

SLEEPERS AWAKENED

NO. 2903

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1904.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 27, 1876.

“But Jonah was gone down into the lowest part of the ship; and he lay there and was fast asleep.”
Jonah 1:5.

WE are told before this fact is mentioned that the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea to overtake the ship in which Jonah was sailing for Tarshish. The great wheels of Providence are continually revolving in fulfillment of God’s purposes concerning His own people. For them winds blow and tempests rise. It is a wonderful thing that the whole machinery of Nature should be made subservient to the Divine Purpose of the salvation of His redeemed! I was in a diamond-cutting factory at Amsterdam and I noticed that were huge wheels revolving and a great deal of power being developed and expended. But when I came to look at the little diamond—in some cases a very small one, indeed—upon which that power was being brought to bear, it seemed very remarkable that all that power should be concentrated upon such a little, yet very precious object! In a similar style, all the wheels of Providence and Nature, great as they are, are brought to bear by Divine skill and love upon a thing which appears to many people to be of trifling value, but which is to Christ of priceless worth—namely, a human soul!

Here is this common-looking Jew, Jonah, named according to the general rule that names go by contraries, “a dove,” for, at any rate on this occasion, he looked more like the raven that would not come back to the ark! And for this one man—this altogether unfriendly Prophet—the sea must be tossed in tempest and a whole ship full of people must have their lives put in jeopardy! This Truth of God is a very far-reaching one. You cannot well exaggerate it. The vast universe is but a platform for the display of God’s Grace and all material things that now exist will be set aside when the great drama of Grace is completed. The material universe is but scaffolding for the Church of Christ. It is but the temporary structure upon which the amazing mystery of redeeming love is being carried on to perfection. See, then, that as the great wind was raised to follow Jonah and to lead to his return to the path of duty, so all things work together for the good of God’s people and all things that exist are being bowed and bent towards God’s one solemn eternal purpose—the salvation of His own!

But note also, that while God was awake, Jonah was asleep. While storms were blowing, Jonah was slumbering. It is a strange sight, O Christian, that you should be an important item in the universe and yet that you should not know it or care about it—that all things are keeping their proper place and time for you and yet that you are the only one who does not seem to perceive it and, therefore, you fall into a dull, lethargic, sleepy state. Everything around you is awake for your good, yet you are slumbering even as the fugitive Prophet was while the storm was raging!

I am going to speak upon the case of Jonah, first, as we may regard it as a useful lesson to the people of God. And, secondly, as it may be considered as *an equally valuable warning to the unconverted.*

I. First, then, I shall use the case of Jonah as A USEFUL LESSON TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD—and I may very fairly do so when we remember who Jonah was.

First, *Jonah was a believer in God.* He worshipped no false god—he worshipped only the living and true God. He was a professed and avowed believer in Jehovah. He was not ashamed to say—even when his conduct had laid him open to blame and when there was nobody to support him—“I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, which has made the sea and the dry land.” Yet, though he was a believer in God, he was in the lowest part of the ship fast asleep!

O Christian—a real Christian, too—if you are in a similar condition, how is it that you can be slumbering under such circumstances? Should not the privileges and the honor which your being a believer has brought to you by Divine Grace forbid that you should be inactive, careless, indifferent? I may be addressing dozens of Jonahs—those who are really God’s people, but who are not acting as if they were—chosen of the Most High but are forgetful of their election, their redemption, their sanctification, the life they have begun to live here below and the eternal glory that awaits them hereafter!

Besides being a believer or as a natural consequence of being a believer, *Jonah was a man of prayer*. Out of the whole company on board that ship, he was the only man who knew how to pray to the one living and true God. All the mariners “cried every man unto his god.” But those were idle prayers because they were offered to idols—they could not prevail because they were presented to dumb, dead idols! But here was a man who *could* pray—and who could pray aright, too—yet he was asleep! Praying men and women—you who have the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven swinging at your belt—you who can ask what you will, and it shall be done for you—you who have many times in the past prevailed with God in wrestling prayer—you who have received countless blessings in answer to your supplications—can you be, as Jonah was, sleeping in the time of storm? Can it be possible that he who knows the power of prayer is restraining it—that he to whom God has given this choice privilege is not availing himself of it? I fear that this may be the case with some of you and looking at Jonah, a praying man sinfully asleep, I cannot help feeling that I may be speaking to many others who are in exactly the same condition!

