

Awake and Be Ready

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the importance of returning to Christ and being awakened from spiritual sleep, highlighting the consequences of not doing so and the role of the word of God in our lives.

Duration: 1:09:11

Scripture: Hosea 6:1, Romans 13:11

Topics: "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being awake and alert in the last days. He uses the example of three disciples who fell asleep when Jesus asked them to watch and pray. The preacher relates this to the current state of God's people, who are in a spiritual slumber. He mentions the turning point in Augustine's life, which was influenced by a passage in Romans chapter 13. The sermon also highlights the need for believers to remember their fallen state and to be awakened to their need for God.

Transcript

Will you please turn to Hosea chapter 6, we'll read the first three verses. Hosea chapter 6, verse 1. Come, and let us return unto Jehovah, for he has torn, and he will heal us. He has smitten, and he will bind us up.

After two days will he revive us. On the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before his face. And we shall know, we shall follow on.

To know Jehovah, his going forth is assured, as the morning dawn, and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain, which watereth the earth. Romans, the letter to the Romans, chapter 13, verses 11 through 14. Romans, chapter 13, verse 11.

This also, knowing the time, that it is already time that we should be aroused out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, and the day is near. Let us cast away, therefore, the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

As in the day, let us walk becomingly, not in rioting, and drunkenness, and in chambering, and in lasciviousness, not in strife and emulation, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not take forethought for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. Second Corinthians. Second Corinthians, chapter 7. Second Corinthians, chapter 7, verses 10 and 11.

For grief according to God works repentance to salvation, never to be regretted. But the grief of the world works death. For behold, the same thing, your being grieved according to God, how much diligence is wrought in you, but what excusing for yourself that is clearing of yourselves, but what indignation, but what fear, but what ardent desire, but what zeal, but what vengeance in every way ye have proved yourselves to be pure in the matter.

Let us have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, we do want to thank Thee for this privilege of coming together in Thy name, before Thy presence, to hear Thy word. Lord, we ask that Thou will give us ear to hear, give us heart to understand.

We pray that Thy word will not return to the void, but will accomplish its purpose in each one of us, that Thy purpose may be fulfilled. We ask in the precious name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

What we gather together to consider this time is on summing up all things in Christ. And in this summing up, we as God's people must take the lead. We are the first fruits of the creation.

We have to be summed up in Christ. And then all things will follow. So this is how important it is for us to really consider this matter seriously before the Lord.

My responsibility is returning to Christ. As I have mentioned the first time, it presupposes that there has been departure. And because there has been departure, therefore, there will be need to return.

So the challenge before us is first of all, do we really sense the need of returning to Christ? What is our attitude? Is it that we do not feel there is any need to return because we are already there? We are always there. We have never departed. Now, if this is the attitude we take, then, brothers and sisters, there is no need for you to hear what we are going to consider.

But if, by the grace of God, you do sense the need, and it is not just in your mind, you think you should have a need to return, but really in our heart, we deeply sense the necessity of returning to Christ. Then, brothers and sisters, the next question we have to ask is, how? How are we to return to Christ? The way of returning. So this is what we like to consider together this morning before the Lord.

I do not know how you feel, but I do feel very strongly that in these last days, God's people tend to go to spiritual sleep. It seems to me that it is a common phenomenon. God's people are not alert.

God's people are not awake. God's people are not watchful. God's people are not diligent.

God's people seem to be in a stupor, in a spiritual slumber, and that is what you find in the Word of God. In Romans chapter 13, we are called to wake up, to be aroused out of sleep, because the night is far spent, and the day is coming. In other words, we cannot, and we should not, continue to fall into spiritual lethargy, spiritual sleep, even coma, because the night is far spent.

It is time to wake up. You know, especially when you come to the midnight time, you tend to fall to sleep. It is difficult to stay awake, but this is the most dangerous time, because this is the time that it requires us to be aroused, to be awake.

You remember our Lord Jesus when he took his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. He was so oppressed in his spirit. He asked the disciples to stay there, and he will go forward to pray.

