

# Spiritual Alertness

by Mack Tomlinson

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual alertness and awakening from spiritual slumber, urging believers to be intentional, live in holiness, and be prepared for the imminent return of Christ. It highlights the urgency of staying spiritually awake, being engaged in kingdom work, and living with a sense of reality in light of God's eternal timeline.*

**Scripture:** Romans 13:11, 2 Peter 3:8, Luke 22:46, Hebrews 10:24, Ephesians 5:14, 1 Thessalonians 5:6, Matthew 26:41, Proverbs 6:9, 1 Corinthians 15:34, Revelation 3:2

**Topics:** "Spiritual Alertness", "Preparedness for Christ's Return"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Some books quickly. There are some not for sale here but these are some by Banner of Truth Trust that we make use of. Linda primarily makes use of them with grandchildren.

We have an increasing growing tribe of grandchildren. So these are tremendous for young children and this is just a sampling. You can go to the Banner of Truth website or Jason could secure.

But they're quite useful. This is more than one in this series word-wise and they're very great for young children. I'll just let you see all kinds of activity to use with young children.

Marvelous for Sundays, for homeschooling. A Bible alphabet activity book. And so it's just really tremendously useful for young children.

Then these hardback. Most of these are by Sinclair Ferguson. Little biographies.

Polycarp, the early martyr of the faith. And they're very well done. Good for children to learn to read too.

So this is a series. So if you want to see these today they're not available for sale. So anyway I wanted you to know about them.

It's a resource. Books I grabbed from the table. This is a tremendous.

Last night the words that you know that one that I mentioned. This is very similar. R.C. Sproul, What We Believe.

And he goes through the same approach as J.I. Packer did. It's easy reading. The chapters are short.

Understanding. It deals with the Apostles Creed, the earliest creed in Christian history. And it's just very rich.

Theological truth capsulized in readable form. So one of the best commentators you could ever read is D.A. Carson, The Gospel of John. If you want a commentary on a book that will exegete the passage.

It's pastoral. That gets to the heart of the truth. You cannot beat D.A. Carson.

Here's another one by Sproul. Knowing Scripture. Short, easy to read.

Why study the Bible? There's several short chapters on that. Personal Bible study and private interpretation. So this is basically a simple even beginner's book on how to study the Bible.

How to interpret it. Very useful and simple. And then finally Jerry Bridges died I think last year, two years ago.

His books are so rich. The practice of godliness. And basically it deals with the fruits of the Spirit.

Devotion to God. Train yourself to be godly. Humility, contentment, thankfulness, joy, holiness, faithfulness.

So see these, buy these as tools to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Now to the tool of all tools. Romans chapter 13.

Verses 11 through 14. Romans 13, 11 through 14. Besides this or knowing this, you know that you know the time that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep.

Why? Because our salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone. The day is at hand.

So then let us cast off the works of darkness. Put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime.

Not in orgies or drunkenness. Not in sexual immorality and sensuality. Not in quarreling and jealousy.

But put on what? The Lord Jesus Christ. This is a command to Christians. But we already knew Christ.

Well this is an admonition to believers. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. Father this is your word.

We ask you now to take it and to speak to us. To work in us the illumination and the tutoring ministry of the Holy Spirit. Speak to us Lord in these moments as we would hear your voice in your word in Jesus name.

Amen. How many of you like to sleep? How many of you young children have to take a nap every day? Do you? You do? You have to? Let me see your hands. Do you have to take a nap? Do you like taking naps? No you don't.

My grandson Weston he's often at our house and we'll say he was cutting wood with me the other day or watching. So Weston here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna have lunch and then we're gonna have a nap and then we'll do wood.

He said no wood first and no nap. But he didn't get his way. So is sleep important? Do we need sleep? Yeah it is very important.

It's weird that we sleep a third of our life. Right? It is a weird thing. But you know what? We should not we should not be awake when we should be sleeping.

And we should not be asleep when we should be awake. There's a time and place for everything. You need to sleep when you need to sleep.

Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do Glenn is sleep. It is. But we ought to be awake when we're supposed to be awake and not sleeping.

It's good to go to bed when you're supposed to but it's not good to be sleeping on the job. Maybe you work at a company and and you're at a computer. Your work's a computer and you're leaning back in your chair and your boss walks by and he sees you nodding off.

Not a time to sleep. So Paul says this here. It's quite amazing.

It's time to wake up. Notice this again. Just look at it there.

Verse 11. The time the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. He's talking to Christians.

