

The Alarum

A Sermon
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Delivered by
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"I myself will awake early."—Psalms 42:8.



The proper subject to treat upon with such a text would be the propriety and excellence of early rising, especially when we are desirous of praising or serving God. The dew of dawn should be consecrated to devotion. The text is a very remarkable expression, and might fitly be made the early riser's motto. It is, in the original, a highly poetical phrase, and Milton and others have borrowed or imitated it. "I will awaken in the morning." So early would the psalmist arise for the praise of God that he would call up the day, and bid the sun arise from the chambers of the east, and proceed upon his journey. "I will awaken the morning." Early rising has the example of Old Testament saints to recommend it, and many modern saints having conscientiously practiced it, have been loud in its praise. It is an economy of time and an assistance to health, and thus it doubly lengthens life. Late rising is the token of indolence, and the cause of disorder throughout the whole day. Be assured that the best hours are the first. Our City habits are to be deplored, because by late hours of retirement at night we find early rising difficult if not impossible. If we are able to escape the shackles of custom, and secure for devotion and contemplation the hour when the dew is on the grass, we may count ourselves thrice happy. If we cannot do all we would in this matter, at least let us do all we can.

That is not, however, the topic upon which I now desire to speak to you. I come at this time, not so much to plead for the *early* as for the *awakening*. The hour we may speak of at another time—the fact is our subject now. It is bad to awake late, but what shall be said of those who never awake at all? Better late than never: but with many it is to be feared it will be never. I would take down the trumpet and give a blast, or ring the alarm-bell till all the faculties of the sluggard's manhood are made to bestir themselves, and he cries with new born determination, "I myself will awake."

"*Will awake.*" This is a world in which most men nowadays are alive to their temporal interests. If in these pushing times any man goes about his business in a sleepy, listless fashion,

he very soon finds himself on an ebb-tide, and all his affairs aground. The wideawake man seizes opportunities or makes them, and thus those who are widest awake usually come to the front. Years ago affairs moved like the broad-wheel wagon, very sleepily, with sober pause and leisurely progression, and then the son of the snail had a chancel but now, when we almost fly, if a man would succeed in trade he must be all alive, and all awake. If it be so in temporals, it is equally so in spirituals, for the world, the flesh, and the devil are all awake to compete with us; and there is no resolution that I would more earnestly commend to each one of the people of God than this one: "I will awake; I will awake at once; I will awake early, and I will pray to God that I may be kept awake, that my Christian existence may not be dreamy, but that I may be to the fullest degree useful in my Master's service." If this were the resolve of each, what a change would come over the Christian church! I long to see the diligence of the shop exceeded by the closet, and the zeal of the market excelled by the church. Each Christian is alive: but is he also awake? He has eyes, but are they open? He has lofty possibilities of blessing his fellow men, but does he exercise them? My heart's desire is that none of us may feel the dreamy influence of this age, which is comparable to the enchanted ground; but that each of us may be watchful, wakeful, vigorous, intense, fervent. Trusting that the Holy Spirit may bless our meditations to our spiritual quickening, we shall briefly turn our thoughts to the consideration of two or three things.

I. Our text is connected with the duty of praise, and therefore our first point shall be—IT IS MOST NECESSARY THAT OUR MINDS SHOULD BE IN A STATE OF WAKEFULNESS WHEN WE ARE PRAISING GOD. Therefore, as we ought to be always praising him, our mind ought always to be wakeful. It is a shame to pray with the mind half asleep: it is an equal shame to attempt to praise God till all the powers of the mind are thoroughly aroused. David is herein a most fit example, for he sings, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psalter and harp: I myself will awake early."

We should be fully awake when engaged in *private* thanksgiving; the song of our solitude should be full of living joy. I am afraid there is very little private singing nowadays. We often hear discourse concerning private prayer, but very seldom of private praise: and yet ought there not to be as much private praise as private prayer? I fear from the seldomness of its being mentioned, that private thanksgiving has grown to be a sleepy affair. Then as to *public* worship, how earnest ought it to be! Yet how seldom is it hearty and real! How often do we hear half-awake singing. Sometimes a sort of musical box, consisting of pipes, keys, and bellows, is set to do all the adoration. The heathens of Tibet turn the wind to account religiously, by making it turn their windmills and pray for them; and our brethren in England, by an ingenious adjustment of pipes, make the same motive power perform their praise. Where this machinery is not adopted, still the Lord is robbed of his praise by other methods. Sometimes half a dozen skilled voices of persons who would be equally as much at home at the opera or the theater as in the house of God, are formed into a choir to perform the psalmody; and it is supposed that God accepts their formal notes as the praise of the entire assembly. How far different is the genuine song of gracious men who lift up their voices to the Lord because their hearts adore him! Oh, I love to hear every voice pouring out its note, especially if I can but hope that with every voice there is going forth a fervent heart. This warm hearted, joyful singing—why, it makes the congregation on earth to be like the assembly of the skies; and causes the meeting-place of the saints to be a

