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The Blessings of Sleep and Rest

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

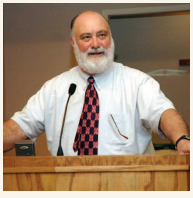
He giveth his beloved sleep.

PSALM 127:2, EXCERPT

Sleep and rest are gifts to be received with gratitude rather than taken for granted. John Weaver considers their place within the believer's dependence on God, connecting rest with trust, responsibility, and the limits of human effort. These messages invite reflection on the wise and faithful use of both labor and repose.

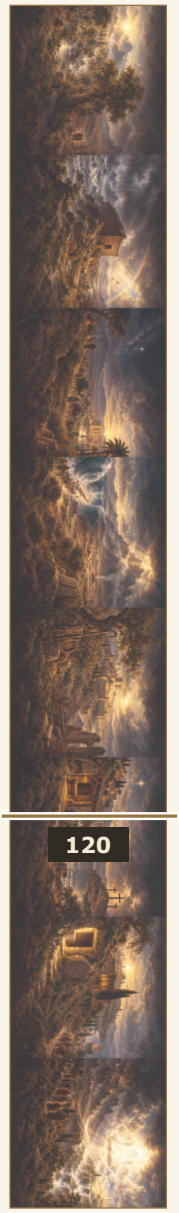
"Our Lord freely gives us eternal rest because He has taken the sting out of death and taken the victory away from the grave."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.



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The Blessings of Sleep and Rest

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CHAPTER 1

The Blessings of Sleep and Rest

Part One of Two

Introduction: The Neglected Topic of Sleep and Rest

As you open your Bibles to Psalm 4, I will tell you that this message is going to be in two parts, with the main part next Lord's Day. The title of the message is a very simple one: “The Blessings of Sleep and Rest.” You have probably never heard a message like this. I have probably never preached a message like this, but I want you to see what the Scripture says. Psalm 4 and verse 8: David said, “I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.”

There are two things that each of us takes for granted: rest and sleep. Since each one comes naturally, we simply assume that we are always going to be able to rest and always be able to sleep. We really and truly, in one sense of the word, should be concerned with sleep and rest because usually from a third to one half of our lives are consumed with sleep and rest.

We are either sleeping, sitting, resting, or, as we normally say, taking a break. I have heard numerous complaints concerning the fact that many do not sleep well or rest well, and I am probably sure that there have been times in my life when I have enunciated the same complaints. When we do not sleep as we should, when we do not rest as we should, our sleep is fitful, and we awaken sluggish and tired.

Each of us has experienced such nights. The truth of the matter, however, is that most of us have had far more good nights of rest and sleep than we have had troubled nights of rest and sleep. Have you ever noticed how concerned we are with rest and sleep? Especially when you have company at your house and they spend the night, usually the very first thing you ask them the next morning is, "How did you rest?" or "How did you sleep?" In fact, that was the first thing Granny Doris asked me this morning when she saw me, knowing that I had had the surgery. "How did you rest?" And my answer was, "Well, you know."

But I want you to consider, for just a little while this morning, some of the truths from Psalm 4 and verse 8. We have never really considered this, and as I was reading through the book of Psalms recently, this verse struck me afresh.

In considering the mercy and goodness of our great God and our Savior, have you ever really considered what a genuine blessing it is to sleep and to rest? What a genuine blessing it is to trust in the Lord for His grace and mercy as you sleep and rest.

The Promise of Sweet Sleep for the Obedient (Proverbs 3:21-26)

Now, I want you to hold Psalm 4; we are coming back there, but turn in your Bibles to the book of Proverbs, chapter 3. I am going to start with this passage, and probably when I end next Sunday, I am going to end with this passage as well, because I want you to see one of the blessings that God gives to those who obey His commandments and bring their lives into conformity to His Word. Look in Proverbs, chapter 3, and let us begin reading there with verse 21.

He says, “My son, let not them depart from thine eyes.” And the “them,” of course, is His commandments. Go back to verse 1: “My son, forget not My law, but let thine heart keep My commandments.” So we are talking about God’s law and commandments. Now go back to verse 21: “My son, let not them,” that is, the law of God, the commandments of God, “depart from thine eyes. Keep sound wisdom and discretion.”

“So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.” Now watch carefully: “Then shalt thou walk in the way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. For thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid. Yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.” Watch: “Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither the desolation of the wicked when it cometh. For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.”

Note verse 24: “When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid. Yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.” The promises of God in bringing abiding peace, comfort, and restoration to those who trust in Him are absolutely phenomenal.

God Satisfies the Weary Soul (Jeremiah 31:23-26)

I want you to turn right on over to Jeremiah, chapter 33. Look at this passage, Jeremiah 33, and let us begin reading there with verse 23. Jeremiah 33. Jeremiah 33, and we are going to begin reading at verse 23. I may have the wrong passage there, or be looking in the wrong place. I have the verse here. “Let's share my 33.” Verse 23. 25, is that it? I just wrote it down wrong. All right, verse 25.

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, as yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah, and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity. The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice and mountain of holiness, and they shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks.”

Now listen carefully to what he says: “‘For I have satiated the weary soul,’ that is, I’ve filled it and overflowed it. I’ve satiated, I’ve satisfied the weary soul, and I’ve replenished every sorrowful soul.” Jeremiah says upon this, “I’ll awaken and be held, and my sleep was

sweet unto me." So here God says that even during the rest there, He satiates and He satisfies. He fills and overflows the weary soul, satisfies it, and replenishes every sorrowful soul.

Now I want you to look back to Psalm 4 and verse 8. Pay attention, if you would please, to the triple blessing that is bestowed here. David said, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep. For thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." He talks about sleep, peace, and safety. But note how he words this: "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep."

The Triple Blessing of Psalm 4:8: Peace, Sleep, and Safety

The word "both" here literally means "at the same time." So, at the same time, he said, "I will lay me down in peace and sleep." His mind then will be at peace. Tranquility will possess his heart, and therefore he will lie down and sleep calmly. The reason he could sleep so calmly was because the Lord was indeed protecting him. Have you ever wondered about Peter's sleeping while he was imprisoned?