More than this, Jonah was not merely a believing man and a praying man, but *he was also a Prophet of the Lord*. He was one to whom God had spoken and by whom God had spoken. He was a minister—that is to say one of God’s own sent servants though he was not in his proper place when he was in the ship sailing towards Tarshish. But can God’s minister neglect their duty like this? If I had been asked at that time, “Where is the Prophet of the Lord?”—perhaps the only Prophet of his age—at any rate a man who was the very foremost in his time—if I had been asked, “Where is he?” I would have said that he must be looked for amidst the masses of the dense population of Nineveh, carrying out his Master’s commission with unstagging faith! Or else that he might be looked for amidst the thousands of Israel, denouncing their idol gods and their wicked ways. But who would have thought of finding Jonah asleep on board such a ship as that? He is a Seer, yet he sees not, for he is sound asleep! He is a watchman, but he is not watching, for he is slumbering and sleeping! Everything is in confusion, yet this man, upon whom rests the Divine anointing and into whose mouth God has put a message to multitudes of his fellow creatures is sleeping instead of witnessing!

Come Mr. Preacher, see to yourself while I am talking about Jonah—and I will take the message to myself while I am talking to you—for this is a matter which ought to come home to all of us upon whom such great responsibilities are laid and to whom such high privileges are given. But all of you who love the Lord are witnesses for Christ in some capacity or other—and it would be a very sad thing if you who are called to speak in the name of the Lord, though it should only be in your Sunday school class, or in a little cottage meeting, or to your own children—should be asleep when you ought to be wide awake and active! May the Lord awaken you, for you are the wrong person to be asleep! You, above all others, are bound to have both your eyes open and to watch day and night to hear what God the Lord will speak to you and what He would have you say to the ungodly or to His own chosen people in His name.

It is also worthy of notice that at the very time when Jonah was asleep in the ship, he was not only a Prophet, but he was *a Prophet under a special commission*. He was not on furlough. He was, on the contrary, empowered by special warrant, under the King’s seal and sign manual, to go at once to a certain place and there to deliver the King’s message. And yet there he is, asleep in this ship and going in the very opposite direction to the one given him! When Prophets sleep, it should be when their errand has been done and their message has been delivered, but Jonah had not been on his Lord’s errand, nor had he delivered his Lord’s message. No, he had refused to obey his Lord and had run away from the path of duty—and here he lies, fast asleep in the lowest part of the ship! O dear Brothers and Sisters, if we could truthfully say that our own work for the Lord was done, we might be somewhat excused if we took our rest. But is our life-work done? Mine is not, that I feel certain. In fact, it seems to be scarcely begun. Is yours finished, my Brother, my Sister? Have you so lived that you can be perfectly content with what you have done? Would it not be a cause of grief to you if you were assured that you would have no more opportunities of glorifying God upon the earth? I think you would feel that very

much. Well, then, how can you be willing to be indifferent, cold and dead when so much of God's work lies before you scarcely touched as yet?

All that you and I have done so far has been like apprentice work—we have just been getting our hands in—we have not become journeymen in God's great workshop yet—certainly we cannot claim to be wise master-builders! Few of us, if any, have attained to that degree, so let us not go to sleep. O Sir, shame on you! Asleep in the early morning? A man may take his rest when he gets weary after a long day's toil, but not yet—with all that work to be done—with the King's commission pressing upon us! With the call of the myriads of Nineveh sounding in his ears, Jonah, God's appointed Messenger, should not have been found asleep in the lowest part of the ship.

This, then, is who the man was. He was a believing man and a praying man. He was a Prophet and a Prophet under a special commission. But where was he? Where had he gone?

