

GOD'S WAKE UP CALL

INTRODUCTION: I went to Army Basic Training in 1979—nearly 39 years ago! It is interesting how many things I still remember quite well from that summer. I didn't always understand **why** we did things at the time—but sometimes I later found out “what the method to the madness” was. I still have some unanswered questions, though.

If I had the chance to meet one of my Basic Training Drill Sgt's—and could only ask them one question—it would be this one: “What was the thought-process that went behind the decision to march us down to “the club” and let us drink beer?” Maybe it was because we were only a few days from graduating and they were rewarding us for a job well-done? Or maybe it was to see who would exercise self-control—and who wouldn't?

My second question—if I was given one—would have been this: “Were the results what you had expected?” I was NOT a teetotaler at that time—that decision came about a year later—but I'm pretty sure I did not drink anything that day. What sticks out in my mind is not what happened **at** the club, but what happened **afterward**. We sort of “marched” back to our barracks. I say “sort of” because it was an ugly display of what marching was supposed to look like. People were out-of-step, staggering, and I think a few people even fell down.

That was nothing, however, compared to what happened in the barracks that night during fire-guard. “Fire-guard” consisted of a one-hour shift where two people “patrolled” the inside of the barracks to wake everyone up in the event of a fire or some other kind of emergency. About 10 minutes before your shift ended, you would wake up the next two people on the list so they could get dressed and be ready to take your spot. I had fire-guard that night—and it was **not** a good night. At least one person got sick—I'll spare you the details—and wouldn't you know it was one of the guys that I had to wake up because he was to take my place! I could NOT get him to wake up so I had one of 3 choices:

- Wake up **everyone** trying to get this guy awake
- Go to the next person on the list and have them do the shift instead
- Do an extra shift myself

What did I do? I **don't** remember—except I do know that I did NOT wake everyone up! Please take your Bibles and **turn to** Romans 13 and follow along as I read verse 11 to 14. It is quite likely that Paul had a very similar picture to what I described in mind when he wrote these words. MacArthur writes: “The text comes like the blast of a bugle...that awakens these slumbering drunken soldiers out of their sin and sleep and calls them to throw off the deeds and the garments of the night and clothe themselves in that which is necessary for battle.”

1. **Those who are called to wake up**

In the word-picture just given, the ones who are called to awake out of sleep are soldiers. Paul is not talking to Roman soldiers; however, he is most certainly talking to **believers**. How do we know Paul was referring to believers?

A. Because salvation was in their future!

Notice the middle part of vs 11—“for now is our **salvation** nearer than when we believed...” A good rule of thumb when we see the word “salvation” in the Bible is to first ask ourselves “salvation from **what**?” Most of the time it is fairly easy to tell from the context if *salvation* is referring to being saved from some physical, bodily harm or if it is being used in the spiritual sense of the word. Since there is no physical danger in the immediate context, we know Paul is speaking spiritually. The second question we should get in the habit of asking ourselves when we read the word “salvation,” is what “aspect” of salvation is being referred to? Justification—the salvation from the **penalty** of our sins when we trust Jesus Christ as our Savior—is immediate and complete and happens the moment we believe. Salvation from the **power** of sin—also called sanctification—is ongoing. It begins the moment we become a child of God—and ends when we are saved

from the **presence** of sin—our glorification. That, of course, does not occur until we meet Jesus by dying and going to Him—or us being raptured when He comes to get us!

The salvation Paul refers to here is not in the past—so it is not freedom from the penalty of sin—nor is it present—freedom from the power of sin. It refers to that future day when we shall be free from the presence of sin and “will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (I John 3:2).

B. Because they had believed

We also know Paul was talking to believers because they had believed! Notice again the last part of verse 11 “for now is our salvation nearer than *when we believed*.” Salvation—regardless of what “aspect”—has to do with believing on Jesus Christ as our Savior and trusting that His shed blood is the only basis whereby we can be forgiven. There had been a point in time where they went from **not** believing to believing—what Jesus calls passing from death unto live. Notice John 5:24....

John 5:24 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

The Romans Paul was writing to were believers—but were sleeping and needed to be awakened.

C. Because Paul includes himself

--v 11 “for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed”

--v 12 “let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”

--v 13 “let us walk honestly....”

