

(Awake! Series): Two Kinds of Sleeping People

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being awake to one's spiritual condition and the danger of sleep, whether moral or spiritual, and encourages listeners to seek a deeper relationship with God and to live a life of righteousness and purity.

Duration: 29:01

Scripture: Psalm 51:5, Isaiah 51:9, Isaiah 52:1-2, Acts 11:24, Romans 3:10, Ephesians 5:14

Topics: "Sleepiness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being alert and responsive to the call of God. He compares it to a person who suddenly wakes up and reacts quickly when they see a train approaching. The preacher also addresses those who have grown up in Christian homes and have become desensitized to the teachings of Christianity. He warns against using God for personal gain instead of offering oneself to be used by God. The preacher urges Christians to be aware of what is happening in the world and to understand the deeper meaning behind current events.

Transcript

Now, in this 52nd chapter of Isaiah, Isaiah 52nd chapter. Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion. Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.

For henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust. Arise and sit down, O Jerusalem.

Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. For thus saith the Lord, You have sold yourself for naught, and ye shall be redeemed without money. This is a very familiar passage, and I don't want to talk long about it, but only to point out that this was written about Israel, and it describes a natural and earthly and national, literal revival yet to come.

And yet, though it refers to Israel, Zion, its spiritual content is for all of those who name the name of Israel's God in truth. I say this because sometimes men want to slough over what is written in the Old Testament. This is not applying to us.

But Isaiah's words were fully applied to New Testament believers, without hesitation, by John the Baptist, Christ himself, Paul, and the other New Testament apostles and writers of epistles. They quoted Isaiah

without hesitation and applied it directly, without excusing themselves or apologizing. They applied it to New Testament church.

They did it, we can do it. And not only can we do it, but we should. The Old Testament was for the Jews, but the spirit of the Old Testament is the same spirit that wrote the New, and intrinsically the same laws apply, the same principles underlie.

While the dispensations change, the God of dispensations has not changed. Now, he cries, awake, awake. And this call, awake, awake, it would take an actor to repeat those words and give them the mighty emphasis that God must have given them.

And he cried, awake, awake, to Israel. Now, this is addressed to sleeping people, and I wonder what it is to sleep. Let's look at it for just a little bit.

We know that to sleep is to be unconscious or semi-conscious. It is to have a dimming of feeling and thought, and awareness is either absent or very faint. When I ride on a train, I sleep all night.

In fact, I sleep better on a train than I do when I'm not on a train. It is I stay asleep longer. The lulling of the thing must take me back to my childhood, because I'm sort of nursed and rocked to sleep with the rhythmic beat of the wheels and the swaying of the train.

And yet I'm never quite asleep. The next day I'm rather groggy, even though I've slept all night. That's an odd situation, because while I'm asleep, I'm only semi-asleep, partway asleep.

And there's an awareness that isn't quite there, and yet it's there. It's very faint. The light never quite goes off.

It just dims, and you can't read by it, so to speak. Then, during sleep, one may be in the gravest danger and not know it. A man may be in grave danger, Dr. Hamlin told us last night, about a man out in the Keswick, near the Keswick colony, of which I have very often spoken here, in New Jersey.

A colony dedicated to the cure of alcoholics by the only method that Dr. Hamlin says he knows, and that is by conversion and the new birth. Some years ago, the old Mr. Rawls, the father of the present director of the colony, felt he should take a walk one rainy night out to the little spur railroad that runs out there. And he did, and found a man asleep across the rails, drunk.

He picked him up, dragged him out of there before the coming freight had ground him to bits, got him converted, and he became one of the songwriters and has lived a long and useful Christian life. Now, that man was asleep and in grave danger and didn't know it. He could have been killed there if somebody hadn't found him by a kind of divine providence.

And so it is with people who may be in immoral sleep. They may be in danger and not know it. The doom of a man may be approaching and yet he gave it no concern at all.

I've been in hospitals and in homes where they would take me in and talk in a low voice and point to a sleeping man or woman, more often man, but I in my experiences. And he was in a deep sleep and he never came out of that sleep. Death was creeping on and he was completely unaware of it.

Now, that's the danger of sleep. And that's why God says, Awake! Awake! And that's why the New Testament says, Awake thou that sleepest and Christ shall give thee life. Now, there are two kinds of

sleep which I want to mention.

There's what we call moral sleep. It is to live and to have habits and to commit acts which are deeply wicked and hateful to God and yet not know it. Acts that are dangerous to the soul and yet not be aware of it.

