

Four Awakenings

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of awakening to God's call and rising above the hideous nightmare of our gloom to live a victorious life in the glory of God.

Scripture: Isaiah 51:9-52

Topics: "Identity in Christ", "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the urgent call for spiritual awakening in his sermon 'Four Awakenings,' urging believers to rise from despair and slumber. He draws parallels between God's seeming silence and the disciples' perception of Jesus asleep during the storm, highlighting that God is always attentive to our cries. Simpson encourages the faithful to shake off the dust of worldly entanglements, put on the strength and beautiful garments provided by God, and embrace their identity as children of light. He reminds listeners that the glory of the Lord is available to them now, urging them to step into their full inheritance and shine brightly in the world.

Transcript

"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Are You not He that has cut Rahab and wounded the dragons?" (Is. 51: 9.)

This sublime passage is a call from Jerusalem to Jehovah to awake as in the might of ancient days for her defense. and deliverance. It seemed to her that He must be asleep, so long had He appeared to be deaf to her cries and silent to her prayers.

So the disciples thought the Master cared not for them, as He lay "in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow," but the heart that was unmoved by the raging of the storm instantly responded to the faintest cry of their distress and woke to rebuke the storm and speak their hearts to peace.

And so God was not asleep. It was but the suppressed strength of His waiting and longsuffering love, and it grew by waiting, and would at length burst forth as "the cry of a travailing woman," rending the heavens, making the mountains to flow down at His command and overcoming all His people's foes.

I. "Awake, awake, stand up, oh Jerusalem, which has drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury; you have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling and wrung them out." (Isaiah 51: 17).

The second passage quoted above is in answer to the first call. It is a summons from Jehovah to Jerusalem to wake. He turns her own question back upon her and cries out, "Awake, awake, oh Jerusalem." Like the disciples in the garden, she has been "sleeping for sorrow."

Yes, it is true that the heart can be drugged by grief and anguish until the fiber of our being is poisoned and paralyzed with sorrow.

Not always is suffering sanctifying. Suffering without faith, love and hope corrodes every fiber of the soul, depresses, discourages and destroys. There is nothing on earth so tragic as the case of those who weep life's bitterest tears in unavailing grief, who get nothing out of their distress but bitterness, despair and at last self-destruction; turning first against God and man and then at last, like the scorpion that stings itself to death, against themselves. Thousands of people are going wrong and going down just through heart break and discouragement. They say "there is no hope," and they go on from worse to worse. Oh, if you are sunk in the stupor or sleep of hopeless sorrow, hear the voice of God calling "Awake, awake." Rise up above the hideous nightmare of your gloom, throw off the spell of Satan's hate and go forth into the clear light of truth and God, and lo! you will find that it was but a nightmare of your heart and brain and the sun is shining around you in the heavens, the birds are singing in the branches and there is still left to you the love of God, the sweetness of life and the hope of a bright tomorrow. Awake, awake -- from the sleep of despairing sorrow. God lives. Christ loves and there is a whole heaven waiting for every heart that can receive it.

III. "Awake, awake; put on your strength, oh Zion; put on your beautiful garments, oh Jerusalem, the holy city; shake yourself from the dust; arise, and sit down, oh Jerusalem; loose yourself from the bands of your neck, oh captive daughter of Zion." (Isa. 52: 1, 2).

The third passage in our series is another call to Zion to wake, this time not from sorrow. There is a hideous sight that we sometimes behold in our great cities: a wretched woman who has fallen in the streets under the power of drunkenness and vice. Her hair is matted; her garments are dishevelled and spattered with the mire of the street and her whole frame is bound by the fearful fetters of long habits of sin. Once she was innocent and beautiful and happy, but oh, how degraded now -- and as you gaze upon her with compassion, you summon her to awake, to put on her strength, to change her garments, to shake herself from the dust and then to loose herself from the bands of sin and rise and sit down once more in her womanly dignity and glory.

Thank God, many a fallen one has thus risen and is "sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." There are several clauses here:

1. "Awake."

The figure of slumber is often used, not only for the sinner, but for the Christian and the church. The condition of sleep is one in which we are blind to the conditions around us. The flames may be creeping through our home, the burglar may be stealing our treasures, the frowning cliff may be yawning just beneath our feet, but we are asleep and we see it not. The fact that you are indifferent or unconcerned about your soul is no evidence that you are safe, but rather that you are asleep.

