

A Church Awake (1 Thessalonians 5:4-8)

I have called today's message "A Church Awake." I wonder if you've noticed the general state of the church today? In North America, the statistic is that more and more people are becoming spiritually interested, but the problem is that the church of Christ is becoming correspondingly smaller and smaller. Liberal theology has gotten into our pulpits, our bible colleges and our denominations; our sermons are filled with nice stories and are empty of God's Word and Truth; in many cases, the church has become so "seeker sensitive" that we no longer talk about sin or judgment, or self-denial, or the fight against demons, or the price of the Cross. Just the other day, I visited one of our Chinese Alliance churches, and the message was about how nice Jesus was to care for people and that we ought to do it too. But the passage that was being preached on was Mark 5 where a man was possessed by a horde of demons called Legion. I was surprised and disappointed. I didn't hear about the war of the spirit of Evil against the King of kings. I didn't even hear about the impact of spiritual bondage and that the Name of Jesus sets us free. What I heard was about Jesus as the nice social worker who helps people feel good about themselves.

Please listen carefully. Our pews are filled with people who are spiritually asleep rather than spiritually awake. And the Word of God is like an alarm bell sounding in the ear of the church and sounding in the ear of every Christian: "Awake! Awake!" It's time to be A Church Awake!

Turn first to Isaiah 51:15-17. I want to call this "**The Call to be Awake**"

(Isaiah 51:15-17) For I am the LORD your God, who churns up the sea so that its waves roar-- the LORD Almighty is His name. {16} I have put My Words in your mouth and covered you with the shadow of My Hand-- I who set the heavens in place, who laid the foundations of the earth, and who say to Zion, 'You are My people.' {17} Awake, awake! Rise up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of His wrath, you who have drained to its dregs the

goblet that makes men stagger.

Pay attention to verse 17. From the mouth of Isaiah comes the warning to Jerusalem. Jerusalem has been asleep when it ought to be awake. And every time Jerusalem slept, it forgot the Word of God and it forgot the power of God, and it forgot the presence of God. Jerusalem sinned because it was asleep. And each time Jerusalem slept, God poured out His anger on it, and still it slept some more. This is the picture of the Church today. Where we ought to be awake, we sleep. We pretend not to notice that there is sin: So we bring gossip into our churches; we fight each other and we harbour unforgiveness against each other. **Galatians 5:15** tells us to stop biting and devouring each other, otherwise we will be destroyed by each other. Take note: A church that is asleep forgets what the Bible says about being gentle and kind, being patient and forbearing, being people of peace rather than people of war. We have gone to bed with those who sin against God, and the prophet Isaiah has the same message for the church as he has for Jerusalem: "Awake! Awake! Rise up, O Church!"

Now turn to **Revelation 16:15**: "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." I want you to notice what Jesus says to the church, "Blessed is he who stays awake because he keeps his clothes with him." The symbol of clothes is that of godly character. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve attempt to find leaves from trees to act as clothing, but leaves cannot cover the ugliness of their sin. God had to clothe them to remove their shame. The same goes for us. Paul says in

(Romans 13:14) Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

I want to call this second portion: "**The Character of those Awake**"

Please turn to **1 Thessalonians 5:4-8**. What is the character of those

who are awake? What kind of clothing do they wear? I want to say that character identifies who we are. These statements of character serve as a diagnostic of our own character. How do we compare according to what Scripture says is one who is awake? Am I awake? Are you? I want to share with you two diagnostic statements to see if indeed we are A Church Awake.

Please look at verse 4, “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; {5} for you are all sons of light and sons of day.” Do you notice what the verse says? “Not in darkness” “sons of light” “sons of day”. To be a son of light and day is to be a person who says, “I want to live in the light and I want to live in the day. The night bears no attraction to me.” That’s the character of those Awake. Here’s my first diagnostic: **What are you attracted to when no one is watching?** Is light more attractive to you than darkness?

(Ephesians 5:8-14) For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light {9} (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) {10} and find out what pleases the Lord. {11} Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. {12} For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. {13} But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, {14} for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Is there anything in secret places that you need to drag out to the light? It is time to admit that the deeds of darkness are fruitless. It is time to be attracted to the things of the light. It is time to no longer be lazy about God.

Now listen to 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8: “We are not of night nor of darkness; {6} so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. {7} For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. {8} But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love,

and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

I want you to notice that Paul is telling us that people who are awake are alert and sober. Their deeds reflect it. They are not found sleeping and doing nothing. They are not found drunk with the world’s temptations and forgetting the things of God. Here is the second diagnostic: **If you are truly awake, then do your deeds reflect it?**

Listen to the words of Jesus to the Church in Sardis in Revelation 3:1-5: “I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. {2} Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. {3} Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

Then Jesus says: {4} Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with Me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. {5} He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the Book of Life, but will acknowledge his name before My Father and His angels.

Are you walking with Jesus without your clothes soiled by the world? Are you hiding the dirty clothes of sin in your closet so that others can’t see? If you’re truly awake, then let your deeds reflect it. Remove sin far away from you. And be prepared for the spiritual battle. Put on the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of the hope of salvation. Breastplates and helmets are not things you wear to go to a party. We have to be prepared to fight the spiritual battles of prayer, of evangelism, of missions, of preaching the truth, of loving the sinner, and of rebuking the sin. A church that is awake is a church that puts into practice what we know and what we have been taught. And there is nothing in all creation that can stop a Church that is Awake in Christ. Are we such a church? Are you, in your own spiritual walk, such a Christian?