faint type of the gathering of the angels and glorified spirits before the throne of God. To drone or to whisper in such a delightful exercise is criminal. If ever we should exhibit the angels' wakefulness, it should be when we are emulating their employment.

Our praise ought to be performed with a fully awakened mind: first, *that we may recollect what we are praising God for*. We should have a vivid sense of the mercies we have received, or we cannot bless God aright for them. You who have not yet received spiritual blessings, should not be forgetful of his temporal mercies: it is surely sufficient cause for lively thanksgiving that you are not upon a bed of sickness; that you are not in the lunatic asylum; that you are not in the workhouse; that you are not on the borders of the grave; that you are not in hell; that you still have food and raiment, and that you are where the gospel is graciously presented to you. Should not all this be thought of? Should not this be fuel for the flame of gratitude? As for us who have tasted spiritual blessings, if our minds were awake, we should think of eternal love and its going forth from eternity; of redeeming love, and the streams that flow from the fount of Calvary; of God's immutable love, and his patience with our ill-manners in the wilderness; of covenant mercy, of mercies yet to come, of heaven, and the bliss hereafter. Such recollections should call up our whole man to praise the Lord. If the innumerable benefits which we receive were thought of and dwelt upon, the contemplation would put a force, a volume, a body into our song, and make it far more than the flaming ethereal thing which it ought to be.

We want our souls awakened, next, *so that we may remember to whom our praise is offered*. Before no mean kind do we bow the knee of homage. To praise God is to stand in the immediate presence of the blessed and only Potentate. Do not even seraphs veil their faces in that august presence? With what lowliness ought we bow! With what earnestness of spirit should we praise! "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Courtiers are not expected to nod with drowsiness in the presence of their king; and if they came to present thanksgiving, it would seem strange if they were to yawn as men half asleep. Surely, it would be hypocritical congratulation and insulting behavior if they should be detected in a sleepy condition! If we come together to praise God, let us really do it. If we cannot praise him, let us know and mourn that we cannot do it, and let us be sure that the spirit is willing, even if the flesh is weak. Let all sleepiness be put away in the presence of the ever-wakeful Jehovah, before whose eyes all things are naked and open. He never slumbereth nor sleepeth, so as to make a pause in his mercy to us: let not our slumbering spirits cause an omission of our grateful song.

We need that we should be awake in praise, *that our whole hearts may be thoroughly warm in the exercise*. Under Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, the acceptableness of our praise depends very much upon the warmth of it. As cold prayers virtually ask God to deny them, so cold praises ask God to reject them. Cold praises are a sort of semi-blasphemy: they do, as it were, say, "Thou art not worthy to be ardently praised. O God, we bring thee these poor thanksgivings: they are good enough for thee." Surely if we treated our heavenly Father as we should, every sacred passion would glow in our hearts like a furnace: our whole heart would catch fire, and as Elijah went up into heaven with horses of fire and chariots of fire, so, too, our souls, as we thought upon the goodness and the graciousness of God, would ascend to heaven in

vehement joy of adoration. Our praises would not be like the incense in the censer, sweet, but cold; but coals of fire would be put in with the incense, and then, like a holy cloud of smoke, our gratitude would ascend to heaven. Mark with what exhilaration the psalmist rendered praise unto God, and imitate him therein. See him dancing before the ark, and hear him cry aloud, "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises."