To live a life and have habits that are self-destructive and harmful to self and others and yet not be aware of it. To live a life which must certainly and surely lead directly to that place about which we do not like to speak, hell itself, and yet not be aware of it. Not alarmed, not worried, not concerned.

They used to have a word they applied to the situation where God moved in, and people that were not concerned suddenly became concerned. They call it an awakening. And if you will notice the literature of revival, you will find that the New England revival was rarely called revival.

It was called the Great Awakening. People who had been asleep, morally asleep, careless men and women, young people, were suddenly awakened morally. And that's what they called it, a Great Awakening.

I wonder if that ought not to be the word we'd use in the day in which we live. That people might suddenly become awakened, were sleeping. You say, can we sleep and yet work? Yes.

We can be morally asleep and yet be intellectually awake. We can be morally asleep and yet be planning, running businesses, writing, painting, working, traveling, flying airplanes, playing baseball, doing anything that men normally might engage in and properly might engage in. Not that what they are doing is wrong.

Work is not wrong, but their lives are wrong. So it's entirely possible to be intellectually, physically awake and yet be morally asleep. And I believe that that's one thing that's wrong with us now and today.

We sleep on dangerous sins. Nobody likes to be awakened. Do you like to be the one that goes in and drags the youngster out for school? You? I never did.

We had a flock of them to awaken, but I never liked it because they never welcomed you. He that bringeth evil tidings is like a cold rain on a summer day, doesn't he say that in Proverbs, the words to that effect? And to go in where some young fellow or girl is deep in sleep and utterly relaxed and comfortable and say, it's time to get up, they never like it. Nobody wants to be awakened.

Now, yet they may be in danger. Lying and cheating and gossiping and secret sinning and the miser and the grouch and young believer, all of these may be deep in sleep and are deep in sleep, if this describes them, and the day of awakening not very far away, that is, the day of judgment not very far away, and yet may sleep on into the day of judgment. I used to hear the evangelists say in the days when evangelists set out to awake you, not to comfort you, they used to say, you are asleep and you will be awakened by the trump of the archangel.

I'm afraid that's too true of a lot of people. Busy and happy, apparently, and at peace and unconcerned with their social enjoyments around them, their growing family, their comfortable homes, all proper and desirable and right and good things to have. But morally, asleep and not know how bad off they are.

Now, a few are semi-conscious, that is, a few sinners are semi-conscious, slightly troubled but drowsy, and a few others are deeply troubled but rather numb, like someone who is awake but not quite awake.

People are different, I guess, and you'll excuse my referring to myself again. I had a little season in the Army when I was a young fellow, not very long, I wasn't in as long as General Harrison.

I didn't rise as high, but I think that I went as high as I could have gone, private. But ever since I used to jump out of bed at first call, three notes, and I was out on the third one, I've never had any trouble waking up since. And to this hour, when I awake, I'm fully awake.

I'm either asleep or fully awake, never in any twilight zone in between. But I have been with people that were completely woozy for five minutes, or ten minutes afterwards. They couldn't talk and you couldn't get through to them, they couldn't communicate, they were just blissfully drowsy.

And half asleep and still awake, sitting on the edge of bed, but still awake, still asleep, didn't know which they were. And I have met people that are like that, they're deeply troubled, but they're numb, they're not awoken enough to do anything about it. Some people, when they're converted, are converted the way I wake up out of a night's sleep, with an absolute sudden wakeness that has no drowsiness in it.

But most people are not converted quite like that. They wake up a little slower, a little more slowly, and it takes a little more time. But it ought to be a complete awakening that would rouse the sinner, that would rouse the wrongdoer from his wrongdoing, rouse him to the danger of it.

You could imagine that man lying across the railroad tracks and hearing the long moan of the then steam train coming down that track. I said a spur, it wasn't really a spur, because it had passenger trains on it in those days. I've seen the track myself.

It was from one town to another, but it wasn't too important a branch of the railroad. But if you could imagine his suddenly rousing himself and sitting up and seeing the headlight through the rain aiming in his direction, getting out of there fast, well, now that's the way we should react to the call of God. That's the way every young person should react to the call of God.

Some of you have been reared in Christian homes, where Christianity and the Bible and the Gospels and the New Testament and the Sunday school and the presence of Christian people has become a routine thing, and you're not affected by it at all. Prayer doesn't even affect you. I warn you that that's not a proof you're all right, that's a proof you're morally asleep and you need to be awake.

