

Warning and Encouragement (1906)

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon warns believers against spiritual complacency and encourages them to remain vigilant and responsive to the voice of Christ to awaken their hearts from spiritual slumber.

Scripture: Song of Solomon 5:2, Psalm 51, 1 Corinthians 10:12, Genesis 19:15-17, Matthew 26:41, Hebrews 12:1-2, John 10:27

Topics: "Spiritual Vigilance", "Christian Perseverance", "Divine Grace"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the fluctuating spiritual condition of believers, using the metaphor of sleep to describe spiritual lethargy and complacency. He warns of the dangers of such a state while offering encouragement through the hopeful sign that the heart still wakes and yearns for God. Spurgeon calls believers to vigilance, honesty about their spiritual condition, and responsiveness to the voice of Christ as the sure remedy to awaken and sustain their faith.

Transcript

"I sleep, but my heart wakes: it is the voice of my beloved that knocks, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Song of Solomon 5:2.

How changeable is the creature! In the verse preceding our text, we find the spouse in a happy, healthy, heavenly frame of mind, for her Beloved was with her and she was in the enjoyment of the closest communion with him. We find him saying, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." Yet, from the height of this glorious fellowship, how soon the spouse comes down to the depths of such a cry as this, "I sleep, but my heart wakes"! Truly, the weather of our isle is not more variable than the feelings of Believers. One day the sun shines hot and strong. The next day comes a black cloud, accompanied with the lightning flash and the voice of thunder. Then come the rattling drops of hail and then, in a few more hours, it is hot again, or perhaps the chilly North wind begins to blow. Have you not been on Mount Tabor at one moment and at another in the Valley of Achor? Have you not been at one time like the chariots of Amminadib, driving so fast that the axles were hot with speed, and soon after you have been like Pharaoh's chariots when the wheels were taken off so that you drove heavily? Now you mount as upon eagle's wings and soon you sink as in deep mud where there is no standing! At one moment delighting in God's goodness and mercy,

but the next moment, crying, "All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me." Lord, what a changeable creature is man! When You have taken him up to his highest altitude, how speedily he comes down, by the force of Your hand, to the very depths! How soon do You bring him down from his highest eminence even to the very dust!

Christian, when the Lord favors you and your soul walks in near fellowship with Him, remember that there is a devil within you and a devil outside you. Be careful of your footsteps—even when you are on the top of the mountain, even when Jesus is sitting by you and whispering in your ear that you are His, watch with the greatest, possible care, for you never lose your corruption! Your communion may be transient, but your corruption is perpetual. To be with Christ is but a thing of a moment with you, but to be with your corruption is a thing of every hour in the day! I pray you, keep this in mind and whenever you are in your best frame, then be doubly careful lest you should lose your Beloved and have to cry once again, "I sleep, but my heart wakes!" Dr. Ives, who used to live on the road to Tyburn at the time when prisoners were always carried in a cart to be hanged there, would frequently say, when he had any friends with him, if he saw the criminals riding by, "There goes Dr. Ives." And when they asked him what he meant, he replied, "Such crimes as that felon has committed I would have committed but for the Grace of God." That is true even of you who live nearest to God. You who have the most familiarity with Christ and enjoy the most holy fellowship with Him may soon become the very leaders of the hosts of Satan if your Lord withdraws His Grace! David's eyes go astray and the sweet Psalmist of Israel becomes the shameless adulterer who robs Uriah of his wife. Samson one day slays a thousand of his enemies with the might of his arm and the valour of his heart—another day his honor is betrayed, his locks are shorn, and his eyes are put out by a strumpet's treacherous wiles.

How soon are the mighty fallen! Behold Solomon, the wisest of men, yet the greatest fool who ever lived! Even Job fails in patience and Abraham staggers as to his faith. "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." These observations seem to rise at once to our minds when we consider such passages as abound in this "Song of Songs, which is

Solomon's." We find, at one moment, that the spouse is so happy that she cries out, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love," and, at another moment, she is searching for her Beloved and cannot find him, and mourning because of the darkness, and of the cruelty of "the watchmen that go about the city."