Peter's Peaceful Sleep in Prison (Acts 12:5-11)

Peter had been imprisoned by Herod. Herod had already cut off the Apostle James' head, and Peter was next on the list. To me, this is so exciting in one sense of the word. The Bible tells us in Acts chapter 12, beginning there with verse 5, "Peter therefore was kept in prison."

SCRIPTURE READING - Acts 12:5-11 (KJV)

> But prayer was made without ceasing of the church of God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison. And he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell from off his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and

followed him, and wist not that it was true what was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.

And when they were past the first and second ward, they came into the iron gate that leadeth into the city, which opened to them of his own accord. And they went out, and passed on through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him.

Now when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

Now here is what is so impressive about this. If you will go back to verses 6 and 7. And when Herod would have brought him forth the same night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison watch. And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison, and he smote Peter on the side. Now can you imagine? Here Peter is about to have his head cut off the next day. He is chained. He is sleeping between two soldiers. So he is not only chained, he is between two snoring soldiers and probably other snoring as well. A great light shines in the prison and the angel still has to slap him to wake him up. I mean, you know, he evidently understood something.

Historical Example: Nicholas Ridley's Calm Before Martyrdom

He understood the grace of God and the mercy of God. He understood exactly what David said in Psalm 4:8: "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." In other words, he understood God's sovereign preservation.

Most of you have probably heard the name Nicholas Ridley. You've heard of Latimer and Ridley. Nicholas Ridley was the Bishop of London who was burned at the stake on October the 16th, 1555, by Bloody Queen Mary. He was burned at the stake for his faith in Jesus Christ. Ridley's brother offered to remain with him during the night before his execution the next morning. But Nicholas Ridley declined,

saying—and I'm quoting—that he, Nicholas Ridley, meant to go to bed and sleep as quietly as ever he did in his entire life. And he did so. The next morning he was burned at the stake. It's amazing, the grace of God in sleep and rest.

David's Confidence Amid Danger (Psalm 3:1-6)

David certainly understood danger. David was in danger far more frequently than most people. He not only understood danger; he understood anxiety and trouble. Yet, in spite of all his problems, he trusted in God to give him rest. In Psalm 3, beginning in verse 1, he says, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about."

No one can fail to admire the beauty of this, and no one can fail to perceive David's confidence in God and the assurance that all things are under God's absolute control. It is this faith that is best fitted for peace, not only during the day, but during the night as well. It is God who preserves us. It is God who protects us.

Our Bodies Need Sleep and Rest

Point 1: Our Bodies Need Sleep and Rest

The first truth we are to understand in Psalm 4:8 is this: our bodies need sleep and rest. This is number one. And by the way, our need of sleep and rest is from the Lord. The Lord ordained it; we need it. He designed our bodies and, as David said in Psalm 139, we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

We are men. We are not supermen. We are not machines. We are not robots. There is only so much that we can do and no more. We are not God. We are not little gods. We are not on our way to be gods. We are men. Consequently, our bodies grow weary and tired.

Let me begin today with what I am going to call some very simple points. These are simple points, and we will progress, Lord willing, from the simple to the more complex. The more complex will be next Sunday. The needed and necessary truths from this verse will be understood also from other Scriptures as they elucidate and explain this passage. Let me show you from the book of Psalms, one of my favorite passages. In Psalm 103, beginning with verse 13, notice what the Scripture teaches: Psalm 103, verses 13 and 14.

The Bible tells us, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him, for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we're but dust." Notice, "...as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him, for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we're but dust." In other words, He knows our lives, He knows our limitations. He remembers that we're dust. The problem is, so often, we don't remember that we're dust. Do you know that our Lord, who is God incarnate, who is perfect God and perfect man, our Lord, who is God incarnate, grew weary and needed rest while He was in the incarnate state.

In John 4 and verse 6, if you will turn there, John 4 and verse 6, and since you're going to be turning there, I'm going to ask you to turn back to the book of Mark just after this. But notice John 4 and verse 6. Here's the story of the Samaritan woman. John 4, notice if you would verse 5. Remember our Lord is perfect God and perfect man.

He knew no sin and yet He was weary because He had a body. Notice if you would, John 4 verse 5. "Then cometh He to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now, Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well, and it was about the sixth hour." Jesus, being wearied with his journey, sat on the well.

And, of course, you know the story there, how he asked for water. I want you to turn back in your Bibles to the book of Mark, chapter 6, and see what our Lord told His disciples. Mark chapter 6, and notice if you would please, verse 31. Mark 6 and verse 31. In fact, let's read verse 30, so that you can see the context of it. Mark 6, verse 30, "And

the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught."

"And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately." So our Lord told his disciples, "Come ye apart in the desert, and rest a while." I never will forget, Lester Olaf used to say it like this, "If you don't come apart, you will come apart."

The truth of the matter is this: our bodies do need sleep and rest. Each night, when I lie down on the bed, I quote Psalm 4 and verse 8, asking the Lord to give me sleep and rest. I ask it for Alice as well. After I had surgery the other day, I was told that I could not lift over five pounds for the next month or so. I looked at Alice and said, “You know that means that you’ll have to do everything.” She said, “I already do.” So I pray for her as well. I ask the Lord for sleep and rest for both of us.

Point 2: It Is God Who Gives Sleep and Rest

Each morning, I thank the Lord for the sleep and rest He has given us. Psalm 92:2 says, “To show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning and Thy faithfulness every night.” We ask Him for sleep and rest, and when He gives it, we thank Him for His faithfulness.

Adam Clarke said this based upon Psalm 4 and verse 8: “Most men lie down and most sleep daily, for without rest and sleep, life could not be preserved. But alas, how few lie down in peace. Peace with their own consciences and peace with God. David had then two great blessings, rest by sleep and peace in his soul. He had a happy soul and when he lay down on his bed, his body soon enjoyed its repose, as the conscience was in peace. And he had a third blessing, a confidence that he should sleep in safety. And it was so. No fearful dreams disturbed his repose, for he had a mind tranquilized by the peace of God. As to his body that enjoyed its due rest, for he had not overloaded nature either with dainties or superfluities.”

