

- **\*READ Romans 13:11-14\*** Go back in your mind with me to your childhood. I know that for some of you that might be harder than others since it was quite a while ago, but go back and think about some of the worst words you could hear from your parents. Think especially to morning time during the school year when it's all cold outside, but your bed is nice and warm...You hear the dreaded words coming out of your mom or dad's mouth...."it's time to wake up!" My house had one of those intercom systems in it so my mom would get on there and tell us that it's time to get up. Even worse was when she sang this stupid little song that made me want to just roll out of bed and hope that I hit my head on something so that it would knock me out. We all hated being told it's time to wake or get up.
- Or it could be that we have received other types of wake up calls in our lives. Maybe we were slacking off in school or at work or with some other type of responsibility, and the person in charge of us has to sit down and have one of those not very fun talks about what is going to happen if we don't get it in gear and start taking care of our responsibilities.
- I think either one of those scenarios could be used to describe what was happening with Paul and the Roman Christians here in the text that we just read. Paul is writing this letter to this racially and culturally mixed church in an effort to cause them to get their acts together. They had a wonderful opportunity to do great work in the kingdom because of the diversity that was within this group. Yet, they seem to have been asleep in some capacity. They seem to not have been engaged as they ought to have been. In this portion of the Roman letter, the Apostle Paul tells them that it is time to wake up! It's time for their to get their heads on straight and get busy living out their faiths.
- This morning, I want to take some time to consider some reasons why we need this type of wake up call at times, because the truth is that each of us faces the challenge and temptation of becoming disciples of Jesus that are sleep walking through this life. We might be awake in our mind and body, but our faiths are very much snoozing away, and this is the most dangerous of states for us to find ourselves in as Christians. Let's look at four reasons why now is the time to wake up in our lives as disciples.

**I. Sleeping disciples are not engaged or zealous disciples.**

- A. Simply put, sleeping disciples are not active or aware of what is going on around them. Is this because they are actually sleeping? Well no...this is just a word picture being painted by Paul to describe the Christian who is apathetic in his or her faith. An apathetic Christian lacks the emotion, enthusiasm, and conviction to be truly active in his or her life in Christ.
- B. But this isn't a new problem. It's not a new problem for Christians to become stale, inactive, or willing to settle for mediocrity. In fact, we can look to Jesus's words to two different churches in Asia and see that they were troubled with such things. The church in Ephesus is said to have left left their first love. Sure they were actually doing some things that were commendable, but John writes that their deeds were useless because there was no true fire or passion in their actions. **(Revelation 2:4)** Then we have the church in Laodicea who is said to be lukewarm. That is such a fitting picture of someone who is apathetic. Jesus was so displeased that He said He'd rather just spit them out of His mouth. **(Revelation 3:15-17)** Why had they gotten to this place? John writes that it was because they had become rich and didn't see themselves as being in need of anything.
- C. This is exactly where we can find sleepy Christians developed. We often find them in this state when things seem to be going pretty well. The family is good, the job is good, the church is good, and basically everything is good. We get comfortable...and then we decide to just kick things into cruise control. What we read in **Romans 13:11-14** demands that we get out of that mindset.
- D. Instead of being sleepy and apathetic disciples, we must be engaged and zealous disciples. We must be a people who have a true burning desire to serve God. Our heart's greatest desire must be the service of God and the growth of His kingdom through us and in our families. This will cause us to be a people who do not sleep...we're not asleep and unaware of our surroundings...but instead we are constantly alert and aware of the spiritual reality we find ourselves in.