The text very readily suggests three subjects for meditation—first, a lamentable state—"I sleep." Secondly, a hopeful sign—"but my heart wakes." And thirdly, a potent remedy—"It is the voice of my Beloved." Nothing can wake a Believer out of his sleep like the voice of his Beloved!

I. First, here is A LAMENTABLE STATE—"I sleep."

I think I can describe this state pretty well because I experience it too often and I am afraid many of you could also describe it with some degree of accuracy, for frequently you, too, fall into it. What is it for a Christian to sleep? Well, thank God, there is a sleep which the Believer never knows. He can never again sleep that deadly sleep in which Christ found him while he was in his sinful state—he shall never sleep the judicial sleep into which some were cast as the result of sin! He shall not sleep, as do others, to his eternal ruin, yet he may sleep dangerously and sinfully—and this is the state in which the Christian is found when he thus sleeps—in a state of inaction. You are doing something for God but you are doing it as a matter of custom than as a matter of loving earnestness. You pray. You go up to the House of God. You teach in the

Sunday school but you do these things mechanically, as a man walks who is sound asleep. You are in a sort of spiritual somnambulism! The work that you are called upon to perform, you do after a fashion, but there is none of the power of God in the work—there is no earnestness thrown into it. It is done, and that is the end of it—but your heart has been absent from it.

Coupled with this, there is a need of vigor in everything to which such a man sets his hand. If he preaches, there is no force or burning energy, no boiling, scalding periods—he just takes his text and speaks upon it. Perhaps God's people are edified, perhaps sinners are saved, but that man has no enjoyment in his work during the whole time that he sluggishly performs it thus. A man, to enjoy the work of the Lord, must throw his whole strength into it. It is the same when you come to prayer. You pray after a sort, but it is not that wrestling with the Angel which gets the blessing from Him. You knock at the door, but not with that force which causes it to open. You have forgotten your former vigor. Whereas once your place of prayer was the witness of groans and tears, now you can go into it and come out of it without so much as a single sob. And it is just the same when you read the Scriptures. Once the page sparkled with promises and your soul was satisfied with marrow and fatness. But when you read it now it is very dull and you no longer derive refreshing consolation from it. Like the temple out of which God has moved, you walk through it—there are the pillars, there stand all the symbols of worship. The altar is there, but God, the King, has gone and a voice has been heard to say, "Arise, let Us go from here." And so, you go through the sacred edifice and find nothing there. In this same sleepy state, we go up to the House of God to listen to His Word and if our sleep has got a strong hold upon us, we cannot get any comfort. We begin to rail at the minister because we are not edified as we used to be—we think that a change has come over him. That is possible, but it is just as likely, and more so, that our lack of enjoyment of God's Word is owing to ourselves. We sit and hear as God's people hear—and we sing as God's people sing, and pray as they pray—after the outward form, but we go out as a man rises from his bed whereon he has tossed all night and we feel that we are not a whit refreshed! And the Sabbath that was once a joy and delight to us, has perhaps become a weariness and a burden!

There is no enjoyment while a man is thus asleep and, as there is no enjoyment, there is no consciousness of pain. Ah, Beloved, I have known seasons when I would almost have given my right arm to be able to shed tears of repentance— wherein I wished that I might again have a broken heart—when I have longed to make my soul feel even the pains of Hell rather than not feel anything! This is one of the worst states a Christian can be in—to go nodding on through life, slumbering over eternal realities, dreaming over Heaven, nodding his head and continuing to sleep when he is in the Presence of the Most High God and should have gathered up all his powers and strung them to the highest pitch of intensity! Have you not been in such a state? If you have not, happy man are you! There are most holy men, some of the giant servants of God, who have fallen into this state and have been compelled to cry out, "I sleep," finding themselves happy, indeed, if they could add, "I sleep, but my heart wakes."