Brethren, we have need to wake up our souls in praise, *or else we shall at all times fail altogether in the duty*. Only the wakeful are praiseful. Sleeping birds sing now., The very best praises God receives from earth are from his troubled saints; but then they are awake; the strokes of the rod have aroused them. When the three holy children sung in the fire, their song was sweet indeed; yet had they not been thoroughly in earnest, they had poured forth no holy hymn. When martyrs have magnified God standing on the burning fagot, they have given God better praise than even the angels can. It was the old fable, that the nightingale was made to sing by the thorn that pricked her breast: and many a child of God has poured forth his sweetest music when the thorn of affliction has pierced his heart. Wake up your souls—you that are desponding, you that are depressed, you that have a dead child at home, you that are expecting soon to go to the grave with those you love, you that have been losing your property, you that are pinched with poverty—wake up your souls to praise God still, for unless well awake you will forget to extol him. Remember what Job did. When he sat on the dunghill, scraping himself with a bit of broken pot, yet he praised God and said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." It was grand of thee, O patriarch of Uz, to be able thus to able thus to extol thy Lord: then was thy soul fully awake. Beloved friends, may our inmost souls be so energetic with the power of grace that we may spontaneously and earnestly bless the Lord at all times and under all circumstances.

Do you believe, my brethren, that amongst all the throng of those who see Jehovah face to face, there is one dull, cold, careless worshipper? Look through the seraphim and cherubim: they are flaming ones, burning with intense desire and fervent adoration. Look through the hosts of angels: they are all his minsters that do his pleasure, and bless him while they do it. Search through all those sanctified and glorified hands of spirits, and you shall not find one with half-closed eye wearily praising his Maker. Heaven consists in *joyful* praise. Look at the very birds on earth how they shame us! Dear little creatures, if you watch them when they are singing, you will sometimes wonder how so much sound can come out of such diminutive bodies. How they throw their whole selves into the music, and seem to melt themselves away in song! How the wing vibrates, the throat pulsates, and every part of their body rejoices to assist the strain! This is the way in which we ought to praise God. IF birds that are sold at three for two farthings yet render God such praise, how much more heartily ought we to sing before him? Let it be a resolution with us at this hour that we will praise God more; that we will sing to him more at home, about our business, and in all proper places; and that whenever we do sing we will do it heartily, waking up our tongue and all the powers of our mind and body to bless and praise the name of God.

II. Now, secondly, we shall notice that WAKEFULNESS IS A GREAT NEED IN THE

ENTIRE SPIRITUAL LIFE. I believe it to be one of the great wants of the church now. I question whether most of us are awake spiritually. I question whether I am. I wish to be wakened far more to a sensibility of the power of the world to come, and a tenderness in regard to spiritual truth. Slumber is so natural to us. "Well," says one, "but we *talk* about the things of God." Yes, but people talk when they are asleep, and a good deal of Christian conversation is very much like the talk of sleepers. There is not the force in it—the life in it that there would be in conversation if we were really awakened to feel the power of eternal verities. "Yet," says one, "I hope we *act* consistently." I trust you do, but there are many people who walk in their sleep, and, alas! I know some Christian professors who appear to be trying very hazardous feats of sleep-walking just now. Some somnambulists have been able to walk on places where, had they been awake, they never would have been able to endure the dizzy height; and I see some Christians, if indeed they be Christians, running awful risks which I think they would never venture upon unless they had fallen into the deep sleep of carnal security. Speak of a man slumbering at the mast-head, it is nothing to a professor of religion at ease while covetousness is his master, or worldly company his delight. If professors were awake, they would see their danger, and avoid sinful amusements and ungodly associations, as men fly from fierce tigers or deadly cobras. "Well, but we are doing much good and useful work," says one: "teaching in Sabbath schools, distributing religious tracts, or labouring in some other form of service; we are spending our time in commendable engagements." I am glad to hear it; but people can do a great deal in their sleep. We have heard many strange instances of how habit at last has enabled persons to pursue their callings, to answer signals, and keep up all the appearance of industry, and yet they have been at the time asleep. Oh, it is a very shocking thing that so many of our churches in England are in a deep sleep! Dissenting churches I know best about, and there are many where the minister preaches in his sleep, where the people sing in their sleep, where prayer is offered in sleep, and even the communion is celebrated amid a profound spiritual slumber. Have you never been at a prayer-meeting where half, if not all, both of those who prayed vocally and those who listened, were in a lethargy as rigid as death? Talk of sleeping women who have been in a swoon by the month together, the wonder may be a lying one in the natural world, but in the spiritual world it is as common as daisies in the meadows. Adam slept soundly when the taking away of his rib did not wake him, but what shall we say of those who startle not though they are losing all the strength and glory of their souls? Alas! for some congregations, it is long since they had a revival, they have lost the very idea of vigorous piety and vital energy. All the week round they are all asleep, and if a real, earnest, living, stirring sermon were preached among them, it would be almost as if the King of Prussia's Krupp guns had dropped a live shell into their midst. I wish a spiritual live shell could fall into some congregations, and burst among them, killing their conventionality, and wounding their self satisfaction with a deadly wound. Men may attend to outward worship with unimpeachable decorum and correctness and yet there may be no wakefulness in it, and consequently no acceptableness with God Most High.