David said, “I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.” In the midst of all his

troubles, trials, and tribulations, David could sleep and rest. He was not tossing and tumbling, and there were not a multitude of thoughts racing through his mind. He was able to sleep and rest because of his faith and trust in God. Many people I know complain about not being able to sleep.

There is a biblical remedy for that. It is not sleeping pills. If you want to know the biblical remedy, look in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes chapter 5 and verse 12. I will show you God's divine prescription for being able to sleep comfortably and well at night, outside of faith in Him. Notice Ecclesiastes 5:12: “The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much. But the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.”

God said that if you work hard during the day, you will probably sleep well at night. Whether you have a lot to eat or little to eat, it does not matter. When your body gets tired, you will go to sleep. So the problem with most people today is that most people do not work.

Have you ever stopped to think about this? Our grandparents and great-grandparents worked from sunup to sundown, and sometimes during the night as well. They had no air conditioning; they sweat and perspired. As one young lady told me, I said, “Why, Candace, you’re sweating.” She said, “Brother Weaver, southern girls don’t sweat, they glow.” I said, “Well, you’re glowing quite well.”

They never had half the physical problems we have, and they were always able to rest and sleep because they worked so hard. God is telling us very obviously that if we really want to sleep, we should work.

Now, here is a second point: it is God who gives us sleep and rest. Do you understand that sleep and rest are gifts from God? Is sleep and rest good? The answer is yes. If it is good and a gift, remember James 1:16–17: “Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above.

We are specifically told in Psalm 127 and verse 2, “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, and to eat the bread of sorrows.

For so he giveth his beloved sleep." He giveth his beloved sleep. It is a gift from God. Have you ever stopped to think that what God gave you last night was a gift?

Spurgeon said on Psalm 4 and verse 8, "Sweet evening hymn, I shall not sit up to watch through fear, but I will lie down. And then I will not lie awake listening to every rustling sound, but I will lie down in peace and sleep, for I have naught to fear. He that hath the wings of God above him needs no other curtain." Better than bolts or bars is the protection of the Lord. Armed men kept the bed of Solomon, but we do not believe that he slept more soundly than his father, whose bed was the hard ground and who was hunted by many bloodthirsty foes.

Look back at one word in Psalm 4 and verse 8. David said, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." "Only" means that it was God alone who was David's keeper. It meant David was basically without man's help. I know that David had his 300, sometimes 600 men. I understand that. But David was not trusting his men for protection. David was trusting in the Lord. It was God and God alone who was protecting him.

Point 3: God Protects Us While We Sleep

Which brings me to the third point: It is God who protects us while we sleep and when we rest. We are most vulnerable when we are unconscious. There is a prayer that I pray every night. I ask the Lord to guard my consciousness, my subconsciousness, and my unconsciousness. One day I was thinking, "Well, Lord, there's no way that I can really keep my subconscious or my unconscious state." Then I realized that there is no way I can even keep my conscious state. You cannot stop thoughts from coming into your minds. If God does not keep them, they are simply not kept.

If we want our minds to be pure, clean, holy, and biblical, we must ask God to protect us even while we sleep. I do not even want to dream anything wicked, ungodly, unholy, or unbiblical, so I ask the Lord to protect me. We are extremely vulnerable when we are unconscious. We cannot see, and we cannot hear.

Have you ever awakened from a deep sleep, startled, and gotten up absolutely groggy? You do not know which way to turn or what to do. I remember one time Alice and I were so tired that we went to bed one Sunday afternoon after church. When we woke up, we not only did not know what time it was; we did not even know what day it was. The only thing I could think of was that I was supposed to be preaching and was late.

It took us a while. In fact, she looked at the calendar and could not even figure out the day because we were totally out of it. Thankfully, I had a couple of hours before church that night. You are totally vulnerable either in deep sleep or immediately after you come out of it because you are so groggy that many times you do not even know which end is up.

We are talking about how God watches over us as we sleep. Would you go to sleep tonight if you thought you would be murdered while you slept? I guarantee you would not sleep. Would you sleep tonight if you thought somehow a robber was going to break into your house and steal everything that the Lord has given you? No, you would not sleep. Would you go to sleep tonight if you thought you were going to die in your sleep? No. Have you ever asked yourself this question: Why did you not die in your sleep last night?

You remember that verse I quote so often, Lamentations 3:22–23: "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." The only reason we are alive today is because of God's infinite compassions and mercies to us through the night. We need to thank Him each morning for those mercies and compassions, and, when we go to bed at night, thank Him for the mercies and compassions that allowed us to live through the day.

So God mercifully, compassionately, and faithfully watches over us while we sleep. He is our protection. Psalm 121, verses 4 and 5, says: "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand." It may surprise you, as you read through the Bible, to find how many verses deal with sleep and rest.

I remember years ago reading about a widow who had difficulty sleeping after her husband died because she was fearful and concerned about danger lurking in the night. Consequently, she would stay up as late as she could, many times reading her Bible, afraid to sleep lest someone break in. Then she came to this passage: “Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper.” When she saw that, she thought about it for a minute and said, “Well, Lord, if You’re going to sit up and watch over me, there’s no need for both of us to stay awake. If You don’t mind, I’m just going to sleep.”

And that's exactly what she did. Have you ever stopped to think how safe we are when the Father is watching over us when we sleep? Look in your Bibles at Ezekiel 34:25: “And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land, and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.”

How many would like to go to sleep in the woods? I mean, with the bugs and the snakes and the bears. God said that if He is watching over you, sleeping in the woods is just as easy and safe as sleeping in a Holiday Inn—probably safer. Isn't that amazing? God said that you could sleep in the woods as long as He is watching over you.

