

Awake and Sober (Part 2)

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1 Thessalonians 5:4-8

Last week I started this sermon and did not finish it. Paul explained the Second Coming of Christ. When? Which day? How?

No one knows the time. It should not be our concern. Yet the metaphor that He is coming like a thief who can rob any house anytime, one has to be prepared. So be ready for coming of our Lord any time

Many don't like uncertainty. Sevan and I were born in the Middle East, where everything is pretty uncertain. When she was studying at the American University of Beirut during the Lebanese civil war, an American professor asked a question to the class. He asked, "Where do you see yourself in ten years?" She could not answer this question. No one was able to. She did not know if that same day she would arrive home safely because of the war. But here in the US, we live relatively a more stable life. We like to plan and know the future. It is good to plan and have goals for our lives. I don't think God will disagree with planning. Concerning future times, God did not give the exact time; we learn to trust GOD. Instead of relying on ourselves, God wants us to TRUST Him. God is faithful and trustworthy.

Let us clarify again: Jesus is coming again. It will be seen by everyone. Meanwhile we need to be prepared. Thus how to stay awake and sober?

1. Beware of false security (*Pax Romana*) (whatever "*Pax Romana*" is in your life?)
2. Walk in the light, because we are children of the day, of light.

But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 ESV)

I love how Paul says it: But YOU... you and I, we who believe in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, are not in the darkness. We are in the LIGHT. We are the children

of day and light. The thief will come at night. We don't have the fear of the night. We are in the light. We are waiting also for the DAY of the LORD. The metaphor of light is so helpful to me. I hated darkness when I was child. I was afraid of darkness. In fact, many dirty businesses are done in darkness. To be reminded again and again that we are children of light is extremely important for us as a community of believers.

So then what shall we do?

3. Awake and Sober

Precisely because we cannot predict the moment, we must be ready at all moments. - C. S. Lewis¹

We must be ready how?

Two important verbs have been used here in this passage:

So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

(1 Thessalonians 5:6 ESV)

a. Let us Keep awake b. Let us be sober

Let us examine these two verbs.

- Awake:

I did not sleep very well until I found out that I have sleep apnea. Now I have a CPAP machine and go to sleep in a minute. I fall asleep when I am comfortable.

Psalmist says: **In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat-- for he grants sleep to those he loves.** (Psalm 127:2 NIV)

Now, we need that comfort in our lives to fall asleep. Sleeping is a gift from God to us.

But here the idea is used metaphorically. Too much "comfort" at our churches will send us to "sleep". Too much comfort during the sermons will put us to sleep.

(We read in Acts 20:9 that Eutychus fell from the balcony and died as he slept during the sermon).

The Bible commands us to “watch,” which has a similar meaning as—to “stay awake” and to “be sleepless.” They are usually meant in the metaphorical and spiritual sense:

to be vigilant and on guard, fully awake, aware, alert and intently focused.

- Sober:

How do we stay sober, not drunk?

Life can distract us. Think about distractions that will divert one from God: distractions of entertainment, distractions of work, distractions of materialism, distractions of fame, distraction of too much hospitality, distractions when unimportant things take most of our time....

How can be awake and sober?

To be awake and sober means **to gird our minds** with the biblical perspective.

Gird up your mind: գոտեպնդեցէք ձեր մտքերը

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;” (1 Pet 1:13 KJV)

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded,
(ESV)

Paul is preparing the Thessalonians for the world. We are in the world not off the world. We need defense mechanism.

“Let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.” (1 Thess. 5:8 ESV)

In the letter to the Ephesians chapter 6, Paul writes about the armor of God:

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, **breastplate of righteousness** ...shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace... the **shield of faith**, the **helmet of salvation**, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance...

We cannot allow the evil to penetrate our mind, which affects our lives, our relationships and so on. We need to gird up our minds with all these instruments. Our minds need to be awake with Christ and in Christ.

Jesus gives the example of men who had lamps burning as they were waiting for the coming of the master:

“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. (Luke 12:35-36 ESV)

Do you see the point? Do you focus? Do you look forward by being “awake and sober” for the coming of the LORD? Are you ready if he comes today?

Illustration: Our absent Lord has given special commendation to those who not only WAIT for His return, but also earnestly WATCH for Him. The difference between these terms is illustrated by the story of a fishing vessel returning home after many days at sea. As they neared the shore, the sailors gazed eagerly toward the dock where a group of their loved ones had gathered. The skipper looked through his binoculars and identified some of them: "I see Bill's Mary, and there is Tom's Margaret and David's Anne." One man became concerned because his wife was not there. Later, he left the boat with a heavy heart and hurried up the hill to his cottage. As he opened the door, she ran to meet him saying, "I have been waiting for you!" He replied with a gentle rebuke, "Yes, but the other men's wives were watching and waiting for them!"³

How do we wait for the coming of our Lord by being awake, watching and on guard?

I think our comfortable lives hide us in a false security. Comfort makes us indifferent towards everything around us. It leads us away from the realities of life. We don't see anymore the pain and suffering around us.

To be awake is to face your temptations, your trials; **it means you take your weaknesses to the cross.** There the old person dies. We die with Christ so that Christ will give us new life. New life to be awake and sober. Everyday being renewed with Him until we meet him face to face. Get out of your comfort zone....believe me you will stay awake...

Illustration: The doctrine of the Second Coming teaches us that we do not and cannot know when the world drama will end. **The curtain may be rung down at any moment.** . . . This seems to some people intolerably frustrating. . . . We do not know the play. . . . The Author knows. When it is over, we may be told. We are led to expect that the Author will have something to say to each of us on the part that each of us has played. The playing it well is what matters infinitely. **C S Lewis²**

But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me. (Micah 7:7 NIV)

The Lord is coming! And with eager eyes
We watch to see the Morning Star arise!
The Lord is coming! Let our hearts rejoice,
We soon shall hear the accents of His voice! (Anon.)

1. www.azquotes.com/quote/1138051
- 2 http://preceptaustin.org/second_coming_of_christ.htm
- 3 sources unknown

“Why is God landing in this enemy-occupied world in disguise and starting a sort of secret society to undermine the devil? Why is He not landing in force, invading it? Is it that He is not strong enough? Well, Christians think He is going to land in force; we do not know when. But we can guess why He is delaying. He wants to give us the chance of joining His side freely. I do not suppose you and I would have thought much of a Frenchman who waited till the Allies were marching into Germany and then announced he was on our side. God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realise what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else -something it never entered your head to conceive- comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left?

For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying you choose to lie down when it has become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realised it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever. We must take it or leave it." C.S. Lewis, The Case for Christianity

C. S. Lewis: "Lose you life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and death to your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in." (Mere Christianity, 226-227)