Come, ourselves, and we must do so because *we are in an enemy's country*; it will not do to sleep here. This side of heaven we are in every place and at all hours surrounded by foes. What did the Master say? "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!" Be like sentries at your post, for otherwise the enemy will soon betray you. Will you not grieve the Holy Spirit if you are lethargic? Will you not dishonour your Master if you fall asleep? Remember also, that the devil seeks your destruction, and can never do you so much mischief awake as he can if he finds you

sleeping. Let the growling of the old lion arouse you. If nothing else will bestir you, remember the fiery darts of the wicked one. Saul would not have lain so quiet if he had known that Abishai was holding the spear over him, and longing to pin him to the earth: yet this is the condition of professors who are given to slumber. Samson would have scarcely slept on Delilah's lap if he had foreseen that his hair would be cut, and his eyes put out by the Philistines. Up, then, ye drowsy professors, for the Philistines are upon you!

Moreover, brethren, *slumber impoverishes us*. The sluggard, and the thistle and thorn, always go together, and rags and poverty follow close behind. You may miss by your sleep great spiritual profit., You cannot expect sleepy Christians to grow in grace. They will miss many instructive things in God's word, many precious promises meant only for the wakeful. They will lose high enjoyments and spiritual banquetings, for the king's entertainments are not for those who fold their arms, and toss upon the bed of indolence. Wealth lies in the field of the wakeful, but the lover of ease shall have want come upon him as an armed man. I blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in God's holy mountain, for it is high time to awake out of sleep.

Awaken too, my brother, for you are *losing opportunities for usefulness*. While you sleep men are dying. See how the cemeteries are becoming crowded, how the area of them has to be enlarged. Day by day you see wending through the streets the funeral procession: men gone beyond the reach of your instructions and your warnings are carried to their long homes. Awake then, awake, for death is busy everywhere. Meanwhile, those who do not die before you may be removed beyond the sphere of your usefulness; they go where at least you cannot reach them, where perhaps no one ever will, and their blood may lie upon your head, and that for ever. Awake, for perhaps while you are asleep another heart that is now accessible to the gospel may become finally hardened. Conscience will soon become seared, and then there is nothing for zeal and earnestness to work upon. It will be too late for you to put the seal upon the wax when once it is cool. Quick, sir; while the wax is soft put the seal down! How many opportunities for good we all miss! But those who are asleep lose all their opportunities, and they will be surely required of them when the Master comes.

Awake! I pray you, because *you will insensibly lose the power, the joy of your spiritual life*. Communion with God will become more and more scarce with you as you become more sleepy. Awake, lest you backslide, lest you all become apostate, and prove yourself not to be a child of God. Awake, for your power with others will certainly depart from you as your wakefulness departs. A sleepy preacher never wins the souls of men. A dull, formal servant of God is of little or no use in the church of God. I think I said years ago, "Give me half a dozen thorough red hot Christians, and I will do more, by God's grace, with them, than with a half a dozen hundred of ordinary professors." I am sure it is so. Crowds of professors are past all cure. I would as soon hunt with dead dogs, as try to work with them. They cannot be trained into heroes: they are dolts both by nature and by practice; much slothfulness has drained out their souls' life. The most you can hope for them is that they will remain decently Christianized, so as not altogether to disgrace us. But, O for thoroughly wideawake men, men who feel the life of God in their souls, and are, therefore, more than ordinarily earnest. Band together half a dozen such, and

the Holy Spirit being with them, they will make all London feel their presence before long. O may God awaken all of us, for our spiritual life absolutely requires it.

III. Thirdly, I am going to mention CERTAIN WAYS OF KEEPING YOURSELVES AWAKE. "How can I be kept awake?" says one. Answer, first, *make it a matter of prayer* with the Lord to awaken you. No one can give you spiritual power and watchfulness but the Spirit of God. "All my fresh springs are in thee." Where life first comes from, there more life must be obtained. Christ has come that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly. He who first called us from the dead, must also arouse us from among the slumbering. He who brought us from the grave of our depravity must bring us from the couch of our indolence. Pray about the matter; make it a point with God: ask him to arouse you. On your knees is the posture in which to conquer sloth.