Such a state as this is very sinful Is it not sinful, O my Soul, to be trifling with the eternal state, to be playing at prayer? Can you be so dull and heavy about eternal things when worldlings are so thoroughly awake about their silver and gold and commercial pursuits? When souls are being hurried to eternity, how is it that I can still be indifferent?

While time is speeding on and eternity is so near, how can I still go to my slothful couch and cry, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of your hands to sleep"? Chosen in Christ, redeemed with His precious blood, quickened by the Divine Spirit and made partakers of the Divine Nature, how can it be consistent with our position and condition to sleep as do others? The light of God's Grace has shone upon

us—is this a time to slumber? Let the world sleep if it will, for its object and aims are not worthy of the Christian's high ambition, but shall you and I sleep when Heaven is before us and Hell behind us—when there is temptation surrounding us everywhere and angels beckon us to Heaven while a glorious company of saints holds us in full survey? Come, my Brothers and Sisters, we must feel that such a state as this is sinful in the highest degree!

And how dangerous it is, too! A man who sleeps in his enemy's camp is exposed to imminent peril. There lies Sisera asleep in Jael's tent. Little do you know, O silly Dreamer, when that woman's hand lifts up the mallet to drive the nail through your brain! If you desire to sleep, Christian, wait until you get Home! There you shall have rest enough forever in your Father's House, but, to sleep here is to sleep in the dragon's jaw! To sleep on the top of the mast when the ship is driving before the storm! No, awake and think of your position and condition and sleep no longer! O God, have mercy upon Your people who have long prosperity! There is the pinnacle of the Temple and blessed is the man whose feet slip not when he stands there. I do not think we sleep so much, spiritually, when we have bodily affliction, though pains of body frequently make a Christian long for his rest. Nor do I think we have slumbering times when we are losing our friends. Men cannot easily sleep when the funeral knell is tolling in their ears and when they are following dear departed ones to the grave. Nor do I think we sleep much when we are the subjects of very violent temptations and have a great many doubts and fears. But when we are in our vessel when the day is fine and the sail is spread, and the wind blows softly, and the ship goes on steadily without a motion, gliding as o'er a sea of glass—then it is that the mariner, perhaps, forgets the rock and the shoal! The poet was right when he said—

"More the treacherous calm I dread, Than tempests lowering overhead."

I do not like trouble and pray God to deliver me from it. I cannot well endure bodily pain. I find myself impatient under tribulation, but I am able to say this—if I had my choice between the severest affliction and a state of sinful slumbering, I would prefer to have the affliction. "There is no devil," said one, "like having no devil." That is to say, there is no temptation like the temptation of not being tempted! The worst form of danger is when a man is left to himself, when he is not much tossed about, when he is quiet and easy. It ought not to be so. The greater our prosperity, the better should we love God. And the more our spirit is at ease, the more we should serve Him with both our hands and render Him hearty thanksgiving for His favor towards us! It should be so, but it is not so. In these smooth waters we are sure to meet with mischief and, therefore, may the Lord, in His mercy, watch over us when we are in much prosperity!

Do I hear somebody ask, "How may I know when I am asleep?" If you are a true Christian, you will soon know it by a sort of instinct, when an unutterable sense of misery comes over you. I may compare the sleep of a sinner to the sleep produced by opium which gives its victim dreams of the most magnificent character, carrying the soul up to Heaven and then, soon, dashing it down to the depths. All sorts of fantastic imaginations are the offsprings of that deadly drug, yet the man enjoys himself while under its influence. But though it causes some happiness in the use of it, it will bring him to Hell as surely as murder itself! The sleep of a Christian, when he falls into this state, is rather like the sleep produced by henbane—it is a kind of uneasy, short, disturbed, unreeling rest. It does a man little harm compared with the other and his constitution recovers from the shock much more readily. Such, I say, is the Christian's sleep—there is no pleasure in it as there is in the sinner's sleep, but his sleep is uneasy, his conscience pricks him, his heart wakes and he finds no peace in it. It lasts but for a little time and it does him much damage, but still, not the deadly damage that the world's sleep of sin brings to its votaries. God save you from it! May He ever keep you from falling into that kind of sleep!