John Calvin, in talking about Psalm 4 and verse 8, said this: “David justly prefers the joy produced by the light of God's fatherly love before all other objects for inward peace of mind. It certainly surpasses all the blessings of which we can form any conception. David boasts that the protection of God alone was sufficient, that under it he sleeps as securely, although destitute of all human guardianship, as if he had had many to keep watch and ward continually over him, or as if He had been defended on all sides by a great company. Let us therefore learn from His example to yield this honor to God, to believe that although there may appear no help for us from men, yet under His hand alone we are kept in peace and safety as if we were surrounded by a great host.”

And the truth of the matter is, we are surrounded by a great host. You remember how Elisha was at Dothan, and the Syrian army had compassed Dothan about to capture him. Elisha's servant went out

and saw the Syrian army. He said to Elisha, “Alas, Master, how shall we do?” And Elisha prayed, “Lord, open the young man's eyes.” When his eyes were opened, he saw chariots of flaming fire surrounding the entire mountains. They be far more with us than they that are with them. He saw the angels of God and the protection of God.

This is exactly what Calvin is saying. This is exactly what David is saying. The Bible tells us that our Lord has promised us in Hebrews 13:5, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Never. There is never a time when the saints of God are left alone.

We often quote Psalm 23:4, where David said, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” Why? “For thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” Walking through the valley of the shadow of death, Thou art with me.

Since we know that God has ordained sleep, and since we understand that sleep is a means to be renewed, refreshed, and revived, consider these questions: How many in this room are afraid to go to sleep? No one is afraid to go to sleep. Do you desire sleep? Of course; you know it is needed and necessary. There is not a person in this room who is afraid to go to bed, lie down, and go to sleep. These questions and statements show us this truth: in the Bible, death for the child of God is likened to sleep.

The Analogy of Sleep and Death for Believers

Look in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 2. I want to show you how the Scripture teaches us that our Lord has taken away the fear of death. Notice verses 14 and 15: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

What does He deliver us from? He has delivered us from the devil, from the power of death, and from the fear of death. We may not want to die, and we may not necessarily be ready to die, but we should not fear to die, because our Lord has taken the fear out of

death. For the child of God, death is nothing more than going to sleep. Now let me ask you before I show you these Scriptures.

If you know that you've got a big day tomorrow, a hard day, and you have the opportunity to go to bed an hour earlier and get a little bit of additional rest, wouldn't you do it? Sure. You plan for it. You're eager for it. You're ready for it.

I want you to begin looking, if you would please, to Deuteronomy 31. We're going to go from the old to the new. I'm being very selective on these passages. There's so many of them. But Deuteronomy 31, verse 16. The key word in each of these passages is "sleep."

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers. And this people will rise up and go a-whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land." He tells what all the people are going to do. But look what He told Moses: "Thou shalt sleep with thy fathers." You go to sleep.

Look in 2 Samuel chapter 7 and verse 12. God is speaking to David, and He says this: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom." But notice, "thou shalt sleep with thy fathers." He'll go to sleep.

Look in your Bibles, John 11. Here our Lord is speaking about Lazarus. Lazarus had died, and of course Christ was going to raise him from the dead. "These things saith he, and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of his sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." Howbeit Jesus spake of his death, but they thought that he had spoken of taking rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, "Lazarus is dead."

Now what did our Lord say concerning Lazarus? He's asleep. He was a believer. He just was asleep. And He said, "I go that I might awaken him out of his sleep." Our Lord, then, is likening death just simply to sleep.

If you would turn right over to the book of Acts chapter 13, notice verse 36: "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep."

"and was laid into his father's and saw corruption." Note what? David fell asleep. That's all it says. In 1 Corinthians 15:51, the Apostle Paul says, "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." He's still talking about death. In 1 Thessalonians 4:14, he says, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." In other words, those that have died. Then, in 1 Thessalonians 5:10, speaking of Christ who died for us, "that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."

Think about this analogy. How many of you are afraid to go to sleep tonight? No one raised their hand, because you know sleep is needed and necessary. If you want to be refreshed, revived, and energized in the morning, you are going to have to sleep tonight. Sleep is easy, needful, and necessary. Likewise, we cannot live except we die. We cannot be resurrected without the sleep of death. We cannot enter into immortality without the passing away of our mortality. We cannot awaken in the likeness of Christ unless we put off the body of this death. We cannot put on our heavenly tabernacle unless we put off our earthly tabernacle. How difficult is it for a child of God to die? It is as easy as falling asleep in the arms of the Lord Jesus Christ and then awakening to a wonderful, glorious eternity.

Isaiah 28:12 says it like this: "This is the rest wherewith you may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing." This is the rest wherewith you may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing. But then God had to say concerning those stiff-necked Israelites, "which you would not hear." You wouldn't come to me that you might have it.

Now, let me show you a beautiful picture of death. In Ecclesiastes 12:5, we read: "Also, when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fear shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail," now watch, here it begins, "because man goeth into his long home," death, "and the mourners go about the streets,"

Conclusion: Rest in the Arms of the Father

"Or ever the silver cord be loosened, or the golden bowl broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the

cistern, then shall the dust return into the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Spurgeon said it like this: "O Lord, give us this calm repose on Thee, that like David, we may lie down in peace and sleep each night, while we also joyfully may lie down in the appointed season, to sleep in death to God."

Someone has penned these words: "How beautiful is sleep. The sleep that Christians know, ye mourners cease your woe, while soft upon his Savior's breast, the righteous sinks to endless rest."

Who's afraid of going to sleep? As a child, I slept in my mother's arms; I slept in my father's arms. As an adult, when it comes my time to die, I will still sleep in my father's arms and awaken, resurrected, refreshed, revived to eternal joy and service to Him who deserves all honor, praise, worship, and glory.