Then there's another kind of sleep, and I don't know what this might have been nearer to what the Prophet had in mind, and I think certainly it was nearer to what the New Testament had in mind when it said, Waked thou that sleepest and risest from the dead, and that is a spiritual sleep. I would suppose that the moral man or the man who is morally asleep is also spiritually asleep, but it's possible for one to be morally awake and then slip back by degrees into a kind of a spiritual somnolence, that is, coldness and lack of feeling about God and the things of God, about Christians and about the dying and about the scriptures and about prayer, and get used to things and get sophisticated, spiritual sophistication. It lacks freshness and warmth.

God is far away and there is little communion and little joy in the Lord. This is a spiritual sleepiness, to have a cold heart with little pity and little fire and little love and little worship. This is a spiritual sleepiness.

The old man of God wrote like this, he said, You sons of Adam, vain and young, indulge your eyes, indulge your tongue, taste the delights your souls desire, and give alouse to all your fire. Pursue the pleasures you design, and cure your hearts with song and wine. Enjoy the day of mirth, but know there is a

day of judgment.

I believe that we Christians ought to be very careful that we are awake and that we stay awake, that we are alert, that we are alerted to what's going on in the world. Most Christians aren't, I'm afraid, alert. They don't know what's going on around them.

They know it historically. They know it in what we call current events, but they don't know what the current events mean. If you're far enough in the hills somewhere, where the only news you get is by pack mule, you may not know what's going on at all in the world, that is not what events are going on.

But it's possible to have a radio in every room and listen to every news broadcast and subscribe to three papers in Time magazine and Newsweek and still not know what's going on. You know what I mean? Perfectly possible to know what's going on, but not know the meaning of what's going on. I have noticed, and I've had occasion to notice, and we use it ourselves in a limited degree, but I've noticed how in the day now, religious journalism has gone to religious news items, whole page after page given over to religious news items.

What this person did, what that person did, and who was elected to this, and who held a meeting over there, and who was the president of this college, and the arguments such and such had about baptism. There's news everywhere, news. But it's possible to be crammed with religious news and filled with religious shop talk and yet not have the spiritual discernment to know what it means.

If there's anything I've asked God for, it's that. It makes you just about as popular as a hawk in a hen roof or a skunk at a picnic. You're not popular at all, and you'll never be.

Nobody wants to be awakened. When everybody is dancing around Diana of Ephesians, great is Diana, nobody wants an apostle to come around and say, that little girl's dead, she's nobody. They want to kill him right away.

They say why he's taking away our source of income. Well, somebody will say, Mr. Tozer, I'm for you in a general way, but I think you need correction here on one thing. If somebody is asleep, how can you rouse anybody? The Bible says more than asleep, the Bible says the sinner's dead.

How can you rouse dead men? They want to tell us that it takes a prevenient miracle of God's grace to awake a man sovereignly without his consent. And after he has been sovereignly converted without his consent, then he believes and then he is awake and then you can preach to him. Well, I never believed that down to this hour, and I'm believing it less and less.

And the very brethren who preach it don't practice it, because they'll preach a sermon like that and then turn around and give them all their cause. That's a lot of things. If a man is dead and you can't wake him and he can't hear and he's so totally depraved he's unable even to hear the voice of a preacher, why give him all their cause? He might just as well go home.

But I know some brethren that do those two very self-contradictory things. It's an instance where a man is better than his theology. He's got more sense than his teacher.

Lecture 11 Justification and Sanctification 3 Now, I want to answer this. Can a sleeping man be awakened? Can a person dead in sin be awakened? Well, the answer is, the technique and the psychology of it ought not to bother you. Can you wake your 17-year-old son to go to high school? Can

you? He's in deep sleep.

And a brother at that age, they can go deep. They're nearly dead with sheer downright delight and sleepiness, not a muscle tense anywhere. Deep sleep.

How do you get him awake? Are you going to stand at his bedside and say to your husband, George, according to my theology, this fellow is asleep and can't hear, therefore we're no use to try to wake him. You don't practice what you preach. You yell at him.

I used to pull one of my boys out by the feet. That was the only way I could get him up. I'd grab him by the feet and start to pull.

He'd wake up and start to laugh. He'd struggle with me, and by the time he was out on the floor, we were in good nature and he was awake. That was the only way.

There is a way to get a boy awake to send him to school. And if you can wake a sleeping boy, then why should we refuse to say that we can wake a sleeping sinner? And if we couldn't arouse a sleeping soul, then no one could be saved because everybody is dead in sin until the Lord is born anew. And then no church could ever have an awakening nor a revival, and the Prophet himself would be a fool for trying to awake anybody.

Now, let's not press an illustration too far. The old man who said those terrible words pursue your pleasures, fill your hearts with song and wine, enjoy the day of mirth. But no, there is a day of judgment.