I think many of you will not need me to warn you of it. Still, if you do need to know, let me ask you to compare yourself with what you used to be. Are you as lively in Divine things as you once were? Is prayer as fervent and refreshing to your souls as it once was? Do you find that willingness to pray that you once had? Do you find that you have to flog yourself into your closet and, when you get there, do you offer up your prayers and desires with coldness which you were known to offer with warm and loving fervor? Do you still continue to have the blessedness you had when first you knew the Lord? If not, that is a symptom of sleep. Then, compare yourself with what you ought to be. Think how you ought to

have grown during the years that you have been a Believer. Are you what you ought to have been? Then, if you are not, you must be asleep, or else you would have made better progress. Compare yourself with what others have been and you will see cause for shame! And if so, my Brothers and Sisters, you are asleep! You are in a dangerous condition and I pray the living God, by the demand for watchfulness when the Prince of this world comes, by the agonies of Christ in Gethsemane, yes, by the blood of Him who poured out His soul unto death, to awake you out of this deadly sleep, for it is a state that will lead to some great and grievous sin, some black and terrible fall unless God shall prevent it by His Grace! First you sleep, then you slumber, then you sin, then you sin again, then you go still deeper and so will you continue unless God, in His Grace, steps in to deliver you from the consequences of this dreadful sleep!

II. Yet, secondly, there is, in the text, A HOPEFUL SIGN.

I think that most of us, though we do sleep, can say as the spouse does, "my heart wakes." Beloved, it is a blessed sign that the spouse knows her state and truly confesses it She does not say, mark you, "I am a little tired. My eyes are heavy." No, but with honesty of heart she says, "I sleep." Ah, it is a good sign when you and I know our state and are willing to confess it before God. I have heard of a Believer in Christ who, on one occasion, was intoxicated, and he was expelled from the church as the result of it. But he was visited by many Christian Brothers and among the rest by one who prayed with him. They prayed together to God, but he could not get any peace. "No," said his friend, "and you never will until you come to the point and confess your sin as it really is." And when the man said, in his prayer, "Lord, You know that I have disgraced myself. I have been drunk," it was then that he obtained peace. He had directed the lances to the wound—he had put before God the right state of the case and this is what we must do, Beloved, if we would have restoring and renewing Grace—we must tell the Lord what our sin really is. As the spouse did, we must confess, "I sleep."

But you will observe that the spouse is as bold in saying, "my heart wakes," as she was in saying, "I sleep." "What does this mean, "my heart wakes"? Why, just this. "My conscience tells me that this sleepy state is not a proper one for me to be in and my heart cries that I must get out of it. I cannot find any rest while I slumber. At a distance from God, I cannot be happy." Peter may follow afar off, but Peter cannot be happy afar off. Peter may sit and warm his hands with the servants in Pilate's Hall, but he cannot warm his heart. Sinners may say, "Why make all this fuss about a little sleep? There is no great sin in it." Ah, but little sins trouble Believers far more than great sins trouble sinners! If a Christian's soul is but a little away from God, it is sufficient to mar his joy and make him unhappy. A man clad in armor may go walking through the woods and may never feel the thorns, but another man who has had his armor taken off, will be scratched and torn to pieces! Sinners clad in the armor of sin feel not the thorn of Christ's desertion—but saints who have thrown this armor aside and are tender of heart, feel even His slightest frown.

My dear Hearer, perhaps you are slumbering this evening and are content to be so. Then you are no child of God! But if you are slumbering and there is some power—something within you that keeps crying out,

"O God, I would be delivered!" Though this voice is ever so feeble, though this cruel sleep of yours may almost have gagged it, yet if it does rebel against this state and cries out, "Lord, I would be changed! I would be different! Turn You unto me and I shall be turned! Revive me, and I shall be revived!" If there is such a longing as this in you, you are still a child of God and well may you exclaim, "I sleep, but my heart wakes. Lord, I would live near to You if I could. I am like a man that rides a sorry jade of a horse—the horse will not go, but he spurs him, hacks at the bit and strikes him again and again, for the man would go if he could—and so it is with me! 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak' and, 'when I would do good, evil is present with me,' and 'how to perform that which is good I find not.'" Lord, help Your servants and let them not sleep any longer!