He took three of his most intimate disciples with him, and he asked the three of them. To me, it is strange that our Lord Jesus just leaves the other disciples there without even asking them to watch and pray with him. But to these three most intimate disciples, our Lord requested them to watch and pray with him.

Then he went forward and prayed. When he came back, he found that these three were fast asleep. The Lord woke them up and said, Watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation.

Your spirit is willing, but your flesh is weak. In a sense, we find this is almost the universal conditions of God's people today. We are in a stupor, in a slumber, in a sleep.

The last days are the most trying times. Just like when you come to the midnight, it's very trying to our flesh to keep awake. But this is the most important time to be awake and to be alert.

You know this passage in Romans 13? It's a very famous verse. Why? Because these verses was the turning point in the life of Augustine. Augustine was a very brilliant young man.

He was so brilliant that when he was rather young, he became a professor of rhetoric in the university. And at that time, professor of rhetoric is the highest position in a university. But this young man lived a dissipated life.

His mother, Monica, prayed for him, went before the Lord for his son. When Augustine began to feel the need of knowing the meaning of life, he was searching for the meaning of life. He got into heresy.

But one time, he and his friends, they went away to spend a few days together just to reason together on the meaning of life that they got. No conclusion. He was so frustrated, he stood up and left and walked in the garden.

What is the meaning of life? No answer. Then he heard some children were singing, so he listened to what the children sing. And he heard, take it up, take it up, and read.

He went to his room, take up the Bible, open it up, and it's Romans chapter 13. The verses that we read in the beginning. This also knowing the time, that it is already time that we should be aroused out of sleep.

For now, our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, and the day is near. Let us cast away, therefore, the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

As in the day, let us walk becomingly, not in routing and drunkenness and chambering, and as lasciviousness, not in strife and emulation. That's what Augustine was. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not take forethought for the flesh to fulfill his lust.

He heard the voice of God. He repented. He returned to Christ.

Brothers and sisters, are we in a spiritual slumber? Have we been waken up? You know, life is a battle. The moment you are born, you fight daily, hourly, against death. It's a continuous battle throughout our lives, physically.

Now, how much truer spiritual is? Oftentimes we think that if we are saved, then that's the end. The battle is won, so we can just lie down, take it easy, and be careless. Brothers and sisters, is that our attitude? If that is our attitude, no wonder we live a life of spiritual defeat, because there are forces around us.

We have enemy within us, our own flesh. We have enemy around us, the world. We have enemy hidden.

The enemy, the archangel. Satan, the devil, the deceiver, the murderer. Brothers and sisters, the moment we are saved, we are born from above.

The battle begins. And it will continue on to the very end. But unfortunately with God's people, they take their Christian life so easily.

They do not understand that Christian life is a battle for life. You relax, you stay back, you don't press on, you do not exercise diligence, seeking the Lord with all your heart, fighting against the good fight. Brothers and sisters, no wonder through carelessness you go into spiritual sleep.

You are not conscious of anything wrong with your Christian life. You feel that you are fine. You are alright.

When I was young, I read a story. I don't know whether it's a real story or it's a fiction. That there was a man boating in the river that leads to Niagara Falls.

And it was such a beautiful day, sunny day. So after a little while, he just stopped rowing. He just lay back, enjoy the weather, enjoy the scenery on the shores.

He was drifting. Suddenly, he was near the fall. Now, brothers and sisters, are we in that same position? You remember Hebrews chapter 2. There is the first warning to the believers.

Hebrew is a letter of exaltation. Exaltation means warning and encouragement. And here you'll find the first warning in Hebrews chapter 2. After a glorious revelation of the Son of God, then the warning comes.

Listen. Lest you slip away. And slip away is also drift away.

In other words, after we have received such revelation of our Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, we shall take it to our heart and diligently seek Him to know Him. Now, if we do not, we'll gradually slip away. We'll gradually drift away.

And isn't that the conditions of many believers today? They are saved, but they are no different from the people of the world. Just drifting along. Dear brothers and sisters, it is time to be aroused out of sleep.