He went on to pray this prayer. O mighty God, turn off their eyes from all these alluring vanities, and let the thunder of thy word awake their souls to fear the Lord. He believed it was possible.

He said, shake thyself from the dust and put on thy beautiful garments. And in the Bible, garments, of course, are righteousness and true holiness. That's the Bible.

Basic goodness, moral soundness. Basic goodness. I was taught for a long time that there is none righteous, no, not one, and that therefore to say a man is a good man is to insult God.

But the Bible says he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost. The Bible says that. He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost.

I want to repeat, and I've said it every second Sunday for 28 years, that a Christian ought to be, among all other things, basically a good man. And if he's not basically a good man, I can't see how he can be a Christian. He's not good by nature.

By nature, he is, as the song says, a sinner by ailing, by birth, and a sinner by choice. And everybody who has ever been truly converted knows that. But when God converts a man, he not only writes his name in the Lamb's Book of Life and justifies him from his past sins, but he makes him basically to become a good man.

He ought to be a good man. I talked to a preacher the other day, or did he write me? One of the two, anyhow, communicating with a man of God. He said, Brother Tozer, I have been reading Phinney, and he said, I'm simply bowled over, I'm simply astonished to learn that Charles G. Phinney expected as much of a converted man as we now expect of a man after he's been filled with the Holy Ghost.

He said, Phinney would not grant a man to even be converted unless he showed a purity of life that we now call sanctification. He said, he started where we end. That was Phinney.

Was that why 75 percent of his converts stood? Was that why? Because he insisted that basically a man ought to put on his beautiful garments if he's going to serve the Lord Jesus, not use the Lord Jesus simply as a means of getting something. Any of you ever read Sidney Harris in the Daily News? Sidney Harris is a columnist, a writer, a newspaper man, through and through, and I don't think a converted man, I don't want to say he isn't, but he never said he was, and some things that he has said indicate to me that he wouldn't be. He is a theatrical critic as well as a general philosopher.

About last Thursday or Friday he had a little paragraph. He said, The modern religious revival leaves me cold. For this reason men are trying to use God in place of offering themselves to God to be used by him.

Then he added these significant words. And if I said it, they'd write me dirty letters and tell me I was a mean old ogre and old age was setting in. But this newspaper man added these words.

No man has a right to ask God for peace of mind unless it's founded on righteousness. The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of the day. And every once in a while, out from some liberal university somewhere, or out from some place where you wouldn't expect any light at all to come, somebody will make a pronouncement that's like a flash of lightning in the darkness, telling us that if we don't look out, we'll be using God to get peace of mind, using God to get business, using God to get rich, using God and never serving God at all.

If God never entered another pair for me, as long as I live, I still want God to believe that I want to serve him until the day I die. He never did another thing for me, yet from this morning on he withdrew his hand and let me go to pieces, physically, mentally, nervously, financially and every other way. I still want him to know I want to serve him just because he's God.

But this modern emphasis that God is a convenience and that Jesus Christ so kindly died for us in order that we might have peace of mind is a travesty on the gospel. The sinners know it and the liberals know it. Only we poor, sleepless evangelicals fail to see it.

Basic goodness, I say, and moral soundness and purity of life, honesty that won't cheat a tax collector or anybody else, truthfulness that won't lie not even about one person more than is present, mercy and humbleness and forgiving love. What a sight that is to put on the beautiful garments. Beautiful garments, there are some, thank God, there are some.

There are some here and there throughout the world that wear the beautiful garments of righteousness and true holiness, and they walk with their God. They're not very popular, maybe, and they're not heard of that much, but they walk with their God quietly. And as Gray said in Gray's Elegy, something to the effect that many a mute Milton had walked here among these hedgerows and between the chops of corn filled with everything Milton knew but unable to express it.

So I believe that there are mutant glorious Pauls and Davids walking the earth today, here and there, simple, plain, godly people that believe in the power of the blood of Jesus, not only to save us from hell but to cleanse us now on earth. They're not heard of, maybe, they're mutant glorious than Milton, but they're among us, and they're the seed of the act of survival. Well, put on my strength, he says.

In the Bible, of course, that means the power of the Holy Ghost. And I pray that all of us would awake now to our duty and our privilege and our right under grace to be filled with the Holy Ghost, so that we might rise and shine and let our light shine forth to the world. Well, God bless us.

It's time we wake up, and I pray with the Prophet or with the hymn writer awake, God turn, Almighty God turn off their eyes from all these alluring vanities, and let the thunder of thy word awake their souls to fear the Lord. May it be so.

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