III. Now, thirdly, here is A POTENT REMEDY—"the voice of my Beloved."

Some Christians try to get themselves into a healthy state of heart by looking to the Law of God, by self-examination and by a thousand other remedies. But, after all, the true cure for every disease in the Christian is in Christ Himself. You may try to chasten yourselves for your sins, but you will continue to sin if that is all that you do. Beloved, I know that the heart has a great objection to coming to Christ after being in a sleepy state. Old Legality whispers in our ears that, "You cannot go and trust Christ as you did, for see how badly you have behaved? You must not go to the fountain filled with blood, now, as you did at first, for look, you have played the harlot and you cannot go with the same confidence as you went at first." "Ah, Old Legality, I can, and I will!" The Law never did bring us out of our state of nature and will it

bring us now out of our state of lethargy? If the Law had first of all quickened us, then it would be well to look for restoration by the Law! But inasmuch as we found our first life by simply believing in Christ, the only way to renew that life is by believing in Jesus Christ again! I will listen, then, not to the voice of the curse, not to the condemnation of Moses, but to the voice of my Beloved, for no music is like His and nothing can so wake my soul as hearing Him speak to me. Hear, then, the voice of your Beloved in the Gospel! He is still your Beloved, though you are asleep! But He sleeps not and He calls to you, "Come to My bosom; come, My Beloved, open the doors of your heart to Me. Come, My affianced and Precious One, I have not put you away, though you have grieved Me and opened My wounds afresh. I have loved you with an everlasting love. Open the doors of your heart to Me and let Me come into communion with you." It is the voice of Jesus speaking to you through your minister and He cries to you, "Come to Me now! Trust Me once again and your spiritual strength shall be renewed."

Then turn to this precious Book and you will hear the voice of your Beloved there. In words like these He speaks to you, "Turn, backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you." Hear Him as He cries to you, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Hear Him as He cries to you, ungodly ones, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"

Hear, then, your Beloved's voice and mark, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you do not hear the voice of your Beloved in the days of prosperity, you will be likely enough to hear it in affliction. If nothing else will keep you awake, the rod will. If you will sleep in prosperity, you shall have adversity—and sooner than you shall be lost, you shall lose everything. If, my Brothers and Sisters, God sees we cannot stand our present peace and prosperity, He will send His servant, Death, into our families. He will take away our possessions. He will place us in adversity. He will wither all our fair flowers and break all our idols and dash in pieces everything that stands between our soul and Himself! Oh, that we were wise, and would

hear His gentle voice! "Be not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle," but hear what the Lord says to you from the watchtower of His ministry and from the witness box of His Word—and then you shall escape the rod.

And perhaps, my Brothers and Sisters, the Beloved may speak to you without the ministry and without the Word. If He shall do so, I pray you to catch His Words. It may be, while you are sitting here, or when you are walking home, or perhaps at the Lord's Table, where some of us hope to meet, directly, you will hear Him whisper some kind, assuring Word that shall sink your fears again. I have known what it is to preach, sometimes, on a Sunday, and I have felt like a butcher who stands in his shop cutting out joints of meat for others—they are fed, but he, himself, has nothing. Or as a cook who prepares and sends up dinners, but cannot so much as get a taste, himself. Then I have gone downstairs to the Lord's Table with a dull heart and, perhaps, in a second, as though a strange miracle has been worked, my soul has been as full of devout joy and holy mirth as ever spirit was out of Heaven! And if you ask me how that has been caused, I would say it has been caused by some kindly look of my Beloved, some loving glance of His eyes, or some sweet Word from His mouth—and my soul has rejoiced with unspeakable joy! Why should it not be so with you tonight? That is the best thing to waken you up! If your heart is dull and heavy, as soon as your Beloved speaks, you will at once awake to spirit and to life!