Well, he had gone down into the lowest part of the ship. That is to say *he had gone where he hoped he would not be observed or disturbed*. He had gone down into the lowest part of the ship—not among the cargo—the mariners threw that overboard, yet the noise did not wake the sleeping Prophet. He was not upon the deck ready to take a turn at keeping watch—no, he had got as much out of the way as he could! And I have known Christian people try, as far as they could, to get out of the way. Possibly they are not living inconsistently, or doing, as far as others can see, anything that is glaringly sinful—but they have retired from their Master's business. They have got into a little quiet place where nobody notices them. I wonder whether there is a Christian who has gone to live in a country village where he has not yet said anything for Christ, although, when he lived in London, he was a busy worker for God? He has, like Jonah, gone down into the lowest part of the ship, into a quiet place where nobody can see him. Around him there are very few Christian people—perhaps hardly any—and he does not want anybody to know that he is a Christian. He would like to live in a private way. If he were asked about himself, he would answer, as Jonah did, "I fear God." But he does not wish to be asked anything about himself. He does not want people to fix their eyes upon him. He is afraid of being too conspicuous. He says that he was always of a retiring disposition, like the soldier who ran away as soon as the first shot of the battle was fired and so was shot as a deserter. He says that he is like Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night, or like Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. He has gone down into the lowest part of the ship, though, at one time, he was one of the foremost workers for Christ!

He has gone, too, *where he will not lend a hand in any service that needs to be done*. He was once in the Sunday school, but he says that he has had his turn at that and does not intend to do anything more. He used to be, perhaps, a deacon of a church, but now he does not wish for such a position as that. He says there is a great deal of trouble and toil in connection with such offices and he intends, for the future, to avoid everything that will give him trouble or cause him the slightest toil. Once he took delight in preaching the Word and in those days if anybody had said that he would live to be silent and not speak in Christ's name, he would have been very angry at the man who made such a statement! But it has now come true. Jonah is not up on deck helping to hold the rudder, or to set a sail, or to do anything—not even a hand's turn to help the poor laboring vessel! He has gone to sleep in the lowest part of the ship where nobody enquires about him, at least for the present, and where there is nothing for him to do!

Observe, too, that *Jonah was staying away from the Prayer Meeting*. Do you ask, "What Prayer Meeting?" Why, every other man on board that ship was crying unto his god, but Jonah was asleep in the lowest part of the ship! He was not praying—he was sleeping and, perhaps, dreaming—but he was certainly not praying! And it is a very bad thing when a true servant of God, a praying man and one by whom God has spoken before, begins to get into such a spiritually sleepy state that he not only does nothing to help the Church, but he does not even join in prayer in the time of danger! Do you know anybody in such a state as that, my Brother? "Yes," you reply, "several." Are you in that state yourself, Brother? If so, let charity for people who are doing wrong begin at home—it may extend to others afterwards. But if this cap fits you, wear it and wear it till you wear it out and have improved yourself through wearing it!

This man, asleep in the lowest part of the ship, *represents one who cannot even take any notice of what was going on around him*. At first he did not wish to be observed, but now he does not care to observe others. What is the condition of the millions of heathen in foreign lands? That is a subject that he avoids—he is of opinion that they will be converted in the millennium, or that even if they are not converted, their future lot may be a happy one. At any rate, it is a subject about which he does not concern himself. Jonah is asleep in the lowest part of the ship and he appears quite content to let

the millions of heathen perish. Then, with regard to the Church of Christ at home, sometimes he is told that everything is prospering, but from other quarters he is informed that we are all going to the bad. Well, he does not know which report is the true one and he does not particularly care! And as for the Church of which he is a member, does he not care for that? Well, yes, in a certain fashion, but he does not care enough for the Sunday school, for instance, to lend a hand there, or for the preaching society to lend a hand there. He never encourages the minister's heart by saying that the love of Christ compels him to take his share of holy service. Jonah is asleep in the lowest part of the ship. He is not much noticed, if at all, for those around him have come to the conclusion that he is good for nothing and he, as I have shown you, does not take much notice of what is going on though all the while he is a man of God, a man of prayer and one whom God has used in times past! I wonder whether these descriptions are at all applicable to any of my hearers? At any rate, I know that they represent, as in a mirror, the lives of many professors of religion. We trust they are sincere in heart in the sight of God, but, to us their sleepiness is more apparent than their sincerity!