## II. Sleeping disciples are not aware of the time.

- A. We must be a people who have our head planted firmly on our shoulders with full range of motion constantly looking around and knowing what is going on around us. We can't do that if we are asleep.
- B. I want to look at two different passages that Paul wrote to two separate groups of disciples concerning their need to be aware and a commonality that we find in the context of those writings. Consider first **I Thessalonians 5:1-8**. This is a context concerning judgment that is coming down the line, and Paul says that the Thessalonian brethren must be what? They must "not sleep as others do", and they were to be alert and sober. Why? Because judgement was coming and they needed to be ready. Did you notice something similar back in **Romans 13:11,12**. "for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed." Eternity is nearing and we must be ready for such! Sadly, the sleeping Christian can't and won't be ready because they're asleep. They don't care. They're apathetic, and we all know how difficult it is to keep up with time when we're sleeping, right? What a sad day it will be for them.
- C. But then secondly, I want us to also consider what is said in **Ephesians 5:15-17**. Notice the language again that we be careful or aware how we walk. That we be wise in the way we live this life, and that we do so taking full advantage of the time we have because we don't know when that time will run out.
- D. Now being alert and aware of the time doesn't mean that we are going to know when the end comes...remember it comes like a thief in the night. (**II Peter 3:10**) But being alert and awake... being prepared and ready sure beats the alternative of being disengaged and fully unprepared to stand before the God of heaven in judgement, which each of us will have to do. (**Hebrews 9:27**)

## III. Sleeping disciples cannot defend themselves against Satan.

- A. It's not just that we need to be alert of the time, but we also need to be alert of the enemy so that we can defend ourselves against Him. Again, another text that adds to the idea of being alert and aware is that of **I Peter 5:8**. We must be awake in our faiths because Satan is just looking for an easy meal. He's looking for that easy victory over the sleeping Christian who isn't aware that he's about to be attacked and mauled by Satan.
- B. Back in Romans 13, we see Paul admonishing that disciples put off and lay aside the deeds of darkness. We need to lay aside the sins that the world engages in and be different because we are aware of the outcome of such a way of living. Those Christians who live with eyes wide open, who consider God's Word, and who understand the consequences of certain actions...they realize that sleeping Christians fall prey the quickest to Satan's temptations.
- C. Did you notice that these temptations are all of the same kind? These specific sins/temptations mentioned, I would categorize into those that the world portrays as just having some fun. Who doesn't enjoy a night out on the town, at the bar, or in the club downing some alcohol? Who doesn't enjoy fulfilling their sexual urges in promiscuity and sensuality? That's what the Satan presents us through the world as being fun and living a little. Especially if we are young, we get tempted with these things and people say things about how now in your youth is the time to have fun. Now in your youth is the time to enjoy the pleasures of this life. Do these things now, and you can get your ducks in a row later. But these pieces of advice couldn't be farther from the wisdom of God.
- D. The alert, aware, and zealous Christian will be on fire for the Lord and His will and these temptations will quickly be recognized and laid to the side, but the sleepy and apathetic Christian might dwell upon them long enough to where they eventually give in and make some major mistakes. Paul demands that disciples be awake and alert and defend themselves against Satan and his attacks.

#### IV. Sleeping disciples cannot grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

- A. Why do we need to wake up? We need to wake up because awake disciples are zealous disciples. Awake Disciples know the time and use it wisely. Awake Disciples are able to defend themselves against Satan. Finally, awake Disciples are able to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus because that can't be done while sleeping.
- B. Growing in God demands that we are active, and we aren't active while sleeping. Here in **Romans 13:12**, we find Paul instructing that we must live this life while clothed with the armor of light. Of course this brings to our mind what is said in **Ephesians 6** and the armor of God, but what is the purpose of this armor? Well, armor first protects. It protects against those fiery arrows of Satan, right?
- C. But it protects us so that we might be able to also be on the offensive. We need to be a people who are doing much to grow in Jesus. What helps us to grow in Jesus? The grace He provided to us through His sacrifice teaches us to do those things which are right. (**Titus 2:11-14**) Notice in this Text some things that we have already noted in this study. Notice Paul mentions the appearing of Jesus in **v.13**. Notice then that he says that we need to be zealous in what we do. All of these ideas are constantly linked together throughout Scripture, and it ought to move us to be a people who never settle into a rut or become lazy, complacent, or lethargic in our faiths. We must wake up and stay awake. We must put on Jesus (**Romans 13:14**), and we must stay in Jesus.

None of these things will happen, though, unless we are committed to awaking from slumber and sleep and living as disciples who's eyes are wide open and constantly aware of those things going on around us. May God help each of us through our diligence to be those disciples that are zealous for good works. May we always be aware of the time. May we always be defending ourselves against Satan. And may we constantly be growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. But why? We put forth this great effort so that as Peter says in **II Peter 3:14** we can "be found by Him in peace, spotless, and blameless." The time to wake up is now. Are you awake, or are you still sleeping?

**\*PRAYER\***