Father, help us to thank Thee for the wonderful rest and sleep that You give us. Help us to think upon the picture of it and how, Lord, it represents our trust in Thee, our leaning upon Thee. And, Lord, thank You for Your protection that You've given us. Thank You for Your goodness and kindness. Thank You for sleep and rest, life and health. And Lord, we just ask Your blessing upon all of Your people. Help us to be more appreciative, more thankful, more grateful, and more praising unto Thee. In Thy name we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

The Blessings of Sleep and Rest

Part Two of Two

Review of Part 1

Alright, let's get started. Psalm 4 and verse 8. Psalm 4 and verse 8. You remember I started this message last week. I'm going to review just momentarily. And then we're going to get started. It's Psalm 4 and verse 8. You remember I began a message which I entitled, "The Blessings of Sleep and Rest." It's from Psalm 4 and verse 8 where David said, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." Now I want to take just a few moments to review. First of all, we've seen, I trust, very important truths from Psalm 4 and verse 8. And I gave last week what I would just simply call a simple introduction to what I'm going to be bringing today. I pointed out obviously from this verse, our bodies need sleep and rest. It is God who created our bodies. He knows our lives. He knows our limits. He is the one that has

ordained sleep and ordained rest. Secondly, I pointed out from this text, that it is God Himself who gives us sleep and rest.

Without Him, there is no real rest. Our Lord played upon this truth in Matthew 11 and verse 28, when He looked at the people and He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Then He said once again, "And ye shall find rest for your souls." So obviously it is God who gives rest, and really and truly physical sleep and physical rest is certainly an analogy of the eternal blessing and the eternal rest that we have in Christ. And then thirdly I pointed out, how it's God who protects us and preserves us while we sleep and rest. And I asked the question last week, why did you not die last night in your sleep or why were you not murdered? And the answer is simply because God was watching over us, God protected us. We could say it like this, we are sovereignly protected. In Psalm 121 verses 4 and 5, I quoted it last week, "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

“The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.” For the child of God, death is likened unto sleep. There is no one in this room who is afraid to lie down and go to sleep. We want sleep, we crave sleep, and our body needs sleep. Our Lord likens death unto falling asleep. No one is afraid to go to sleep, and no Christian should be afraid to die. We may not want to die, but we know that we shall die; the truth is, we are not afraid to die. How easy is it for a child of God to die? It is as easy as falling asleep in his Father’s arms. That is exactly the analogy our Lord gave us.

The Apostle Paul gives us another truth in relationship to this. He wrote, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, that is, or all die, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.”

The grave and death do not get the victory over the child of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ has already given us the victory because He died in our stead, as our substitute and sacrifice. Our Lord freely gives us eternal rest because He has taken the sting out of death and taken the victory away from the grave. He holds in His own hand the keys of death and the grave.

God Instructs Us While We Sleep

Although sleep is indeed a blessing, sometimes sleep can also be a curse. Before considering the negatives, I want to show you some positives. When I say sleep can be a curse, it depends upon the individual and also upon the circumstances.

Here is the first truth I want to share: God often instructs us while we sleep. That may be strange to your ears, but I want to show it to you from the Bible. Before I do, understand something of primary importance: Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God.

David said, “I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.” When I say that God often instructs us in our sleep, this is not a program, and it is not a pitch for believing in dreams. I do not trust dreams. I know that God gave them in the Old Testament and sometimes in the New Testament, but since the Word of God has been completed, we do not need dreams, visions, or anything else.

Hebrews 1:1 says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” Notice that the Bible says He hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. What does that mean? It means that Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God.

You do not look for truth in dreams, Ouija boards, tarot cards, or fortune tellers. The only truth there is, is that which is in Jesus Christ, the living Word, and in the Bible, His written Word. Christ and Christ alone is the full and vital revelation of God. When one depends upon anything else, it is idolatry, plain and simple. We are shut up to Christ and His Word.

Having laid that groundwork down, I want you to see how God oftentimes instructs us in our sleep. Job 35:10 says, “But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?” Have you ever had a song in the night?

That does not mean you got up insane. But have there been praises in your mind, or thanksgiving that goes along with all of your thoughts at night? God can sovereignly give us things to think upon while we lie in bed. It does not necessarily have to be a dream. God can implant things in our minds so that when we awaken, we are thinking upon the very thing that God brought to our minds. Scripture does indeed teach us that God oftentimes instructs us while we sleep.

There is no doubt that God did use dreams in the Old Testament. The Word of God had not been completed at that time. He also used some dreams in the New Testament, because the Word of God had not been completed at that particular time. But I want you to understand this: it was Joseph’s dreams, you remember, that got him in trouble with his brethren. Joseph did have dreams, but the point is not merely that Joseph had a dream. God was teaching and instructing Joseph as he dreamed. After having reviewed what went over last week, we are on our first point, showing that God oftentimes instructs us while we sleep.

Job 33:14 says, “For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.” Isn’t that amazing? Sometimes God does speak to us, and we do not even perceive that it is God speaking to us. The passage continues: “For God speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.” Note especially: “In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.”

God is able to speak to us even when we are unconscious, and He can speak to us in such a way that it changes our lives.

I want to give you three quotes before going any further in explaining this. This is from John Trapp, the old Puritan. He speaks of the fact that God opens our ears: “Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.” You remember in the Bible, when a slave wanted to be a permanent slave and refused to leave, what did the owner do?

He took him and put an awl and bored a hole through his earlobe. Here is what old John Trapp says: “He maketh the boar bigger, as it were, that good counsel may enter. He calleth up the ears of the soul to the ears of the body, that one sound may pierce both. He saith as to him in the gospel, Ephphatha,” which is what our Lord said when He healed the deaf man, “and together with his word there goeth forth the power.”

Old John Trapp said it is like God just makes the boar bigger. He calls up the ears of the soul to the ears on the head when God speaks, so that whatever God says goes farther than the ears on the head; it goes down into the ears and the soul.

Albert Barnes said it this way: “The idea is that he reveals to the ear of man imported admonitions or counsels. He communicates valuable truth. We are not to understand this as saying that the sleeper actually hears God speak, but as the ear is the organ of hearing, it is employed here to denote that God then communicates His will to human beings. In what way He may have access to the souls of people by dreams or visions or whatever, it is impossible to explain.”