Now, further, what was Jonah doing at that time? *He was asleep—asleep amid all that confusion and noise!* What a hurly-burly there was outside that vessel—storms raging, billows roaring—and Jonah was not a sailor, but a landsman and yet he was asleep. Certainly he must have been in a remarkable state to be able to sleep through such a storm as that! And what a noise there was inside the ship as well as outside! Everybody else was crying to his god and the mariners had been throwing the cargo out of the ship, so they must have stirred the whole place up from one end to the other. There seems to have been scarcely any opportunity for anybody to rest, yet Jonah could sleep right through it all, no matter what noise the men made as they pulled the ropes, or threw out their wares, or what outcries they made as they presented their prayers to their idol gods! Jonah was asleep amid all that confusion and noise and, O Christian, for you to be indifferent to all that is going on in such a world as this—for you to be negligent of God's work in such a time as this is just as strange!

The devil alone is making noise enough to wake all the Jonahs if they only want to awake. Then there are the rampant errors of the times, the sins of the times, the confusions of the times, the controversies of the times—all these things ought to wake us. And then, beyond the times, there is eternity with all its terrors and its glories! There is the dread conflict that is going on between Christ and Belial—between the true and the false—between Jesus and antichrist. All around us there is tumult and storm, yet some professing Christians are able, like Jonah, to go to sleep in the lowest part of the ship. I think, Brothers and Sisters, if we are spiritually awake—if we only look at the condition of religion in our own country—we shall often be obliged at night to literally lie awake and toss to and fro, crying, “O God, have mercy upon this distracted kingdom and let Your Truth triumph over the Popery which many are endeavoring to bring back among us!” But, alas, the great multitude of Believers have little or no care about this matter—they do not even seem to notice it, for they are sound asleep in the midst of a storm!

Notice, also, that *Jonah was asleep when other people were awake.* All around us people seem to be wide awake, whether we are asleep or not. When I see what is being done by Romanists and observe the zeal and self-denial of many persons who have dedicated themselves to the propagation of their false faith, I am astonished that we are doing so little for the true faith! Is it really the case that God has the dullest set of servants in the whole world? It is certain that men are all alive in the service of Satan—then we should not be half-alive in the service of our God! Are the worshippers of Baal crying aloud, “O Baal, hear us,” and the devotees of Ashtaroth shouting, “Hear us, O mighty Ashtaroth,” and yet the Prophet of Jehovah is lying asleep in the lowest part of the ship? Is it so? Does everything else seem to awaken all of a man's energies—but does true religion paralyze them?

I have really thought, when I have been reading some books written by very good men, that the best thing for sending a man to sleep was a book by an evangelical writer—but that the moment a man becomes unsound in the faith, it seems as if he woke up and had something to say which people were bound to hear! It is a great pity that it should be so, just as it was a great pity that everybody should have been awake on that vessel with the exception of Jonah, yet I fear that it is still only too true that those who serve the living God are not half filled with the awakening fervor which ought to possess them for the honor of the Lord Most High!

Jonah was asleep, next, not only in a time of great confusion and when others were awake, but also *in a time when he was in great danger*, for the ship was likely to sink. The storm was raging furiously, yet Jonah was asleep. And, Believer, when you and those about you are in danger of falling into great sin through your careless living—when your family is

in danger of being brought up without the fear of God—when your servants are in danger of concluding that religion is all a farce because you act as if it were—when those who watch you in business are apt to sneer at Christian profession because they say that your profession is of very little worth to you—when all this is taking place and there is imminent danger to your own soul and to the souls of others, can you still sleep in unconcern?