Wake up. Because the day, the night is fast spent and the day is coming. If our Lord should come today, where will you be? The letter to the Laodiceans.

We often say this last letter of our risen Lord to the churches prophetically represents the church in the last days. And what do you find there? You find it is neither hot nor cold. You know naturally we like things loquum.

You don't like to drink very hot tea, nor very cold tea. But loquum tea is very soothing. It helps you to sleep.

And spiritually how true this is. Because naturally we like something neither cold nor hot. If you get too hot, people say, well, you are too hot.

And even if you get too cold, people may say, well, you are too cold. You need to wake up and warm up a little bit, but not too hot. Don't go to extreme.

Be moderate. That is the advice we hear always. Loquumness.

But listen to what our Lord said. The Lord said, I will wish that you are neither hot or cold. Our Lord does not like loquumness.

If you are not hot, the Lord said, better be cold. So at least you may wake up. But if you are loquum, you don't see the need of waking up.

Brothers and sisters, is it not that among God's people today, you discover there are people who in the beginning of their Christian lives, they really were zealous for the Lord. They were hot, but gradually that first love cools down. Yet, they still look back and remember how faithful, how rich, how much they know about the Lord.

You know what is the church in Laodicea? Where does it come from? The church of Laodicea comes from the church in Philadelphia. There was a time there was such a love towards God and towards the brethren. There was a time they did not deny the name of the Lord.

They keep the word of patience of our Lord. They were faithful to the Lord. And because of this, the Lord revealed himself to them in such full way.

That was the church in Philadelphia. But gradually the fire goes away. They still remain, retain the outward appearance.

But there was no more fire within. That's Laodicea. Outwardly everything goes on as usual.

You cannot find any fault. They have knowledge, scriptural knowledge, exact, accurate. But yet, they thought they were rich.

But our Lord said, you are poor. They thought they were closed. But the Lord said, you are naked.

They thought they saw. But the Lord said, you are blind. The Lord was knocking at the door, outside.

And yet, they thought the Lord was inside with them. Brothers and sisters, are we in such a state? We had a glorious beginning with the Lord. But where are we now? And yet, we are still proud of ourselves.

Brothers and sisters, you know we can fall into such situation. We can be deceived by the devil to such a degree that we are completely obsessed. That is to say we just cannot see our real situation.

You know the letter, the book of Malachi, is a book that shows us what spiritual obsession really is. God's people can be so obsessed that they just cannot see reality. So here you find the last voice in the Old Testament to God's people is just this.

God said I love you. But they say where ye have you love us? They cannot sense even the love of God. God said you dishonor me.

And they said where ye have we despise you? God said you have wearied me with your words. But they said where have we wearied you? God said return to me. And they said where ye shall we return? God said you have robbed me.

And they said where? Where have we robbed thee? Brothers and sisters, this is obsession. Your mind is completely obsessed with deception. That you just cannot see reality.

And unfortunately God's people today can fall into that situation. I would like to say a few words to the young generation. You know dear brothers and sisters, in the Bible spiritually speaking there is no second generation.

Physically yes, but spiritually there is no second generation. Always first generation. You remember the children of Israel? By the mercy of God they enter into the promised land.

They have seen the mighty works of God. They have seen the loving kindness of God first hand. But after Joshua died, after first generation of elders who knew the Lord died, you know what happened? The second generation.

They live in the promised land, but they were not able to keep their inheritance. Why? Because they did not have first hand experience of God. They live by tradition.

And if you live by tradition, no matter how good that tradition is, no matter how accurate that tradition is, it is dead. Lots of brothers and sisters, you are raised up in Christian families. Maybe you are still unsaved.

I was raised up in Christian family. My father loved the Lord. We have family devotion every day, but I was not saved.

If by the grace of God you have a touch, a living touch with Christ, you are saved. Thank God for that. But do not live by the tradition of your fathers.