Then again, the sleeper lives in an unreal world. The thoughts that come to him are vain dreams and false visions of unreal things while the world is going on around him, and he knows nothing about it. Thousands of people are living as in a dream, passionately striving for the vain things of this little day which will soon

vanish and be forgotten, while the great realities of time and eternity are to them as dreams.

Oh, you that are living in a false world and for the perishing things of time, awake, awake!

Again, sleep is a condition of idleness and ease. Your girdle is laid down. Your work is put aside and you are doing nothing in the activities of life. Thousands of God's children are idle because they are asleep. The cause of the Master needs them. The claims of the work need them. The great interests of eternity need them, but they are asleep.

The sleeper is defenseless and exposed to the attacks of the enemy. It is when you sleep that the thief comes to steal your property. It was "while men slept the enemy sowed tares in the field." It was while he slept that Bunyan's pilgrim lost his roll and had to go back afterwards and spend long and weary hours in recovering what he had lost.

How many opportunities have been lost by sleep? How pathetic the appeal of Christ to His three disciples, "Tarry and watch with Me," and how touching His reproach afterwards when He found them sleeping. "What, could you not watch with Me one hour?" And how unspeakably mournful His final words to them as He came back at last, spent with agony and treading the winepress alone, and said, "Sleep on now and take your rest." It is too late to help Me. You have lost your opportunity. "The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

Oh, children of God, how much you are missing! Souls are perishing. Opportunities are going by. Eternal recompense is being lost while you sleep on in your dull and stupid insensibility. Awake, awake!

When a Roman sentinel slept at his post, he lost his uniform and was publicly dishonored and disgraced. It is to this the Master refers when He says, "Blessed is he that watches and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." (Rev. 16: 15.)

God's awakening call is a very loud and repeated one. Not gently does the summons come when it is necessary that we shall be wakened. This is the meaning of the alarms that have been rung in your heart and your life, the blows that have struck you in your home, your business and your own person. God is calling you. Oh, awake, before He shall have to call so loudly that you will never forget the shock!

2. "Put on your strength."

Sometimes we go to sleep from weakness and weariness. God is calling us to rise and let Him clothe us with His strength. This is not inherent strength of our own. It is a strength that we put on. It is the robe of fire with which the Holy Ghost is waiting to endue every willing, consecrated soul. Oh, the weakness of Christians, afraid of their own voices, afraid of the faces of men, conscious of their impotence and inefficiency, unable to speak to a soul, unable to pray a prevailing prayer, unfruitful and passing on to judgment with "nothing but leaves" to bring before the Master.

God has provided for our strength. The Spirit of Pentecost is waiting to come upon every willing heart. He will give you power to pray, power to witness, power to live, power to bring things to pass for His cause and the world's need. God wants no imbeciles or invalids in His army. You have no business to be a baby. "Awake, awake, put on your strength." Receive the Holy Ghost.

3. "Put on your beautiful garments."

This refers to the robes of purity and practical righteousness. The Holy Ghost is given us, not merely for power, but for all the help we need to live pure, sweet victorious lives. We have no more business to be wicked than we have to be weak. We have no business to go on sinning and failing. We have no business to go into the wedding feast, not having the wedding garment on. It is all provided, and we have but to be willing to wear His robes of purity and He will put them on us. The question is: will you choose to be sweet, to be kind, to be holy, instead of indulging yourself in your temper, your irritation, your hasty word of retaliation. The Holy Spirit will give you all the grace, all the love, all the patience you are willing to wear. You must take it by faith and then wait to put it on and prove it in the real tests of actual life and in the hard places where your human nature will break down and His divine grace will come to triumph.

This expression covers more than a mere ordinary experience of holiness. These beautiful garments include the finer touches of grace, the finishing touches of holy character, the beautiful array which the bride is to wear in order to be ready for the coming of her Lord.

Shall we awake and put on our strength and our beautiful garments?

4. "Shake yourself from the dust."

Every woman knows how to shake the dust from her robes when she has been sitting in an open car or by some dusty highway. The dust here refers to the entanglements with the world into which the children of God so often fall. John Bunyan describes it by the picture of a muck rake with which the miserable worldling was raking together all the dust and grime of the roadside for the sake of the little bits of shining gold he found among it, while at the same time he was refusing a golden crown which the hand of an angel was holding out to him from above.

Yes, "the thick clay," as Job expresses it, is all over us. Go into a fashionable church and angel eyes can see it upon the clothes of the vain and frivolous women, who are thinking much more about their array than about the Word of God. Or, look a little deeper behind the waistcoats of the men and you will see hearts filled with the plans of the week's business and the cares of this sordid world, and all higher thoughts shut out by mammon.

