

# Professing Christians, Awake!

by Asahel Nettleton

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*Asahel Nettleton exhorts Christians to awake from spiritual slumber and fulfill their duty as followers of Christ.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 3:13

**Topics:** "Spiritual Awakening", "Christian Revival"

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## Description

Asahel Nettleton preaches on the urgency for Christians to awaken from spiritual slumber, emphasizing the signs of spiritual slumber such as neglecting spiritual duties, avoiding reproach, and losing interest in divine things. He motivates Christians to awaken by considering the time, the duty to their children, the activity of unbelievers, the power of the enemy, the urgency of sinners perishing, the time that has passed, the glorious future awaiting them, and the danger of being deceived.

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## Transcript

"Now it is high time to awake out of sleep" (Rom. 13:11).

The language of this text is borrowed from natural sleep, in which a person is in a great measure unaware of what is happening around him but life remains in the body. This condition is applied to Christians who have grown insensitive to divine things--they sleep, but life remains in their souls. In particular, the exhortation is for those who find themselves in a state of spiritual slumber to shake off their drowsiness and awake to spiritual realities.

### Signs of Spiritual Slumber

1. Sleeping Christians allow personal ease to compete with spiritual duty. Religion is the great business of the Christian's life. It imposes on him many responsibilities that are in painful opposition to his fleshly desires. However, to neglect spiritual duties for the sake of personal comfort is to indulge in spiritual slothfulness. Great care must be taken to fight this natural tendency toward laziness with regard to spiritual things. For this reason, the Scripture instructs Christians to encourage one another daily "lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13).

Avoiding reproach is a common way Christians shirk their godly purpose in the world. It is easy to live quietly as long as you will not disturb your fellow sinner with a reminder of his sin. Ignoring the sinful behavior of others requires no effort, and thousands of professing Christians resign themselves to rest in a state of passivity. Whole churches often shut their mouths in silence in the name of charity or goodwill, but

in so doing they actually display an awful indifference to the souls of men.

2. Sleeping Christians are no longer deeply affected by divine things. In this frame of mind, it is no wonder that Christians regularly attend the house of God but soon forget the instruction they receive. Although they once saw the glory of God in the face of Christ, now they walk in darkness. Where once they were stirred by a deep sense of the worth of souls and could weep over perishing sinners, now they can endure the sight of transgressors almost without emotion.

Their lack of interest in spiritual things is further manifested by their conversation. At one time, they spoke often of eternal matters, but now all their attention is engrossed with the world. They converse with ease about the temporal issues of life but have almost nothing to say about the great things of eternity. When they do speak of heavenly themes, it is in a dull and lifeless manner. The weight of eternal realities does not stir their soul, and thus they talk like a person in sleep.

3. Sleeping Christians are reluctant to pray secretly. Prayer has been properly described as the breath of the Christian. When a Christian continues in a state of prayerlessness for a prolonged period, it is a sign that he is asleep. If not shortly awakened from this breathless state, it is reasonable to wonder whether such a person is actually spiritually dead.

#### Motivations for Christians to Awake

1. Consider the time. Gospel light has risen upon us, and those who do not open their eyes to this light will remain in eternal darkness and despair. How can you sleep when the light of heaven is shining upon you? It is no time for sleep, because the day of salvation is a day that will be witnessed for eternity. The great business of this day calls loudly for you to awake.

Think, my brethren! Have you nothing to do for yourselves in preparation for eternity? Have you no sins to repent of and no evil propensities to mortify? Are your evidences of grace bright enough? Do you love God with all your heart? Are you perfectly conformed to God's holy law? In short, are you willing to die as you are? If you have anything to do for yourselves, it is high time to awake out of sleep.

2. Parents, consider your children. Are they all securely within the safety of the covenant? Do you pray with them and for them? Have you taught them that they are sinners in need of new birth? Are you urging them to remember their Creator in the days of their youth? Were you to depart with one of your children today, could you rest satisfied that you have done your duty? Have you not one more word of instruction, of counsel, or of warning for your children before you meet them at the bar of God? If so, then it is time for you to awaken to your duty to order your home.

3. Consider the activity of unbelievers. The men of this world shame us by their conduct. They rise up early and sit up late. They plan and execute. Labor, fatigue, and hardship are nothing to them if they can but collect a little of this world before they leave it. They are laying up treasure on earth. And will you not be as earnest to lay up for yourselves treasure that will endure in heaven? Do you not feel reproved by their conduct to think that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light?

4. Consider the power of your enemy. My brethren, you are on the field of battle against the prince of darkness. The malice of evil legions is directed against the Redeemer's kingdom in this world. Satan is already in possession of the hearts of all wicked men. While you sleep, he is sowing tares and destroying about us. Snares and temptations are laid thick around you, and unless you are awake, you will certainly

be ignorant of his devices. I would blow the trumpet and sound the alarm: Cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light!

5. Consider that sinners are perishing. Your life and example will contribute either to their salvation or to their destruction. It is a fact that one ungodly professor of Christianity does more to prevent the conversion of sinners than many infidels. Brethren, are heaven and hell mere fables? If they are eternal realities, how can you remain silent or indifferent about them? If there be one impenitent sinner among you who is in danger of going to that place of eternal torment, can you sleep? Come, then, you that know the Lord and keep not silent, "if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezek. 33:8). There is a dreadful storm of divine wrath coming upon the world of the ungodly. Therefore, it is high time to awake from slumber because "their damnation slumbereth not" (2 Pet. 2:3).

6. Consider the time that has already passed. How many months have you been asleep? How many years have you slept in God's vineyard? Would you still continue sleeping away the day of salvation? With some, the sun has already passed its midway point and is now hastening its rapid descent. "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light" (John 12:35). Delay not, for "the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

7. Consider the glorious future that awaits you. You who have long traversed the wilderness on your way to Zion, your struggles for eternal life will have an end. You who have long labored, prayed, and groaned to be delivered from the bondage of sin, "look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). This night you may wake up amid the song of angels, and a crown of glory may be placed on your head. Awake, then, and behold the glorious dawn of a bright new day!

8. Finally, consider the great danger of being deceived. A genuine Christian can never sleep sound without being disturbed. He inevitably will become frightened and wake up alarmed about his own condition. However, there are those who remain sound asleep and live at ease in Zion. They neither weep for their sins nor rejoice in the glory of God. Their hope of heaven is really only a pleasant dream while meanwhile they sink further into spiritual deception.

The Christian church is a net that gathers of every kind. Remember that ten virgins professed to be followers of Christ but only five were ready for the bridegroom. Many who now commune on earth will never meet in heaven. Many who now appear to us to be real Christians will, no doubt to our surprise, be found on the left hand of Christ, "for many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14).

Sadly, the sinner who has professed religion with a false hope can hardly be driven to give it up. However, it is far better to destroy such hope and for the person to conclude that he is lost than for him to awake too late. "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh . . . : lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping" (Mark 13:35-36). At midnight the cry will be made. Then there will be a great confusion, for thousands will be deceived. Therefore, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (Rev. 3:1-3)

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