

DON'T LET YOUR HOUSE BE BROKEN INTO

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Ephesians 5:8-17 - "...for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light [9] (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), [10] and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord [different from mere morality]. [11] Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. [12] For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. [13] But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, [14] for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' [15] Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. [17] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Important to note is the context of **verse 14** - "...Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'" The words "O sleeper" and "arise from the dead" might easily lead to the conclusion that Paul is talking about the unredeemed - those who don't know Jesus.

But the surrounding verses won't allow that interpretation. From all the verses we read Paul is clearly addressing the members of the Church at Ephesus. These are the people who are asleep and need to wake up. They aren't alert to things that stare them in the face. They're numb to things they should be keenly sensitive to.

Paul is addressing a particular problem. There's a lulling to sleep of believers. People were drowsy and had **become accustomed** to the darkness and lifelessness of the world in which they lived. They didn't find their culture and environment unusual and disturbing. They were Christians who had become **at home** with the things that grieved and angered the Lord they claimed to love.

Paul warns of a kind of ***lullaby of our environment***. He's trying to make these Christians feel the weight of the world's ***pull***. That's it. There's the constant pull of sleepiness against which the Holy Spirit flexes all His divine strength in our minds. The Spirit and the Word combine to summon our attention to the gnawing, addictive climate of carelessness and spiritual indifference.

That's where our text comes in. Paul says "Wake up! Arise out of that!" But there's something else here. There's a right way and a wrong way to wake up from apathy and accommodation. And the church frequently misses an important distinction. We're not to rouse ourselves in the sense of ***isolation*** from the world around us.

In other words, the church isn't to merely ***retreat*** from everything in this world. It could easily be argued the church has spent too much of her time backing up from the world - giving up too much redeemable territory.

Paul's call is more aggressive than that. He's calling us to an awareness of both the ***shortness of time*** and the ***depth of the darkness*** so the Holy Spirit can rouse us to moving into the world with a genuine spiritual life distinct from and powerful enough to transform the death and sleepiness of this hopeless age. That's Paul's reason for the reminder of both the shortness of ***time*** and the nature of the ***darkness*** - **Ephesians 5:15-16** - "**Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.**"

We should be stirred to note that a church as renowned and prominent as the Church at Ephesus needed to hear the Spirit's wake up call. That holds out a warning to us. We're not above this danger. Past blessings and prominence of status provide no defence to present spiritual slumber and compromise.

So that's the spirit of the summons of this text. It's designed to awaken a fresh hearing with uncluttered attentiveness - to a child-like relearning - to listen all over again - to the reawakening voice of the Holy Spirit's claim on our lives.

That's a very quick fly-over of Paul's summons in our opening text. I was fascinated by rummaging through other reminders in the Bible of the kind of things that can happen if we ***don't*** heed the call to be constantly ***reawakened*** to the ***time*** and ***darkness*** in which we live. Here are some of the things that happen while people ***sleep*** when they should be ***awake***:

- 1) **Matthew 13:24-26** - "He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, [25] but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. [26] So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also."

Jesus tells a simple story about a farmer who puts some seed in the ground. Then we stumble on to this idea. ***While***

his men slept an enemy sowed weeds on the same plot of land. The enemy had a chance to do something he wouldn't have been able to do had the farmer's men **not** been slumbering. That's the point of the story.

Notice, all the enemy had to do was plant a tiny seed. It was almost imperceptible. The text actually says that single tiny step was enough. After that initial step, so says our text, that enemy didn't even have to hang around. So sure was he of future germination that he actually "**went away**"(25). It wasn't till much later down the road, after the results of the evil sowing sprouted through the soil, that the farmer saw he had been sabotaged.

There's a message for many people - people who say they **do** love Jesus - who **do** sing and praise and acknowledge the blessedness of eternal life and the forgiveness of sin - but who are **never going to see the full measure** of what He would bring to fruition in their lives - what they could be as disciples of Christ - because, through their own sleepiness to the danger of the time in which they live and the darkness of the culture in which they live - there are so many weeds and thorns of this present age crowding out the full purpose of God's plan for their lives.

Again, nobody noticed the sowing work of the enemy **while it was happening**. This danger is almost imperceptible. Seeds are always so tiny - insignificant looking. And the weeds never look that different from the grain at first. That point is made very clearly in Jesus' story. In fact, **the servants of the master don't even know where the weeds came from**. They weren't paying much attention - **Matthew 13:27** - "**And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?'"**

Please underscore that last sentence. They **don't know** how the weeds got in there. They weren't alert to how it happened. Does that describe you? This is a **huge** concept. Do you have an understanding of where the actions of your life come from? You know the things you love. But do you know **why** you love the things you love? Do you just see the **results** of your life with no awareness of the **source** of your life.