Next, *means are to be used*. We are not to leave the matter with God, and think there is nothing to be done by ourselves. Act towards yourselves about spiritual wakefulness as you would with natural wakefulness. Set your inventive faculties to work, and devise means for chasing away the sleep dragon. What would you do if you required to be awakened early? Perhaps you would set an alarm; a good thing, no doubt. Take care you set a spiritual alarm. Every Christian ought to keep one, and it should be so well set as to keep exact time, and so powerful as to arouse the most slumbering. A tender conscience, quick as the apple of the eye, is a precious preservative against sinful sleep; but it must never be tampered with, or its usefulness will soon end. When once the hour has come, down runs the alarm, the man starts up all at once, and says, "It is time to rise;" so should my conscience be so well regulated, that when a temptation is near, or a sinner is near me whom I ought about warn, my soul should at once take the alarm and say, "Here is work to do—a sin to be conquered, or a soul to be instructed: now, therefore, perform the doing of it with all thy might! I hear the alarm, and I must bestir myself!" May we always maintain and retain such a special wakefulness that we may be at our post of duty or in our place of conflict with a punctuality which none can gainsay. O for the alarm of a tender conscience!

Many of our friends who have to be up early in the morning ask the policeman to call them at the appointed hour. I may not compare the Christian minister with a policeman in some respects; but yet he is one of God's officers, and it is part of his business to stir up drowsy professors. It is well to attend an earnest gospel ministry, where the minister's voice, under God's blessing, will be likely to wake you up. Faithful preachers are among God's best gifts. Cherish them, and be obedient to their admonitions. I have known persons become offended when a minister is "too personal;" but wise men always prize a ministry in proportion as it is personal to themselves. He who never tells me of my faults, nor makes me feel uneasy, is not likely to be the means of good to my soul. What is the use of a dog that never barks? Why have a doctor, and grow angry with him if he points out the source of your disease? Did God send us, as his messengers, to pander to your taste or flatter your vanity? We seek not your approval if it be not founded on right. I have often felt pleased when I have heard people confess, after their conversion, "I came to the Tabernacle, and at the first I could not endure the preaching. I hated

the preacher, and raged at his doctrine; but I could not help coming again." Just so. Conscience makes men respect the gospel, even when their depravity makes them loathe it. They are held fast by the cords which they fain would cast from them. May it often be so, O my unregenerate believers, that while my plain dealing excites your anger, it may nevertheless have a power over you; and may every man and woman here, whether saved or unsaved, feel that the preaching is the truth of God to his or her soul; and, whether liked or not liked, may it become the permanent means of arousing from sleep, and ultimately bringing to Christ every one of you to whom these words shall come. Be sure and attend an arousing ministry, and pray God to make the ministry which you now listen to more and more an arousing ministry to your own soul. Pray for the preacher, for he is in the same danger as yourselves, for he is too compassed with infirmity. The minister soon goes to sleep unless God wakens him; and what is more sad than to see the professed messenger of God become a traitor both to his Master and to men's souls by a lack of zealous affection? It is ill for the sheep if the shepherd himself be asleep. Woe to the camp where the sentry is given to slumber! May God deliver our country from being overrun with preachers whose souls are insensible concerning their grand work, and who love the bread of their office better than the glory of God or the good of their hearers.

I have known some persons adopt a plan for awaking in the morning which I can recommend spiritually at any rate. They have drawn up the blinds in the direction of the morning sun, that the sun might shine on their face and wake them. I know of no better way of waking for your soul, than letting the light, and the life, and the love of God shine full into your face. When the Sun of Righteousness arises he brings healing beneath his wings, and he brings awakening too. A man cannot think much of Christ, and love Christ much, and walk much in Christ's fellowship, and yet be asleep. The two who went to Emmaus in Immanuel's company, were their hearts cold? Nay, do not think so. "Did not our heart burn within us?" Yes, and your hearts will burn too, and your whole spiritual system will flame and glow if you walk in the company of Jesus. I can recommend constant fellowship with God as one of the best remedies for spiritual sloth, the surest provocative of holy zeal.