What's in Paul's mind here? Well notice the context. This exhortation, it's time to wake up, is set between two things. Verse 10.

Love. Walking in love. Verse 12.

Holiness. Cast off the works of darkness. Put on the armor of light.

So this is a call in the context of walking in love and living a life of holiness to spiritual alertness. Put off lethargy. Stop being drowsy.

The church, my church in West Texas that I was a member of and then I was converted and then I was a Christian in it. There was a deacon and I'm not making, I'm not exaggerating. He would sing in the choir and he could go to sleep with his eyes open.

We noticed it and he was very good at it. I don't know how he did it but he was always asleep in the choir. Not the whole service but Christians do go to sleep.

Have any of you ever after being converted walking with the Lord you went to sleep spiritually and you backslid. You fell away temporarily. You went to sleep spiritually and God had to wake you up again.

That happen to you ever? Sometimes it's a bad case. Sometimes it's subtle. Sometimes you just, sometimes I'll listen to a sermon by someone and it'll just choke me and I'll say, man I have been not alert.

And so this is Paul's call to spiritual alertness. To be in tune spiritually in your life 24-7. Staying afresh.

Staying alert. When you're drowsy you know physically when you're drowsy you're not seeing or hearing things. You're not in tune consciously with your surroundings, with events, with what's going on around you.

Now listen there are various kinds of Christians. See where you are. There are mature, wise, humble, gifted, thoughtful, zealous Christians.

And there are immature, foolish, carnal in specific areas, half committed, unconnected, prideful, arrogant, earthbound, short-sighted, nearsighted, farsighted, temporal minded, drowsy Christians. Did I describe you? Wake up. Even sleeping believers who Paul says it is high time to wake up.

What are you? At times the Apostle Paul would give a spiritual jolt. Do you like preachers that give a spiritual jolt? I'm not an awakening preacher but I preach on awakening. Washer's an awakening preacher.

Conway's an awakening preacher. I'm not an awakening preacher. I'm more calm.

But sometimes it's time to say wake up. Paul did that. He did that.

It's time to wake up and rise out of spiritual lethargy, moral sleep. You can get trapped by the enemy. David's at the height of his reign walks out on his balcony.

What's he see? He was spiritually sleeping. It cost him big time. At that moment if he had run back in his room, fallen on his knees and cried out to God, the history could have been different.

Moral sleep, spiritual sleep, spiritual laziness, slumbering. When we ought to be awake, alert, full, all out. That's what Paul is calling us each individually to be here.

This isn't to unbelievers, it's to Christians. It's not a call to initial conversion because notice his words in the second half of the passage. Our salvation is nearer than when we first believe.

He's giving a call to awaken fully mentally and spiritually to what is ahead and how we are walking and how to view your life and how to live your life spiritually on the cutting edge, in tune with God, staying fresh. And he says in verse 11, looking at the wrong chapter, for you know the time. It can be translated, it's high time.

There's no time to lose. It's long, the time is long overdue. It's critically important.

It's high time to deal with any spiritual lethargy, kingdom half-heartedness, to not be engaged, to not be all out, staying on the fringe. Some Christians stay on the fringe of their church, on the fringe of the kingdom. They're not engaged.

They're not intentional and creative about what can I do for the Lord more? How can I serve more? I know a brother who was a consummate servant of his church and he would be carrying five chairs in one arm and five in another to set up and he'd see young guys standing over by the wall chit-chatting and he'd get frustrated. Hey guys, what are you doing? Come on. He was an example.

They were kind of oblivious to the need and he was carrying the weight. He was an example. Spiritual lethargy and being drowsy is always lurking around us, pulling us like a magnet to go back and settle in and be idle.

To not be staying on top of things. Spiritual drowsiness. Every Christian at times needs to be awakened, jolted, stirred, and quickened with new life to be aroused from their slumber.

And when you're spiritually slumbering, you don't even see it at the moment sometimes until God wakes you up. Have you ever had somebody call early in the morning and your phone woke you up and you answer, oh did I wake you up? No, no, I'm awake. I'm fine.

You were asleep. We need to be awakened often. This is a wake-up call like an alarm sounding to us.

So this morning, how asleep are you? None? Eighty percent? Fifty? Twenty? Ten? Are you asleep or not? It's high time, Paul says, to wake out of sleep in our own individual lives, in our marriage sometimes, a wake-up call to get things right, to make things right, to be right toward your mate, in your own church life and involvement. We have to stay awake spiritually to stay faithful, to be exemplary in the Christian life, in worship, in kingdom-mindedness, in our own personal ministry and evangelism of influencing others. To wake up to those around you because we're often slumbering as to the state, the spiritual state, of others.