You need to seek the Lord earnestly to have a first hand living experience of the living Christ in your life. Otherwise, you will be in the same place of spiritual sleep. So brothers and sisters, what is the way of returning to Christ? First, recall, remember, where in you have fallen.

In other words, awake. You need to be awake. You know in Revelation chapter 1, chapter 2, the letter to the church in Ephesus, our Lord Jesus said to the church in Ephesus, verse 5, remember, where in remember, therefore, whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first work.

But if not, I am coming to thee, and I will remove thy lamp out of its place, except thou shall repent. The first thing is to remember. Remember, where in thou hast fallen.

If you remember, there is hope. So you find in Lamentations, Jeremiah's Lamentations, chapter 3, verses 19 and 20. Lamentations, chapter 3, verses 19 and 20.

Remember thou thine affliction, mine affliction, and my wanderings. The one word and the goal. My soul has them constantly in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

Verse 21. Thus this I recall to heart, therefore, have I hope. You know about the prodigal son.

He was far away in a distant land. He wasted everything that a father had given to him. And there was a family.

He was sent to watch the swine, and even the husk he had none. Now in his desperation, he remembered his father's house. He recalled that in his father's house there was plenty.

Even the servants had plenty. And that woke him up. He was aroused from his sleep.

And that's the beginning of his returning to his father. So brothers and sisters, the first thing is we need to be awakened. To be aroused.

We need to remember. We need to recall. Recall how once there was such a living relationship between us and Christ.

And now we have fallen into such a situation. The realization of this will wake us up. Now what are the instruments that God used to wake us up? We have already mentioned God raised up prophets to wake God's people up.

The ministry of prophets, prophetic ministry is this. To wake up God's people out of their slumber. How God sent Elijah, Elisha to the nation of Israel.

Try to wake them up. Bring them back to God. By wonders.

Great deeds. And then he sent Hosea, Amos, all these prophets to the children to the nation of Judah, Isaiah, Jewel. All these prophets to arise to arouse them.

Even when the nation of Judah was at its very end, God sent Jeremiah to recall them back. Even during the time of Babylonian captivity, God raised up Daniel, Ezekiel, and even after the remnant came back, God raised up Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. And in the New Testament you'll find God raised up John the Baptist, the greatest of the prophets.

And even our Lord himself. Dear brothers and sisters, God's word is the instrument to arouse people out of spiritual slumber. Wake up to the Lord.

And if we do not listen to the word, as if it is not enough, you know God will use chastening, discipline and healing to wake us up. Because he loves us. Whom he loves, he chastens.

That's the way he tried to awake us. Sometimes it may be sickness. Sometimes maybe a crisis in your family.

Sometimes maybe a great shaking of where you are. And all these are expressions of God's love. Trying to call his people, return to him.

He is the only safe haven. So first of all, brothers and sisters, the way to return to Christ is by being awakened. Aroused.

Recall. Remember. Then the second thing, when we are aroused in our spirit, when we begin to discover in what pitiful conditions we are being, when we come to our senses, then the next thing that follows is repentance.

You know, brothers and sisters, we often think of repentance as belonging to the world. The world needs to repent. And when we preach the gospel, we always say repent and believe on the Lord Jesus.

The world surely needs to repent. But brothers and sisters, repentance does not stop there. Repentance is for Christians as well as for non-Christians.

We as believers have as much to repent as the people of the world. And in a very real sense, probably, we have much more to repent than the people of the world, because we receive more light. Brothers and

sisters, do you really sense the need to repent? The word says, to those who are afflicted and contrite in spirit and tremble at my words, those I will look upon.

Do we tremble at the word of God? When we hear the word of God, do we tremble? Do we have an afflicted and contrite spirit within us? That's the person that God will look upon. Repentance is a continuous process in our spiritual life. After you have repented and turned to the Lord, you need to have a spirit of repentance throughout your life.

You know, the more you draw near to the Lord, the more you realize how you have sinned against Him. What is sin? In Romans 3, verse 23, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. What is sin? Sin is coming short of the glory of God.

What is the glory of God? God is glory. In other words, our God, our Lord, is full of glory. That is His character.