Many time people are awakened in the morning by the noise of the street in which they live. "I cannot sleep after such an hour," says one, "for I hear the tramp of those who are going into the city, and the grind of the street traffic." At a certain time you hear the hammer of the blacksmith, the scream of an engine, or the heaving of machinery, and after that sleep is gone. The activities of the world ought about awaken Christians. Are worldlings active? How active ought we to be! Do they labour and spend their sweat for earthly wages? How much more ought I to put forth my entire strength to serve so good a Master, whose reward of grace is everlasting bliss? The world is all astir to-day: let the church be all awake too.

We ought to be stimulated to supreme efforts by the activity of our fellow Christians. I find it does me much service about read the biographies of eminent servants of Christ, such as martyrs, missionaries, and reformers. I rise from reading their memorials feeling ashamed to be of so dwarfish a stature compared with these spiritual giants. What a humbling effect such a reflection ought to have on the do-nothings who swarm in the churches! but alas! these are not

soon moved to judge themselves. With this one word we leave them: think of what some are doing, and be ashamed that you are doing so little in proportion to what they accomplish.

There are many ways of waking, but here is one, with which I will close my observations on this point. Hear the trumpet of the second coming. "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him," was the cry that awakened the virgins when they all slumbered and slept: may it have the like arousing power at this moment. We know not when Christ will come, nor is it for us to utter prophecies about it: the times and seasons are hidden from us. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man." Whether it will be before the Millennium or after the Millennium, let those judge who can. I have no judgement upon it. I think, as you carefully read the Scriptures, you will feel more and more convinced that only this is clearly and certainly revealed—that the Lord will personally come in such an hour as we look not for him. Let that awaken us; let it keep us always watchful, with loins girt and lamps trimmed, proving our faithful love to our blessed Master.

These are, it is clear, very many ways by which Christians may be awakened. God grant that they may be effective to each and all. I think it was Sydney Smith who was once preaching a sermon about sleeping in church, and when he had done, he said, "Now, what good have I done? All those who sleep have been asleep through my sermon, and only those who are wakeful have heard me, and they did not need my rebukes and advice." I often feel that this is very much the preacher's case. Earnest people, when the congregation is exhorted to earnestness, take it home to themselves; but those persons who do nothing, and are most indolent, are the very ones who say, "I don not see the need of it; I do not want to be disturbed." Of course not! It is not only the mark of the sluggard to sleep, but it is another characteristic of him that he is wrath with those who would compel him to rise. "A little more sleep," says he, "a little more slumber;" he turns his heavy head upon the pillow once again, and wishes no blessings upon those who knock at his door so heavily. You sleepy professors are likely to do the same, but I will not refrain from knocking till you refrain from dozing. I pray God that there may be very few in this church of the incorrigible order, whose life is one long dream, a dream of self-aggrandizement, meanness, and littleness. May you and I, and all of us, be thoroughly earnest in the service of our Master, and if we cannot arouse others by our precept, at least let us not fail to try the force of our example.

IV. I must close with a word upon that fourth point, which is this—THE GREAT AND URGENT NEED THAT THE UNCONVERTED SINNER SHOULD AWAKE. Hitherto I have spoken to the converted man: now let me address myself to the ungodly, and may the voice which shall call the dead to judgement now awaken him. You, you unconverted man, are asleep; a deep and horrible sleep holds you fast. If it were not so, you would perceive your danger, and you would be alarmed. You have broken God's law; the fact is certain and solemn, though you treat it lightly. Punishment must follow every breach of that law, for God will not be mocked nor suffer his government to be treated with contempt. For every transgression there is an appointed recompense of reward. The retribution which is your lawful due will not long be withheld: it is on its road towards you. The feet of justice are shod with wool: you hear not its coming, but it is as sure as it is silent. Its steps are swift, and its stroke overwhelming. Awaken, O man, and listen

to this text: "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready." No peril of plague, battle, shipwreck, or poison, can equal the hazard of an unpardoned soul. Beware, yet that forget God, for his terrors are past conception, and his wrath burneth as an oven.