And Jonah was asleep *when he needed to be awake*. He, above all other men, was the one who ought to be awake and to call upon his God. If anybody goes to sleep nowadays, it certainly ought not to be the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! All things demand that Christians should be in real earnest. I know of no argument that I could gather from time or eternity, from Heaven or earth, or Hell to allow a Christian to be inactive and careless! But if I am asked for reasons why Christians are needed to be in downright earnest and full of consecrated vigor in the service of God, those arguments are so plentiful that I have no time to mention them all! The world needs you! Careless souls need to be awakened! Enquiring souls need to be directed! Mourning souls need to be comforted. Rejoicing souls need to be established! The ignorant need to be taught, the desponding need to be cheered! On all sides, for a Christian there is an earnest cry and, certainly in these days, God has made a truly godly man to be more precious than the gold of Ophir! And that man who keeps himself back from earnest service for God in such a time as this, surely cannot expect the Lord's blessing to rest upon him. Verily, the old curse of Meroz may well be pronounced upon the man who, in this age and under present circumstances, like Jonah, goes down into the lowest part of the ship, lies down and goes to sleep!

Jonah was asleep with all the heathens around him upbraiding him by their actions. They were praying while he was sleeping and, at last it came to this—that the shipmaster sternly addressed the Prophet of God and said, “What are you doing, O sleeper?” It is sad, indeed, when things have come to such a pass that a heathen captain rebukes a servant of God! And yet I am afraid that the Church of God, if she does not mend her ways, will have a great many similar rebukes from heathen practices and heathen utterances! Look at the enormous sums that the heathen spend upon their idols and their idol temples and worship—and then think how little we spend upon the service of the living God! One is amazed to read of the lacs of rupees that are given by Indian princes for the worship of their dead deities—and yet our missionary societies languish and the work of God in a thousand ways is stopped because God's stewards are not using what He has entrusted to them as they should. Think, too, of the flaming zeal with which the votaries of false faiths compass sea and land to make one proselyte, while we do so little to bring souls to Jesus Christ!

One of these days you will have Hindu and Brahmins talking to us in this fashion, “You profess that the love of Christ compels you, but to what does it compel you?” They even now ask us what kind of religion must ours be that forces opium upon the poor Chinese! They quote our great national sins against us and I do not wonder that they do. I only wish that they could be told that Christians reprobate those evils and that they are not Christians who practice them. But we must do more than even the best Christians are now doing or else we shall have the heathen saying, as the semi-heathen at home say, “If we believed in eternal punishment, we should be earnest day and night to rescue souls from it”—which is to me a strong corroboration of the truth of that Doctrine. We do not need any Doctrine that can make us less zealous than we are! We certainly do not need any Doctrine that can give us any excuse for lack of zeal. Still, there is great force in the remark I quoted just now. We are not as earnest to save men from going down to the Pit as we ought to be if we do, indeed, believe that they are hastening to that doom! The shipmasters are again rebuking the Jonahs! Those who believe in error and who worship false gods turn around upon us and ask us what we are doing. O Jonah, sleeping Jonah, is it not time that you were awake?

But why was Jonah asleep? I suppose that it was partly the reaction after the excitement through which his mind had passed in rebelling against God. He had wearied himself with seeking his own evil way, so now, after the disobedience to God of which he had been guilty, his spirit sinks and he sleeps. Besides, it is according to the nature of sin to give—not physical sleep, I grant you—but to give spiritual slumber. There is no opiate like the commission of an evil deed. A man who has done wrong is so much less able to repent of the wrong and so much the less likely to do so. Jonah's conscience had become hardened by his willful rejection of his Lord's commands and, therefore, he could sleep when he ought to have been awakened and alarmed.

Besides, he wished to get rid of the very *thought* of God. He was trying to flee from God's Presence. I suppose he could not bear his own thoughts—they must have been dreadful to him. So, being in a pet against his God and altogether in a wrong spirit, he hunts about for a snug corner of the ship, stretches himself out and there falls asleep and sleeps on

right through the storm! O sleepy Christian, there is something wrong about you, too! Conscience has been stupefied. There is some darling sin, I fear, that you are harboring. Search it out and drive it out! Sin is the mother of this shameful indifference! God help you to get rid of it! Brothers and Sisters, I am speaking to you with as much directness as I possibly can, yet not with more than I use towards myself. Have I, in my preaching, been slumbering and sleeping? If you find that I am not in earnest, I charge you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, tell me of it and wake me out of my sleep if you can, as I now tell you of it and say, by all that God has done to you in saving you by His Grace and in making you His servant, give not up your soul to slumber, but awake, awake—put on strength and awaken yourself, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to prayer and to the service of your God!