God calls us to shake ourselves from all these things; to be separated from the world and only to use it as a servant and instrument for His glory, counting all our means and possessions as His property and spending them as stewards for His service and glory. The only way to be saved from the world is to give everything to Christ and then to administer the trust as His servants and stewards.

5. "Loose yourself from the bands of your neck." We are fettered. We are bound. Sometimes it is by the fear of men; sometimes it is by the power of evil habits; sometimes it is by the restraining hand of sickness; but God bids us claim our freedom and stand forth in the glorious liberty of the children of God. We must loose ourselves. He has set us free. We have but to assert our liberty and we shall be free.

6. "Sit down."

This speaks of rest and quietness and peace. She is first to rise from her prostrate and helpless condition and then sit down as a queen on her royal seat. Our place is to "sit with Christ in the heavenlies," in the "peace that passes all understanding," and the rest which quiets every anxious care and fits us to bless and help the troubled hearts around us.

Have we entered into His rest? Have we "sat down under His shadow with great delight"? Have we taken our place of blessing and privilege and "entered into rest"?

IV. "Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you." (Is. 60: 1.)

The splendid figure here is that of one sleeping after sunrise. The sun is up, the light is come, the glory of the Lord has risen, but we are still sleeping as if it were night and His voice bids us rise, step out into the light that is filling all the earth and heaven and shine in its radiance for His glory.

This applies to the people that are waiting for salvation instead of rising and claiming the salvation which has come and is awaiting their acceptance. This applies also to the people that are waiting for the Holy Ghost instead of recognizing the fact that the Spirit has come and that it is ours to receive Him, count upon Him and to go forth and act in dependence upon His presence and victorious power.

And this applies to all who are living below their privileges; who are waiting for some great thing to come to them instead of recognizing that God has given us everything and that He is waiting for us to step out and enter into our full inheritance. This word "glory" stands for the highest and the best that God has for His children. It is more than the ordinary grace which saves us. It is "the life more abundantly," it is the "joy unspeakable which is full of glory," it is "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." It is for us here and now. "The glory that You have given Me I have given them that they may be one even as we are."

God is waiting to come into your life with a touch of sublimity that will transfigure the common things into the sunlit mountain tops of a celestial vision. It does not mean that our lives shall be on some high plane of circumstances and earthly conditions. Just as the sun can light up a little bit of glass till it glows like a diamond; just as the windows of yonder village sometimes blaze like celestial palaces when the rays of the setting sun fall upon them at a distance, so the commonest trials and duties of life grow elevated when touched by the grace of God and the victory of faith and love.

The other day Mrs. Alexander told in Albert Hall how a few nights before, as she talked with a besotted woman and told her of the love of God, that wretched being asked her if she loved her well enough to kiss her. For a moment she shrank from the new experience, but there came such a tide of God's love into her heart that she leaned over and kissed those foul lips and said, "Yes, I will kiss you, because God loves you," and then she told how that woman, begrimed and defiled with every kind of sin, broke down and gave her life to God, and is now working in the meetings, bringing others to the Savior. What a touch of glory that little thing shed upon a very simple act.

And sometimes we have seen God come to some quiet Christian in the hour of overwhelming sorrow when others were crushed in despair, and yet this child of faith was enabled to rise up with face illumined and eyes that refused to weep and lips that could only praise until all that watched wondered at the glory of His grace.

Yes, and sometimes, too, we have seen a modest, quiet Christian, after a life unmarked by religious emotion or any great experience, but filled up with simple duties, patient suffering and faithful service, -- we have seen such a life pass down into the dark valley, and we have wondered perhaps if there was a deep enough experience for that last great test; and lo! the heavens have opened, the glory of God has shone upon that dying bed and those lips have been opened to utter words of inspiration and revelation, words of peace, words of triumph, words of unutterable joy, words of sweet and solemn warning to the

living, words of power in the Holy Ghost and that chamber of mourning has become like a mount of transfiguration, and we have said, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

"Is that a deathbed where a Christian dies?

Yes, but not his; 'tis Death himself that dies."

Beloved, this glory is for you and for me; oceans of it, ages of it are waiting for us yonder, but God will anticipate the eternal years and give us an earnest of it now. Shall we take it? Shall we rise and shine, for our light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon us?

"Shine on, shine on,

You children of the light, shine on;

Shine as the beacon light,

Shine as the sunrise bright,

Shine as the children of the light, shine on, shine on."

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