that true of you today?

All of these things. You have not sought him. You have not understood him. You have doubted him. You have disbelieved him. Well, again, it's this cry, awake, awake.

Put on your strength. Put on what is that on offer to you. Imagine waking up in the morning and you find your clothes laid out for you to wear.

Maybe you're one of these people who before you go to sleep at night, you want to have everything ready to put on in the morning. Or maybe you're one of those people who just first thing you see in the morning, you'll grab it and put it on.

But imagine waking up in the morning and you find that there's clothes there for you to put on, but you've never seen them before.

[23 : 43] They're not yours. They're much better quality. They're the best, the most beautiful clothes you've ever seen. Where did they come from?

Who has put them out for you? You don't understand, but they're there for you to wear. Well, this is what God is saying to us here.

Awake, awake. Put on your beautiful garments. Put on what I have prepared for you. God has laid out clothes for us to wake up to and to put on for ourselves.

So instead of our filthy rags, the rags of our sin, of our doubt, of our fears, of our anger, of our disbelief, of our questioning God, all of these things that we are continually putting on, he is saying, I have these beautiful garments prepared for you.

Beautiful garments of the righteousness of Christ. That robe that he gives to his people to put on, to know the forgiveness of sin, that salvation, that comfort, that forgiveness.

[25 : 04] We have all of these beautiful garments to put on when we awake and see that Christ is our Savior, a Savior for us. And he offers us so much to put on.

So we can go on in his strength. You think of that great passage in Ephesians 6. Put on the whole armor of God.

Those beautiful garments that he speaks of there. Put on the whole armor of God for the days in which we live our evil and stand firm. He offers us the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes on your feet, the readiness of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit.

We have all of these beautiful garments to put on. They are all available if we wake up to him. To wake up and see that he is calling us.

We doubt so much. We fear so much. But he is calling us to faith. Have you still no faith?

[26 : 24] As Jesus said to the disciples, have you today still no faith? Wake up. Put on your strength, O Zion.

Put on your beautiful garments, the clothes that are ready for his people to put on, to do away with the rags that we so often cling to, and to put on his salvation, his righteousness.

Doubt and faith are poles apart. It's a little poem once said, Doubt sees the obstacles while faith sees the way. Doubt sees the darkest night while faith sees the day.

Doubt fears to take a step while faith soars on high. Doubt asks, Who believes? Faith answers, I.

Doubt and faith. That's what we see in this passage. As the people began in verse 9 to say, Awake, awake, calling to the Lord to wake, as if he was asleep.

[27 : 35] But it is God who is saying, No, it is not me who is sleeping. I, I am he who comforts you. And then he says, No, you, wake yourself.

Wake yourself. Stand up, O Jerusalem. See the sin that you are in, and see the salvation that there is on offer. And then awake, awake, put on the beautiful garments that he has prepared for you.

Will you wake? Awake to your sin. Awake to a God who is wide awake, who is in control.

And awake to the garments that he has prepared for his people. That salvation that is in Jesus Christ. May we wake up.

Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we thank you that your word stirs us in our hearts, that it speaks to us, O Lord, of reminders of who you are and who we are, that you are not a God who is asleep.

[28 : 46] For even as the psalmist says, you never slumber nor sleep. And help us to remember that, that you are the one who is awake with your eyes upon us.

But you are one who says to us as your people, wake up, wake up. See where we are. See our need. But see Christ who has done all for us.

And see these beautiful garments that are prepared for us. The righteousness, the salvation, the forgiveness, the comfort that is ours through him.

So, Lord, help us to hear and to wake and to rise even from here today with that hope in you as we ask all with the forgiveness of our sin.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to conclude by singing in Psalm 30 again, the Sing Psalms version, page 35.

[29 : 49] We're going to sing the last three stanzas there, verse 10 to 12. Psalm 30 at verse 10. Hear as I cry, O Lord my God, and listen to my plea.

Come to my aid and my distress have mercy, Lord, on me. You turned my wailing into dance. No longer was I sad. My sackcloth gone. You gave me clothes of joy and I was glad.

We'll sing from verse 10 to 12 to God's praise. The tune is Wallace. Hear as I cry, O Lord my God, and listen to my plea.

Come to my aid in my distress. Have mercy, Lord, Lord, on me.

Have mercy, Lord, Have mercy, Lord, on me. You turned my wailing into dance.

[31 : 20] No longer was I sad. My sackcloth gone.

You gave me clothes of joy of joy and I was glad.

Of joy and I was glad. Of joy and I was glad. Of joy and I was glad. Therefore my heart will sing to you, you and never cease to praise to your great name, O Lord my God.

I will give thanks always. I will give thanks always.

After the benediction, I'll go to the main door. We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore. Amen.

[33 : 02] Amen. Amen.

Thank you.