Thus I have spoken, perhaps at too great a length, to Christians.

II. Now, more briefly, I want to give A WARNING TO THE UNCONVERTED.

Jonah, asleep on board that ship, is a type of a great number of unconverted people who come to our various places of worship. Jonah was in imminent danger, for God had sent a great storm after him and, my unconverted Hearer, *your danger at this present moment is beyond description*. There is nothing but a breath between you and Hell! One of our beloved Elders was with us here last Sabbath—he is now with the spirits of just men made perfect—but if it had been the lot of any unconverted person here to suffer and to expire in the same manner, alas, how sad it would have been for you, my Hearer! Driven from the Presence of God, you would be cast in the outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! The sword of Divine Justice is already furbished, will you yet make mirth? Can you laugh and jest when there is but a step between you and death—but a step between you and Hell? An enemy to God, unforgiven, the Angel of Justice seeking you out as the storm sought out Jonah in that ship, “What are you doing, O sleeper,” when the peril of everlasting wrath is so near you?

You are asleep, too, *when there are a great many things to awake you*. As I have already said, there was a great noise in the vessel where Jonah was, a great noise inside and outside the ship, yet he did not awake. I do believe that many of you unconverted people find it hard to remain as you are. You get hard blows, sometimes, from the preacher. At family prayer, often, your conscience is touched. When you hear a passage from the Bible read, or when you hear of a friend who has died, you get somewhat aroused. Why, the very conversion of others should surely awaken you! If nothing else had awoken Jonah, the prayers of the mariners ought to have awakened him—and the earnestness of your mother and father, the pleading of your sister, the cries of new converts, the earnest anxieties of enquirers ought to have—and if you were not so deeply sunken in slumber, *would have* some influence over you to arouse you.

You are asleep *while prayer could save you*. If your prayers could not be heard, I think I would say, “Let him sleep on.” If there were no possibility of your salvation, I do not see why you should be awakened from your slumber. Despair is an excellent excuse for sloth—but you have no reason to despair. “Arise, call upon your God,” said the shipmaster to Jonah! And we say to you, “Friend, how is it that you are so indifferent and do not pray, when it is written, ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find,’ and when the facts prove the Truth of the words of Jesus, ‘for he that asks receives, and he that seeks finds?’” Heaven is within your reach, yet you will not stretch out your hands! Eternal life is so near to you that Paul writes, “If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” Assuredly that man who has food heaped up before him, but who sits down and goes to sleep with his head in Benjamin’s mess and yet will not eat of it deserves to be starved! He who can sleep when the river runs up to his very lips—he who is dying of thirst, yet will not drink deserves to die, does he not? With such wondrous blessings set before you in the Gospel—with Heaven itself just yonder and the pearly gates set wide open, yet you are so indifferent that you despise the good land and murmur and refuse to accept the Savior who would lead you to it—why, surely, you must be sleeping the sleep of death!

You are sleeping while God’s people are wondering at you, just as those mariners in the ship wondered at Jonah—and while they are weeping over you and praying for you! There are some in this place who are the constant subjects of prayer. Some of you who are seated here do not know it, perhaps, but there are those who love you and who mention your name day and night before God. And yet, while they are concerned about you, you are not concerned about yourself! O God, if storms cannot awaken these sleeping Jonahs, awaken them by some other means, even though it is by one like themselves, or one even worse than themselves! Send a message that shall upbraid them. Set some blasphemer to ask them how they can attend the means of Grace and yet be undecided! I have known that to happen. I have known a coarse,

vile-living man to accost a moral and excellent attendant on the means of Grace and say to him, “Why are you not either one thing or the other? If religion is all a lie, why don’t you be as I am? But if it is true, why don’t you become a Christian?” And verily may they put such questions as those to some of you!