He continues: “And he sealeth their instruction, or literally, in their admonition he seals or fixes a seal. The idea is that he makes the admonition or instruction as secure as if a seal were affixed to it. A seal ratified or confirmed a contract, a will or deed, and in the sense here that the communication of God to the soul was as firm as if it had been ratified in a like manner.” God seals that instruction. Whatever He instructs, He seals it, so that ultimately we know it is from Him and it is truth.

Adam Clarke said, “A dream or a vision simply considered is likely to do no good. It is the opening of the understanding and the pouring in of the light that make men wise to salvation. Serious

alarms, holy purposes, penitential pangs for past sins, apprehensions of death and judgment, discoveries of God's justice, of Christ's love, of the world's vanity, and of heaven's excellence to withdraw men from their evil purpose and to hide pride from man. In all of these openings of the ear of the heart and sealing instructions upon the conscience, we have numerous examples in the history of the church, in the experience of good men, and in the civil and providential history of all nations." God does more than give a dream. He opens the heart to receive instruction.

The idea is that God sends home His instruction and gives it in such a manner that it imprints itself upon our mind. We think about it, and we know it. It was not the dreams that were important; it was the truth that was communicated that was important and had to be acted upon.

Biblical Examples of Divine Instruction in Sleep

Consider two examples in Genesis chapter 20. Sarah and Abraham had gone down because of the famine. Sarah was a beautiful woman, and Abraham said, "You say that you're my sister. And that way they will not kill me to have you." That is exactly what happened. Genesis 20:1 says, "And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah." Why would Abraham say, "She is my sister"? She was his half-sister.

That was true. The reason he said she was his sister is that, in those days, a man had to contract or covenant with a family for a bride. No one was supposed to take Sarah without first bargaining with Abraham, who would have been her brother. But Abimelech the king did not bargain with Abraham; he simply took her. Look, please, at verse 3:

"But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife." Verse 4: "But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she

herself said, He is my brother. In the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this."

But what did God tell Abimelech? "If you touch her, I'm going to kill you. You're a dead man." God came to Abimelech, who was a heathen, in a dream. The dream itself was not important; what God said, conveyed, and communicated was important.

Abimelech received the message so thoroughly that he not only returned Sarah, but gave Abraham money, sheep, and everything else to correct the misunderstanding. He said, "Lord, I would have never taken her had I known she was a man's wife." God said in verse 6, "And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her." I do not know what God did to keep Abimelech away from Sarah. Maybe He gave him a case of the twenty-four-hour virus. I do not know, but He kept him away. Notice that God spoke to Abimelech in a dream.

Turn to Genesis chapter 31. Jacob had served Laban and married his daughters. God is inheritance. Laban was going to chase Jacob and try to harm him. In Genesis 31:24 we read, "And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad." What did God say?

"You better not touch him." A little bit later on, Laban said to Jacob, "You know that it was in the power of my hand to do you hurt, but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying..." So obviously Laban did indeed have an evil intent when he went after Jacob. God also spoke to Jacob in such a way that he knew the truth.

"And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to

the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

So what did God do? God came to Jacob in a dream and God spoke to him. When Jacob awoke, he was not saying, "Let me tell you about this wonderful dream I had." No, he said, "This is the gateway to heaven. God is surely in this place." He understood exactly what God told him. Do you realize God spoke to Daniel the same way? Turn over your Bibles to the book of Daniel chapter 8.

Then I'm going to show you one from the New Testament. Look in Daniel chapter 8, beginning with verse 18: "Now as he was speaking with me," said Daniel, "I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright." Where did God speak to Daniel? He was in a deep sleep, with his face toward the ground. Turn over to Daniel 10 and look at verse 9: "Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground." God spoke to him, and he knew that God had spoken.

Turn over to Matthew chapter 1, beginning with verse 19. Everybody knows the story of Mary and Joseph. "Then Joseph her husband, being a just man…" when he found out that Mary was with child: "Now Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name

Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife."

Isn't that amazing? Here God corrected all of Joseph's misgivings and misconceptions in a dream. He was saying, "Joseph, you've got to understand, Mary has not been with a man. That thing, referring to the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, was conceived in her by the Holy Ghost."

Go back to the book of Job and look in Job 36 and verse 10. I'll quote a few of these verses, but I want you to see this one. The Bible says, "He openeth also their ear to discipline,"

God Opens Ears Whether Asleep or Awake

It is God who opens our ears. Do you realize that whether you are asleep or awake, if you hear, receive, and understand truth, it is God who opened your ears? Do you remember in Luke 24 those two disciples on the Emmaus road? They were downcast and disheartened when Jesus appeared to them and asked, "Why are you so downcast?" They said, "Are you a stranger here? Have you not known what has happened?" They told Him how Jesus was crucified: "We had hoped He had been the Messiah. Besides all this is the third day." Our Lord said, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written." Then, in Luke 24, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." In Acts chapter 16, the Lord opened Lydia's heart, with the result that she attended to the things spoken by the Apostle Paul.

So it does not matter whether you are asleep or awake: if God opens your ears, He will seal the instruction. In Psalm 17 verse 3, David said, "Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." Notice what David said to God: "Thou hast visited me in the night." Has God visited you and you do not know it? Has He opened your ears and sealed instruction to you?

This is not about dreams. Do not trust in dreams. Do not look to dreams. Do not desire dreams. It is not about dreaming; it is about hearing the Word of God.

If you really want to dream, I can assure you I can tell you how: get two pieces of bread and a mayonnaise, ketchup, and mustard and pickle sandwich. If you eat it right before bed, I guarantee you will dream something. It will not do you any good, but you will dream something. Sleep experts tell you that you dream all the time while you are asleep; you just do not remember most often. I have gotten up at night and told Alice, "I didn't dream at all last night. I slept so hard." Well, I may have; I simply did not remember it. Yet sometimes dreams are so vivid that when you awake, you can remember one from years ago. I still fight a dream because it was so vivid and real, though I know it was so untrue. Occasionally it crosses my mind, and I think, "How did I dream something like that?"