If you were awakened, O sin-stricken transgressor, you would also perceive that there is a remedy for your disease, a rescue from your present danger. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" and "Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." Forgiveness of sin is guaranteed to every one that rests in the work of Jesus, and all other necessary blessings are secured to him. If thou wert awake, thou wouldst not remain an unconverted sinner another hour, but thou wouldst turn unto God with full purpose of heart. If God would awaken thee, thou wouldst tremble at the jaws of hell which are open to receive thee; thou wouldst turn to Christ, and say, "Jesus, save me! Save me now!" You are asleep, sinner—you are asleep, or you would not take matters so coolly. I am afraid for you, and bowed down with amazement and dread. The mercy is that you may be awakened: you are not yet among the slain that go down into the pit. O that that almighty grace would awaken you at this present moment, ere your doom is sealed and your damnation executed! Here I offer my fervent prayers for you, believing that he to whom I pray is able to bring to holy sensibility the most stolid of mankind.

Strange ways God has of awakening his elect ones from their deadly slumbers. Awake them he will, and he will shake heaven and earth sooner than let any one of them perish in unfeeling security. He will strike them down as he did Paul, or send an earthquake to shake them, as he did to the gaoler at Philippi; in his own way and time he will make them come to themselves and then to Christ. Remember the story of Augustine. To the grief of his dear mother, Monica, he had been leading a wicked life; but God's time had come, and as Augustine walked in the garden he heard a little child say, "Take! Read! Take! Read!" This induced him to take the Bible and read it. He no sooner read, than a passage came before his eyes which awakened him, and he sought a Saviour, and found him. Perhaps it will be a death in your house that will wake you—sad means, but often most effectual. A mother's death-bed has been a soul-saving sermon to many a family. Some sleepers need a thunderclap to arouse them. Pray, you dear people of God that are awake, that the sinner may be awakened, for there is this awful danger that he may sleep himself into hell. Spiritual sleep deepens, the slumberer becomes more heavy still, the stupor more dense, till the conscience grows seared, and the soul is unimpressionable; the flesh is turned into stone, the heart is harder than steel. It may be that some of those who hear these words of warning may never wake to think about their souls till in hell they lift up their eyes. What an awful lifting up of the eyes will that be! O you who are now peaceful and secure, what a change awaits you! Hurlled from vainglorious security to blank despair in a moment! You took it all so easily: you said, "Let me alone; do not worry me; there's time enough. The preacher ought not to frighten us with these bugbears; we all have a great deal else to do besides listening to horrible stories of hell and damnation;" and so you wrapped it up, and so you smoothed it over, but the end thereof who shall describe? Have you never heard of the Indian in his boat upon one of the great rivers of America? Somehow his moorings had broken, and his canoe was in the power of the current. He was asleep, while his canoe was being borne rapidly along by the stream. He was sound asleep, and yet had good need to have been awake, for there was a tremendous cataract not far ahead. Persons on shore saw the canoe—saw that there was a man in it asleep; but their vigilance was of

no use to the sleeper: it needed that he himself should be aware of his peril. The canoe quickened its pace, for the waters of the river grew more rapid as they approached the cataract; persons on the shore began to cry out, and raise alarm on all sides and at last the Indian was aroused. He started up, and began to use his paddle, but his strength was altogether insufficient for the struggle with the gigantic force of the waters around him. He was seen to spring upright in the boat and disappear—himself and the boat—in the fall. He had perished, for he woke too late! Some persons on their dying beds just wake up in time to see their danger, but not to escape from it: they are carried right over the cataract of judgement and wrath. They are gone, for ever gone, where mercy is succeeded by justice, and hope forbidden to enter. Let much prayer go up from believing hearts that God would awaken sinners now, and begin with those who come to the place of worship, and remain at ease in Zion. Ask for the arm of God to be revealed while the heavenly message is delivered; for his is our message: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." There is a man before me now asleep in his sins, whom God means to make a minister of Christ: he knows not the divine purpose, but there are lines of love in it for him. Arise oh slumberer, for Jesus calls thee! Awake, thou Saul of Tarsus, thou art a chosen vessel unto the Lord! Turn thou from thy sin: seek thou thy Saviour. There is one here who has been a great sinner but the Lord intends to wash him in the cleansing fount, and clothe him in the righteousness of Christ. Come, thou guilty one, awake! for mercy waits for thee. There is a poor weeping woman here who has gone far in sin; but Jesus says, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Sister awake! Come and receive the mercy which Jesus Christ is ready to bestow upon thee! God give thee waking grace, and saving grace.

May you and I, beloved brethren in Christ, awake to the most earnest and intense form of life *in* Christ and life *for* Christ. At once let us bestir ourselves: we may think it early, but it will be none too early; may we awake now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 108; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.