Your life is springing from somewhere. Stuff gets sown into your mind and heart. Do you know where it comes from? Or are you asleep while much of your life is being formed?

Are you turning the seeds of your life over to the enemy without thinking about it? Here's why that's a very smart question to ask. All seeds look small at first. **Everything** - Godly and devilish - looks inconsequential at first. The beginnings of everything - Godly or devilish - seem too little to change a life. That's why most people give too little attention to the sowing of their lives.

This also included sowing to the things of the Spirit. No single day of devotions looks life changing. Certainly no single church service seems to save your marriage or family. No single time of prayer solves all of life's trials. That's never the way sowing works. Benefits and blessings - as well as dangers - are always gradual and incremental.

- 2) **Matthew 24:43-44** - "**But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. [44] Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."**

Jesus uses a story to illustrate the surprise element of His Second Coming. He's stressing the need for **watchfulness and alertness** just as Paul did in **Ephesians 5:14** - "**....for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'"**

I want to be painfully simple and direct about Jesus' words here. Jesus says, "**If the owner of the house had known the hour of the night when the thief was coming, he would not have 'let his house be broken into.'"**

"....he would not have let his house be broken into...." Hear some passion at this point. Your **house**. Your **home**. He means the things most dear and precious. Ultimately this shattering of our routines and securities will take place when Jesus comes again. That's because sleepy people can't become alert people at the last minute. We form the habits of our lives. And then that sowing forms us. It's unavoidable.

But long before that, consider the things that break into our houses - our homes - while we sleep. Consider the things that creep with stealth and darkness right into the fabric of our families and rob them of their power in the Spirit and the potential they could have under God.

Many times when I come home from the church some evening and Reni can tell when I've been counselling fractured marriages and heart-broken parents. It's incredibly grieving to see close up those points where the enemy is breaking into too many homes.

And people who are humble and wise enough to come and deal with their situations quickly and openly usually come to see that it didn't just happen overnight. They see that somewhere along the way there was a sleepiness to certain dangers, certain desires, certain attitudes, that were left too long.

Consider alertly the things that break into our houses while we sleep. How careful are you about the **entertainment** you allow into your living room? What kind of **music** do you stream off the ear drums of the temple of the Holy Spirit? How much of the **material goods** of this world do you need to be happy? And what are you sacrificing to get them?

Listen. These are the points where the Holy Spirit wants to issue a fresh wake-up call to the church. Don't grow accustomed to the drone of a culture that sucks the life of the Spirit out of your home.

Please notice that in both these stories the first plan of attack wasn't to sow in weeds among the crop or to bust the door down of the neighbour's house. That completely misses the point. The first step is to catch someone **sleeping** who ought to be **awake**. The first plan is to **deaden the spiritual perception, to lower the appetite for God!** Then any kind of gradual spiritual take-over is easy work.

3) **Jonah 1:6 - "So the captain came and said to him, 'What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.'"**

We all know this old story. We know Jonah is famous for spending his weekend in a fish's belly. But there's more to the story than that. Jonah is running from the call of God on his life to evangelize Nineveh. As he flees on a ship to Tarshish a terrible storm threatens the lives of all who are on board.

The sailors have no recourse but to pray to their powerless pagan idols for help. They sense the danger and take whatever feeble steps for help they can take. They're groping desperately in the dark. They do all they know to do in the face of their peril.

The real issue revolves around Jonah. There is something in their words to Jonah that ought to grip our hearts. **"Why aren't you praying to your God on our behalf? How can you possibly sleep? If you were praying maybe we wouldn't be perishing!"**

My thinking here is no one **begins** the Christian life asleep. If the Christian experience is genuine at all, the individual **senses** the depth of his need and the greatness of God's redemption in Jesus Christ. We all **begin** the Christian life **alert**.

Spiritual slumber happens **gradually**. Our Jonah story has **one** person devoted to God and all the others **idolaters**. And the pagans are **praying** while Jonah is **sleeping**.

And I think there is something strange and very convicting about that. I actually wonder how many people who don't know Jesus in any way, if they **knew** the light and the hope of the Redeemer the way we do, would say to you and to me, and our church, "Why aren't you beating the doors of heaven down? If you were maybe I wouldn't be perishing!"

I am drawn to this **three-fold wake up call** from the Spirit. It's all about how **the beginnings of everything** happen in the kingdom of God. These are texts that call me to stop and think about **the weeds** that grow in my heart while I sleep. And, for all of us, these are texts that remind us of the things that **break into** our houses and homes while we sleep - and the call to rescuing the perishing in prayer rather than sleep.

"The present time is of the highest importance - it is time to wake up to reality. Every day brings God's salvation nearer. The night is nearly over, the day has almost dawned. Let us arm ourselves for the fight of the day." - Romans 13:11-12, Phillips