Neighbors or extended family sometimes is the hardest and we can kind of settle in to not be engaged with them because they're the hardest to reach. Right now in your own life as far as impacting others, are you awake or asleep? Who are you going after? Who are you engaged with? Yesterday morning in San Antonio, Evan Jennings and I met for breakfast and the waitress came and I tried to seize the moment. I said, Evan, aren't you glad we got the best server in the house? She smiles.

I said to her, you know, I notice these things about people because I love the Lord. She started looking at me. Evan's grinning and she was so busy, we didn't have time to engage her more.

You stay spiritually alert. I've gotten to share the gospel with waitresses and waiters in restaurants and or at ticket counters at the airports because you stay alert and you say, I can speak a word here. Are you asleep? You're not going to do it if you're spiritually asleep.

You live this way, Glenn. God has a calendar. One reason to awake.

Why does Paul say this? That it's time to awake. Look again at the passage. For our salvation, notice this phrase, is nearer to us now.

What's he picturing? He's picturing God's eternal and time calendar. God has a calendar, a timeline. The events and the history of the world is moving, moving, moving along.

And the picture here is almost that at times God shortens things to move things along. We don't know when and how, if he ever does that. Linda and I drove from Seattle, Washington to West Texas back before Thanksgiving.

And we drove across Washington State, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico to West Texas. Got there in time for Thanksgiving with her family. And a friend of mine in our church, John, Jonathan Thompson, his comment was, boy, you were mowing down some miles on that drive.

You know what God's doing? He is mowing down centuries, decades, centuries, moving toward things toward the end of time. And we're in that. Paul here has in mind the end of this earthly realm.

Our salvation, our final salvation, where we die or we go to be with the Lord and life's over, is nearer than when we first believed. Paul here has in mind the end of this realm and the soon arrival of the next one,

the calendar of time. We should see our life in light of the calendar of time, which is a vapor.

Mark said it earlier. The end of February is already on us. Do you realize how quickly 2020 will be? We use calendars all the time.

Alarms, keep track, appointments, not forget something. When do I need to be there? When I need to be at the airport? Flights at 7 a.m. I'll get there about 6.50. No, not a good plan. You set your clock, you check the alarm, and you function by a calendar.

William Hendrickson translates Paul's words here. You know how critical the time is. The hour has arrived for you to wake up from your slumber.

In all of your life, mediocrity, let it be gone. Spiritual slumber, kill it. Awake and mature in your spiritual disciplines and in your service and in your heart for the kingdom.

Grow up and awake and be alive more than ever. In what area are you slumbering in spiritually? And it's time to wake yourself up from all slumber. Why? Because Paul says the night, that is, this life, this world's in darkness, right? This life.

He uses the word the night to picture this temporal life. The night is far spent, he says, and advanced. The day, he uses that picture of the day, eternity, is at hand and it's drawing nearer.

Hebrews says the same thing in chapter 10. Let us draw near, let us hold fast, let's consider one another to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Not forsaking the assembly yourselves as a manner of some is.

Why? And so much the more because of what? You see the day is approaching. The final closing, finishing of our salvation is much closer than it was for Paul and then it was the day you were converted. We cannot, brothers and sisters, we cannot be spiritually asleep.

This is a battle for me. I'm a grounded out guy, I'm a routine guy. I'm just plod like a turtle.

Sometimes Linda says, honey you need to plod faster. Come on. But no matter what you're like, you can't, we can't be spiritually asleep through our life's journey.

Oblivious to spiritual realities and priorities. More than once Jesus caught his disciples doing what? Yeah. Could you not watch one hour? No, they couldn't.

Watching, praying. Luke 22, when he arose from prayer he found them sleeping. He said, why are you asleep? He was truly frustrated.

He wasn't playing. He wasn't acting. In his humanity, frustrated with them.

It was a holy true frustration. Not all of our frustration toward others is holy and pure, but his was. And he says, rise and pray lest you enter into temptation.

To some of us, Christ asked this question. Why are you sleeping? What are we going to say? How would we answer him today if we go away from here and we're alone and we faced the fact I'm kind of sleeping? What are we going to tell the Lord? He's asking the question. Knowing the time.

Spiritual drowsiness contradicts kingdom living. Time is running out. All of history and time, the whole existence of time, is like a jet moving rapidly to an appointed end.