O Friends, I pray you, if you are out of Christ, do not pretend to be happy! Do not accept any happiness till you find it in Him. To some of you I would speak very pointedly. Are you sick? Do you feel that your life is very precarious? O my dear Friend, you are like Jonah when the ship was likely to be wrecked. Do not delay! Are there the beginnings of consumption about you? Is it supposed to be so? Do not delay! Has some relative been taken away and does there seem some likelihood that you may have the same disease? Oh, do not sleep, but awake! Are you getting old, Friend? Are the gray hairs getting thick around your brow? Oh, do not delay! For unsaved young people it is wrong to sleep, for he that sleeps when he is young sleeps during a siege! But he that slumbers when he is old sleeps during the attack, when the enemy is actually at the breach and storming the walls! Do any of you work in dangerous trades? Do you have to eat your bread where an “accident” might easily happen as it has often happened to others? Oh, be prepared to meet your God!

But, having begun this list, I might continue it almost indefinitely, but I will end it in a sentence or so. *Are you a mortal man? Can you die? Will you die? May you die now? May you drop dead in the street? May you go to sleep and never wake up again on earth? May your very food or drink become the vehicle of death to you? May there be death in the air you breathe? May it be so? Will you one day, at any rate, have to be carried to your long home, like others, and lie asleep in the grave? Will you give account to God for the things done in the body? Will you have to stand before the Great White Throne to make one of that innumerable throng and to be there put into the balance to be weighed for eternity? If so, sleep not, I beseech you, as do others, but bestir yourself!*

May God’s Holy Spirit bestir you to make your calling and election sure! Lay hold on Jesus Christ with the grip of an earnest, humble faith and henceforth surrender yourself to the service of Him who has bought you with His precious blood! God grant to all of us the Grace to awake and arise that Christ may give us life and light for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *PSALM 51.*

Verses 1-5. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge. Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* “It is not merely that I have sinned in practice, but I am a sinner by nature. Sin would not have come out of me if it had not first been in me. I am a mass of sin and must, therefore, be loathsome in Your sight.”

6, 7. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop.* Take the bunch of hyssop as the priests did, dip it into the basin filled with sacrificial blood—“Purge me with hyssop.” Apply the precious blood of Jesus to me—

7, 8. *And I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* He feels like a man whose bones are broken and he asks the Lord, by putting away his sin, to bind up those broken bones till every one of them should sing a song of gratitude to the Divine Healer.

9-13. *Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clear heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.* “If You will only save me, I will tell everybody about it. I will be a preacher as well as a penitent. Rising from my knees where I have been confessing my sin, rejoicing that You have blotted it all out, I will hasten away and tell others what a good God You are, and they will believe my testimony, and sinners shall be converted unto You.

14. *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God.* David had been guilty of the death of Uriah. It is a proof of his sincerity that he does not mince matters, but calls a spade a spade and prays, “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God.”

14. *The God of my Salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* “I will not only preach, but I will also sing. I will be preceptor as well a preacher. A Christian can never do too much for the Lord who has so graciously pardoned him. David feels that he cannot do anything right, either singing or preaching, by himself; so he adds—

15. *O Lord, open You my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; otherwise I would give it: You delight not in burnt offering.* God cares little for the mere outward forms of worship. Ritualistic observances are nothing to Him—“You desire not sacrifice, otherwise I would give it: You delight not in burnt offering.” Though these were the fixed ordinances of the Lord under which David lived, yet he was enabled to look beyond them to something higher and better!

17-19. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* When we come to God and are saved by Him, then ordinances take their proper place. You cannot teach a man how to live until he is born and you cannot teach him what his spiritual life is to be until he is born-again. All religious rites and ceremonies which precede the new birth go for nothing. First there must be the inward life—the broken heart, the contrite spirit—and then everything else drops into proper order. Mind this—God help us all to mind it well!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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