You know where dreams come from most of the time? Let me read to you Ecclesiastes chapter 5, verse 3: “For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.” We often dream about that which has been on our minds the most during the day. But here is another verse, Ecclesiastes 5:7: “For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.”

You do not fear your dreams. Dreams are inconsequential. In a multitude of dreams, there is vanity—that which is useless and worthless. But fear thou God. The fear of God is always profitable. Oftentimes, God does speak to us in the night. “He speaketh once, yea twice, and man perceiveth it not.” God oftentimes opens our ears, and we are totally and completely unaware of it.

Sleep Providentially Withheld

I want you to understand that at times sleep is withheld providentially. Although our bodies need sleep and although God gives sleep, oftentimes sleep is providentially withheld. All of us understand how frustrating it is when we cannot sleep. If we have a problem, if there is something touching upon us with a great deal of difficulty, we lie awake in bed with our thoughts running through our minds without ceasing.

We try to relax, and we cannot. We pray, and it does not do any good. We endeavor to shut our thoughts off, yet they cannot be

quieted. They scream like a thousand banshees running through our minds, one right after the other, and we lie awake, absolutely miserable. I submit this to you: when that happens, the best remedy is not a sleeping pill, but to get out of bed and begin to read your Bible. Evidently, there is something you need to know, something you need to learn, something that God is trying to give you and tell you, and God speaks in and through His Word.

Even if it is nothing but 1 Peter 5:7: “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” Maybe He is trying to teach you how to cast that burden upon Him. I am sure that you remember the story of Esther and Mordecai: Mordecai saved the king’s life, yet no honor had been done for him. At the same time, Haman was seeking to have Mordecai hanged on a gallows that he had built.

What did God do? God providentially withheld sleep from Ahasuerus. He could not sleep, and so he commanded that the chronicles of the kings be brought before him. Perhaps he thought that reading something very boring might help him go to sleep. What could be more boring than reading what had been done by yourself and by former kings? But as the man read to the king, he came to the account of how Mordecai had saved the king's life by reporting the individuals who were trying to kill him.

The book of Esther, chapter 6, verses 1 through 3, says: "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him."

You remember how the king heard someone in the outer court. "Who is that?" It was Haman. The king asked him, "What would you do for the man that the king delights to honor?" Haman thought, "Who would he like to honor more than me?"

And so he says, "Let the royal apparel be put upon him. Let him ride on the king's mule and let a nobleman lead him and say, 'This is

to be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.'" And Ahasuerus said, "You do it to Mordecai and don't let anything fail of what you just said." Of course, you know the rest of the story. But it all began with God providentially withholding sleep from Ahasuerus.

The same thing happened in the book of Daniel, first of all to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 2:1 says, "And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him." In other words, he couldn't sleep.

You remember Daniel was thrown in the lion's den. Now King Darius cannot sleep. What Darius did was basically stay awake all night praying and fasting for Daniel. Daniel 6:18 says, "Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him." Why? Because he knew Daniel had been thrown into the den of lions wrongly.

Now, sleep is our normal and natural state. Therefore, when we cannot sleep, we have to consider whether or not God is providentially withholding it from us. If He is providentially withholding it from us, there is something we need to learn.

Spiritual Dullness Likened to Sleep

Ephesians 4:26-27 says, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil." Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. So if you go to bed angry, which you should not do, God could withhold sleep from you until you correct the problem. This is what I'm trying to say: you need to listen when God providentially withholds sleep from you. He's telling you something.

Moreover, we should ask the Lord at such a time whether He is speaking to us. You remember how Hannah had brought young Samuel and left him in the temple. He heard a voice calling, “Samuel, Samuel.” He got up and ran to Eli, saying, “Here I am, what do you want?” Eli answered, “I didn’t call you, boy. Go back and go to bed.” Again the voice called, “Samuel, Samuel,” and Samuel ran to Eli and asked, “What is it you want?” Eli said, “I didn’t call you, son.”

Then he understood that the Lord was speaking to Samuel. He told him, "You go back and go to sleep; if He calls you a third time, you say, 'Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.'"

Sometimes God keeps us awake so He can speak to us through His Word. We need to get up and read our Bibles.

Consider another verse in Song of Solomon, chapter 5 and verse 2. Listen to what the bride says: "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Notice that she said, "I sleep, but my heart waketh."

Have you ever been asleep but able to hear everything going on around you? I have. Alice and I get tickled about it. Renee, our oldest granddaughter, used to travel with us. When she was about four years old, she went with us to Indiana and sat in the back seat, pretending to be asleep. We were talking with some friends and began talking about Renee. She sat there grinning, listening to us talk about her. Finally she said, "Y'all, I can hear in my sleep." Of course, she was not asleep at all.

Yet there are times when you can hear in your sleep, and times when you can talk in your sleep. Our twins could be called, spoken to, and carried on in conversation with while still asleep; they would answer and remain asleep. Therefore, when God withholds our sleep, or when we are sleeping but really awake, we need to pay attention. We need to listen to the voice of God, because God is speaking to our subconscious and teaching us to listen, read His Word, and hear Him.

Now here is a third truth about sleep. I told you there were some bad things about sleep. The first of these, my third point, is that spiritual dullness and apathy are likened unto sleep.

Each one of us understands what it is to be sleepy. You can be going to sleep or coming up out of sleep, and someone can ask you a question. You may give an answer, but you have no earthly idea what the answer is. You simply cannot think clearly. You are still groggy, dull, and unable to function properly.

Such spiritual dullness is condemned in the Scriptures. Psalm 76:5 says, “The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands.” He is talking about an army, about soldiers. God put such a sleep upon these soldiers that they could not find their hands. In other words, they simply could not function.

There have been times when I have lain on my arm in sleep, and my arm went to sleep. I have dreamed that I was trying to get my arm, but I could not get it; or that it was wrapped up in a cover and I could not get it out. Finally, I got wide enough to wake it. There it was, and then I had to shake my arm. The same thing has happened to you.