He is holy. You know, recently I read a book saying that holiness is uniquely God's character. Aside from God, there is no being that is holy, because He is totally different, separated, all by Himself, and yet He wants us to be holy, to have His holy character separated completely unto God.

So what is sin? Dr. Zuma, he was one greatly used by the Lord among the Muslims, and he has a definition for sin. He says sin is the inner relationship between two personalities, your personalities and God's. What is your relationship? Your personality and God's personality.

Are they one, or are they conflicting? That's sin. And I read another example, and that is sin is where you and I are in the light of His countenance. When the light of God's countenance shines upon us, then you know whether you have sinned or not.

Is our life able to meet with God's life? Are we as holy, separated, so separated, and unto God, absolutely, completely as God is? Who can say that He has no sin? If we say that, we deceive ourselves. What we need is to see His glory. If we do not see Him, if we do not see the light of His countenance, we feel all right.

But whenever we come into His presence, we realize we have sinned. We need to repent. And that's the reason why you'll find, even John Bunyan said, the tears of my repentance needs to be cleansed.

The closer you are with the Lord, the more you will maintain an attitude of continuous repentance, because that alone will lead you to salvation. So you'll find, what is repentance? Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot repent.

We can regret. We can feel remorseful. We can feel sad.

And why? It's all for ourselves. Because we lose faith? Because we have failed? Our pride is being hurt. We are humiliated.

That's what we can do. But we cannot repent. Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is a change of mind. We cannot change our mind. Only the Holy Spirit of God can.

He will convict us, He will convince us, and He will bring repentance to us. And when true repentance comes, you'll know the result. So that's why you'll find in 2 Corinthians chapter 7. You know, Paul,

because of his love for the Corinthian believers, he tried to convince them.

He tried to bring them to their senses. But they were so stubborn. They were so hard.

They were so obsessed. They would not receive. So finally, he sent a strong letter to them.

Now we this letter was, we didn't have that letter. Some people say maybe in 2 Corinthians some part of it is in that letter. But we do not really know what he wrote.

But he wrote with tears. A strong letter against the situation of the Corinthian believers. And after he wrote the letter, he regretted because he did not want to hurt them.

He did not know how they would receive it. But thank God, the Spirit of God worked and they really repented. So what is real repentance? Read 2 Corinthians chapter 7. Verse 11 For behold the same thing you being grieved according to God.

Repentance is grieving according to God. Or I can even put it in another way. Repent is grieving for yourself.

Repentance is grieving for God's glory. So it says here, grieved according to God. Now what is the symptoms? How much diligence it wrought in you.

What excusing of yourself. And that means clearing of yourself. You want to clear yourself of this sin.

And what indignation. Just like Job, I abhor myself. I hate myself.

What fear. Trembling at the Word of God. And what ardent desire.

Real desire to return to the Lord. And what zeal. And what vengeance in every way you have grieved yourselves to be pure in a matter.

And that is repentance. So the second thing. The second.

The way to return is repent. Now the third thing. I have overused my time.

I just mentioned it. The third thing is return. You know, repent is just a preparation.

Now you repent. So what you do now? Repent is negative. Now what is the positive step you take? Return.

So now you begin to return. But brothers and sisters, when you return, what does it mean? Where do you return? To whom do you return? You return to Christ. That is returning.

You just do not return to a work. You just do not return to a state. No.

You return to Christ. Because your salvation is in Christ. You cannot reform yourself.

You cannot do the first work as you did before. You need the Lord himself to come into your life in such a living way that you are able to do the first work. That is to say, love.

Return to first love. So brothers and sisters, that's where we return. And if you read the word of God, you will find whether in the letter to the Galatians or 1 Corinthians or Colossians, whatever, you'll find the

returning does not stop.

Even at the work of Christ, it always goes on to the person of Christ. Now, I do not have the time to say that, but let us remember this. Returning to Christ.

Shall we pray? Dear Lord, do call us from our slumber. Give us repentance and lead us back to yourself. We ask in thy name.

Amen.

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