My time has gone but I want to say this to you. I am sometimes, no, I am often haunted with the fear lest we, as a Church, should fall asleep. Oh, how greatly has the Lord blessed us these many years! And what favor seems to rest upon every agency! The preaching of the Word has been very successful, but still it is open to the conversion of many. In our classes how is God honored! Ah, you little know, some of you, what others of us see—and even we do not see one-tenth of what God is doing in the class conducted by one of our sisters here. And our Sunday schools may very well be a delight, for the Lord is working a great work in them! But I am always jealous over you, lest you should slumber. How easy it is to fall asleep! I often fear that my voice, which was once like a trumpet to you, will become like sleep music—that you will become so accustomed to it, and I, perhaps, shall become so dull and heavy, that the life of God will almost die out among us. My soul weeps and cries to God over this matter! My Master knows that I would cheerfully resign, that another voice might speak to you, if that would keep alive your zeal and enthusiasm. If it is, however, not my fault, even a changed ministry would not suffice. When Churches grow to a great size, people think they must always continue so,

and that God will always bless them as He has done. Why, Sirs, as our first blessings came in answer to prayers—all future blessings must come in the same way!

I remember well, when we used to meet together in Park Street to have holy communion with the Lord, how we used to wrestle with Him in prayer, so much so that I have scarcely been able to pronounce the benediction, much less give any address, because we all seemed to be carried away in the mighty majesty of wrestling prayer! We have now, sometimes, very choice seasons, but I am afraid not altogether such as we once had. At any rate, if there is any falling off, I thank God there is very little, indeed. It is scarcely perceptible as yet, but how soon may there be, unless we watch and are jealous with a holy jealousy? Let us work with Christian earnestness in prayer. O you who have done little for Christ of late, I pray you, do more for Him! You who think your time of service is over and that you may retire like pensioners, and no more fight, I want you to enlist again! Put on the colors once more as if you were but raw recruits! You who once could defy persecution and stand up in the street to preach Christ and laugh at all your fears, gather up your courage once again! Oh, that you would wake up, as a Church, and put on your beautiful array of past times when you were despised and persecuted—and the minister's name was

a byword and a proverb, and you, yourselves, because you were linked with him, were thought to be fools and the off-scouring of all things! But now I tremble lest we should grow respectable and great, and lest men should think we are respectable and depart from us. My soul begs and beseeches you to renew your prayers for me, that I may preach with greater vigor. What if my ministry should become as dull and stupid as the ministry of one-half of my Brothers—what if it should become as useless and as unprofitable as the ministry of nine out of ten who occupy the pulpit? I had sooner die than live to be such a being as many who stand up in the pulpit wholly to waste people's time and not to win souls! My spirit pants to have the consuming zeal of Baxter and the earnest, passionate enthusiasm of Whitefield—but I cannot get it except through your prayers! Or getting it, it cannot be maintained without your vehement cries and entreaties before the Lord!

Perhaps we, as a Church, have been brought to our present state for a great purpose which has never dawned upon us. We have already done something for God—we are filling the pulpits of our village churches with men sound in the faith and earnest for God. We are erecting a great barrier against the everyday increasing encroachment of heresy and infidelity—but we need to do something more and something looms upon us in the future—I scarcely know what—some high and holy purpose which this Church has been brought up to this point to accomplish. Shall we draw back? Men of Ephraim, will you draw back in the day of battle? Will you be condemned for not coming to the help of the Lord against the mighty? Shall the angel pronounce over you the sentence, "Ichabod, for the Glory of the Lord has departed from you because of your declining to continue earnest in zeal"? If it is so to any extent, let us return unto the Lord! Let us take to Christ words of repentance and faith and let us beseech Him to make this Church again His buckler and two-edged sword and to make His minister once more a captain in the midst of the Lord's hosts, for the day of the Lord is mighty and the battle of the Lord is terrible—and every man must take his place and every soldier must draw his weapon from his thigh—for the day of the Lord draws near and the battle of God is to be fought now, even now! Let us arise, my Brothers and Sisters! Let us rush like lions to the prey, like swift eagles to the chase! And God shall help us, God shall help us, and that right early!