Linda and I grew up in West Texas, near Amarillo, the little town of Clarendon. And every time we go there, I have the thought, I'll probably be buried here. I know right where the plots are.

Won't be long. Won't be long for you either. Now, our ultimate salvation, the final regeneration of all things, the consummation of everything, the ushering in of the new heavens and the earth, all of it is on God's eternal calendar and the clock is ticking.

When the Apostle Peter thought of that, what did he ask us? Remember what his attitude was for himself and all believers? Turn to 2 Peter 3. Let's just read it. 2 Peter 3. Here was Peter's attitude about it. 2 Peter 3 verse 8. This follow, just hear it and let it sink in.

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some kind of slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief and then the heavens will pass away with a roar.

The heavenly bodies will burn up and dissolve and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. The most, pause, the fanciest tombs in the earth. I was in preaching in North Carolina and one of the church members invited me to dinner on Saturday night and this was a wealthy area.

It was a seven million dollar Carolinian mansion. Had dinner there. When I left I thought that's a lot of kindling for the day of judgment.

Every house, every castle, every fancy building in this earth is kindling wood for God's final judgment. The heavens, the earth is going to melt with fervent heat and everything in it burn up and be destroyed and he will create a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells what? Righteousness. Keep reading.

Verse 11. Since all these things are to be dissolved, what's the question? Peter says. What sort of people ought you, ought we to be in lives of holiness and godliness waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolve and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn.

Wake up brothers and sisters. Be alert. Stay awake.

No slumbering in the kingdom. No drowsiness in the battle. No sleepwalking in the Christian life.

Some people will think, now Mac you're getting old. Somebody in San Antonio said I love to see old men use an iPhone. I said what did you say? They were embarrassed.

Kind didn't let them off the hook. I said I'm older. I'm not old.

Some people say you're getting old Mac. That's why you talk about these things because you're thinking more about dying and death. But I've got, the younger could say, I've got, I'm 40, I'm 30, I'm 20, I'm 15.

I've got my whole life in front of me. No you don't. If you're 18 or 20, you've already lived 25% of your promised life, more than what you've been promised.

Alistair Begg said this. Listen to this. Track with me.

The average life is 36,792,000 minutes. 36 million plus minutes. You sleep 12,300,000.

You eat your way through vast amounts of food, 3 million minutes of your life. You work another 13 million minutes. That leaves you with 8 million minutes.

Once you shower, clean up, dress, all your life, you're down to 5 or 6 million unspoken 4 minutes. Do we realize God's calendar? Some of you may die early. Jim Elliott, Keith Green, we sang his song earlier.

I remember vividly those Friday night prayer meetings. He'd be at the piano, 80 of us in there. He'd be leading the songs.

And I don't remember how long, the last time I saw him before he died. But it was right then. Maybe a month before, two weeks before.

Nobody knew. He didn't know. You don't know.

Are you awake spiritually? Some of you aren't spiritually asleep. You're spiritually dead in your sins. And you're perishing.

The gospel says, awake from the dead and Christ will give you life. Come, repent, turn to me, God says, and I will pardon you, I'll forgive you. Some of you here have heard the gospel over and over and over.

You know it clearly, not a false gospel, the truth. You know it, and you resist, and you harden, and you put it off, and you ignore it, and you're in denial. You're fully accountable today that if God took your life, he would put you in hell, because you haven't repented.

Why will you not wake up and turn to Jesus Christ? This passage calls Christians to intentionality, being intentional, the continual perspective of reality. See, when we're spiritually slumbered, we've lost a sense of reality. Salvation is nearer to us than we first believed.

The future final salvation is drawing near soon. We need to wake up, be ready, the clock is ticking, the plane leaves at 7 a.m., be up at 4, be at the airport at 6. Life is a vapor. God's call to us is, wake up more than ever and live awake spiritually.

You don't have to slumber. You can, how many of you ever driving at night, and you're just drowsy, and you have to, you roll the window down, and the wind's cold, and you slap yourself. You got to stay awake, or you got to pull over and sleep.

So are you asleep today? Ask Christ to revive you and make you a spiritually alert, awake believer that's not slumbering, who he doesn't have to say to you, why were you sleeping? Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. Let's pray. Father, use this message to awaken us.

I stand in need as much as anyone, Lord, to stay awake spiritually, and I know I'm preaching to myself. Help us, O God, to be spiritually alert, and to live the way the Apostle is calling us to live here. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen. Let's sing the hymn, I Am Resolved. Sing it to the Lord.

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