Why could those soldiers not function? Because of their sleep. There is not a person in this room who can go into a deep sleep and function while doing what he should be doing. You cannot do it. It is impossible.

So sleepiness is often likened to spiritual dullness and apathy. First Thessalonians 5:6-8 tells us, “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.” Notice the words, “Let us not sleep, as do others.”

He is not talking about staying awake twenty-four hours a day. He is talking about a sluggish, apathetic spirituality that is worthless. You do not want to sleep like that. You do not want to be spiritually dull. Our Lord said to His disciples, “And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” Why are you sleeping?

Now is not the time to sleep. “Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” In Romans 13:11, the Apostle Paul says, “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” It is time to awaken out of our sleep. Sleeping is likened to spiritual dullness, lethargy, or apathy.

Hebrews 5:11 gives a very clear illustration: “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.” “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Look at verse 10. He is talking about Jesus Christ: “...called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec, of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.” Paul said, “I'd like to carry you further into doctrine. I'd like to really explain to you the Melchizedek priesthood of Jesus Christ. I'd really like to explain to you how he was called of God an high priest. But he said, ‘You're dull of hearing. You're too sleepy. You're too droggy. You won't perceive. You won't understand. You won't comprehend.’”

Sleep and Laziness Connected

This part of sleep is condemned in Scripture. Sleep and laziness are connected, and God reveals that such a one who is sleepy and lazy will never progress physically, materially, or spiritually. Turn back to Proverbs chapter 6. We are talking about how sleepiness and grogginess refer to dullness of hearing the things of God. Proverbs 6:9 says, “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.” Note the question: “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?”

How can you lie in bed? How can you not do what you are supposed to do? Proverbs 19:15 says, “Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.” Slothfulness will cast you into a deep sleep, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger. Proverbs 20:13 says, “Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.”

Then, in Proverbs 24, beginning with verse 30, the wise man said, “I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man

void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man."

I never will forget, and I see it in many cities. It used to be mainly blacks, but whites are included now. I used to be able to take you by a certain place in Jessup, Georgia. I do not care what time of day or night it was; there were a bunch of men sitting around a barrel that had a fire in it. They would sit there all day, just talk and smoke cigarettes. All I am saying is that they sat there all day and all night and did nothing.

You couldn't hire them to work. They didn't want to work or have a job. And God says somebody like that is going to suffer hunger; poverty is going to come upon them. Am I sympathetic with them? Not at all. The same thing that is true physically is true spiritually as well. If we do not learn to be alert spiritually, we will suffer hunger. We will suffer in every area. If we desire truth, we must work for it. We must read, study, and apply God's Word.

We will never be scholars in the Bible if we are lazy, indolent, and sluggish. You know what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15? "Study to shew thyself approved unto God." What are the next two words? "A workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Note that word: a workman. Studying is hard work. God says that if you are going to amount to anything in His Word, you must be a workman. If you will not work at learning the Word of God, you will never learn it.

Danger of Sleeping in the Wrong Place

It is dangerous to go to sleep in the wrong place. Although sleep is normal and natural, and although it is given to us as a gift from God, it is dangerous to go to sleep in the wrong place.

In 1962, or perhaps 1961, my cousin and I took my car to Jacksonville Beach. We arrived about ten o'clock that night. We were not going to get a motel room; we were simply going to sleep in the

car. I parked on the beach because I wanted to be there first thing in the morning. We went to sleep, and about midnight a policeman came with a flashlight and bumped on my window. He woke me, and I rolled the window down. He said, "Son, do you like your car?" I said, "Well, yes, sir, I do." He said, "Well, if you like it, you need to move it because by in the morning, you're going to be sitting in three or four feet of salt water."

I said, "Thank you, sir," and moved that little car higher onto the cement instead of leaving it down on the beach. It was dangerous for us to go to sleep there, though we did not know it at the time. Many people have lain down and gone to sleep in dangerous places. Many homeless people are now being beaten, robbed, and murdered where they sleep.

Do I need to tell you this? Samson went to sleep in the wrong place. He laid his head down in Delilah's lap. He should never have been there in the first place. He should never have been with a Philistine, and he should never have been with a prostitute. Let me read it to you. Judges 16, verses 18 through 21:

"And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself."

“And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.”

Whenever we lie down and are comfortable in sin, whatever that sin is, we are sleeping in the wrong place. We have been bidden to awake from such a place and from such a sleep.

In Ephesians 5:14, the Word of God says, “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall

give thee light." Sinners are asleep as far as God is concerned. God commands sinners to awaken out of their slumber, for they are sleeping in a very dangerous place—sleeping lost and under the judgment and wrath of God. How can we speak to others about God's deliverance while we are sleeping in sin ourselves? In 1 Corinthians 15:34, the apostle said, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." Whether we wake or sleep, what should be foremost in our minds is the Word of God.

Closing Application and Prayer

We should think about it, study it, sleep on it, and meditate upon it. When we are awakened, we should be talking about it—how to apply our lives so that we may be in obedience to the Word of God.

Proverbs 6:20 says, "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Take God's Word and make sure that it is in your mind and in your heart. Hear it, read it, talk about it, and sleep upon it.

I would much rather dream about something holy, righteous, and godly than dream something unholy, ungodly, and unbiblical. We need to learn to pray for sleep and rest. But we also need to pray with this understanding, where God said in Psalm 127 verse 2, "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep."

We need to make sure that we have normal, natural, physical sleep and rest by asking God for it. But we also need to make sure that we do not have a spiritual, sluggish, lazy, and slothful attitude toward the Word of God and the things of God. Sleep may either be a blessing or a curse. If you go to sleep without the Lord Jesus Christ as your salvation, you are sleeping in a very dangerous place, wherever it is and however comfortable it may be. For Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is Lord and Savior.

Let's pray. Father, we ask that You would help us today, speak to our hearts, teach us, and help us, Lord, to sleep and rest in Thee. Yet help us not to be spiritually sluggish and spiritually sleepy. May we be awakened unto Thy righteousness and the truth of Thy Word. Help us, we pray. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

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