This Church cries tonight, "I sleep." But she can also say, "my heart wakes." The heart of the Church is still awake! I think my voice to you tonight is an echo of the voice of your Beloved. Sisters, Brothers, bestir yourselves! Let us cry mightily unto God! Let us labor for the winning of souls! Let us pant and pray for a great increase to our membership and God will save sinners, in answer to our prayer, and His name shall be glorified forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: EXODUS 12:1-27.

Verses 1, 2. And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. And for this reason that, now, as a nation, they were to begin their separate history, separate in existence from all the rest of mankind!

3, 4. Speak you unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house: and if the household is too little for the

lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. The separation of the lamb was to take place

some four days before the time of its slaughter. Probably it was kept in the house, according to the Jewish tradition it was so, and they would hear it bleating and be reminded of the purpose for which it was to be slain.

5. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: you shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats. You know what a type this is of Christ, "without blemish," offered up for us in the very fullness of His strength, in the prime and glory of His Manhood, giving Himself up to be our Paschal Lamb, "The Lamb of God."

6. And you shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. Just as the sun went down, or just before it set for the evening. There is also the marginal reading "between the two evenings." The evening before the sun set, was the first, and then the daylight after the sun set was the second evening.

7. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. Not on the threshold, lest it should be trodden upon—and woe be unto the man who shall trample upon the blood of Christ! On the two side posts and on the lintel was placed the mark indicating that God had redeemed the inmates of that house with blood.

8. 9. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the innards thereof We are to have a whole Christ, with His head of wisdom and His heart of love, the walk and conversation of Christ, and all the inward secret life and Grace of Christ to be ours.

10. And you shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire. Not a bone was to be left for the Egyptians to treat with dishonor, but all was to be consumed.

11, 12. And thus shall you eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's Passover For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. All those false gods had been smitten in the different plagues and now, inasmuch as the Egyptians regarded the first-born in the family with veneration, the last stroke was about to be struck—and Pharaoh and all his subjects would stagger under the tremendous blow.

13. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are. Oh that we would all look upon the blood of Jesus as a token—a token of Divine Love in giving the Well-Beloved to die for us—a token that Justice has had its due—a token that we are perfectly secure forever!

13. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you. It is God's view of the blood of Christ, which is the all-important matter! When He looks at Christ upon the Cross and is satisfied with the Atonement that He there offered, the Lord passes over all those for whom Christ died as a Substitute.

13-15. And the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread; even the first day you shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day

until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. Therefore he was no partaker in the redemption purchased by blood. He who is not purged from hypocrisy may say what he likes, but the blood will not save him unless he repents—there must be the putting away of this leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, or else even the blood of Atonement will not avail.

16. And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you, no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. What rest this brought into the houses of the Israelites! There was not only deliverance from the plagues, but there was also rest from all manner of work. Herein is the blessedness of the blood of the Lamb—when it comes to the home and the heart of the Believer, it gives him rest of soul while others are toiling in vain to get relief by their own works!

17-25. And you shall observe the feast of unleavened bread, for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall you observe the day in your generation, by an ordinance forever. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whoever eats that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger, or born in the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall you eat unleavened bread. Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the Passover. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin, and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians, and when He sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the Destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And you shall observe this thing for an ordinance to you and to your sons forever. And it shall come to pass, when you come to the land which the LORD will give you. According as He has promised, that you shall keep this service. What? Were they never to forget the slaying of the lamb and the sprinkling of the blood? No, never! Not when they came to Canaan, to the land that flowed with milk and honey, and when God had worked other great marvels for them? No, never! And the highest honor that we shall ever have will be this, to be able truthfully to sing—

"A monument of Grace,

A sinner saved by blood."

26, 27. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? That you shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

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