In these “let us” phrases, Paul uses here what is called a hortatory subjunctive. What it is called is not that important; what **is** important is that he is urging them to unite *with him* in a decision he had already made—to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light and walking honestly.

Who is given the call to wake up? Believers. Secondly, let’s notice

2. The call itself

Vs 11 “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep”

A. The urgency of the call

My guess is that most—if not all—of us have **overslept** at one time or another. Maybe you forgot to set the alarm or the power went off or you just didn’t hear it. Depending on how long you overslept—and why it was that you had to be awake at a certain time—the consequences of oversleeping can be pretty serious. Prior to moving here, my wife often had to be to work at 5:30 in the morning. We set the alarm at 4 to leave the house at 5. On occasion we would have alarm issues—or hearing issues—and wake up late. The first thought that seems to come to mind when you realize you overslept is what? **PANIC**

What are the consequences of failing to wake up? Some people have lost jobs—or missed flights—or missed appointments—or had a surgery unnecessarily delayed because they failed to wake up. Although we aren’t told in this passage what the consequences would be for not “waking up,” it is impossible to miss the urgency—“now it is high time!” In the Greek it means “the hour;” now is the hour—wake up!

B. The necessity of the call

Not only was the call urgent; it was also necessary. There would be no call for them to “awake out of sleep” if they weren’t asleep! Most of the time when Paul uses the word “sleep” in reference to believers, he is actually referring to their **death**.

I Corinthians 15:51-52 “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all **sleep**, but we shall all be changed,
⁵²In 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.”

I Thessalonians 4:13-15 “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are **asleep**, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which **sleep** in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are **asleep**.”

Jesus did the same thing when he spoke of Lazarus. **John 11:11, 13-14** “...Our friend Lazarus **sleepeth**; but I go, that I may awake him out of **sleep**. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in **sleep**. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.”

It is noteworthy that Paul uses a different Greek word here than he usually does. Instead of the word “koi-may-sis,” he uses the word “hupnos”—the word from which we derive our English word “hypnosis.” Paul is **not** saying: “Hey dead believers, it is time for you to get out of your grave;” but he is saying, “Hey sleeping believers, it is time to wake up and get busy doing what God wants us to do!”

Last week we talked about our mission and the fact that each of us has one from God. We each have a role and God expects us to seek His will in that role. We are not to be bystanders watching everyone else go to battle—we need to stop sleeping, go to our Commander for orders, then get serious about obeying those orders!

3. The compulsion to wake up

Why is the call urgent—and necessary? Why is it important for us to wake up? I see three reasons:

A. Reason #1—The close of our day

Notice again verse 11—a lot in this verse, isn’t there—“And that, *knowing the time....*for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Our salvation—the day we meet Jesus and are glorified—is nearer than when we first believed. On one hand, that is kind of a “dah” statement—**of course** we are one day closer to heaven **today** than we were yesterday. And yet—do we really **live** like our days are closing—and could end at any moment?

While preparing for this message, I read an interesting illustration that I put in the bulletin. Maybe you’ve read it already; if not here it is in brief. Psalm 90:12 challenges us to “number our days, that we may apply our heart unto wisdom.” Psalm 90 also reminds us that a “normal” life span is 70 to 80 years. So a man calculated how many days he had left—presumably to age 80—and placed one marble for each remaining day in a jar. At the end of each day he would take a marble from his “remaining” days and place it in a different jar. Imagine the impact that would have on your life to be visually reminded—every day—that you had one less day to live—and were one day closer to eternity. Oh that we may develop the habit of numbering our days!

B. Reason #2—The closeness of God’s day

Verse 12—“The night is far spent, the day is at hand...” What day is at hand? Any day? The next day? Or a certain day? I’m not going to be dogmatic, but it most certainly seems to be a reference to the **day of the Lord**, the beginning of the end of what we know of “normalcy” here on earth. The “day of the Lord” is a series of events that starts with the rapture of the church, then 7 years of tribulation on earth, the return of Christ to reign 1000 years on earth, the Great White Throne Judgment, the new heavens and the new earth, and then eternal state. If that day was close when God had Paul write this 2000 years ago, how much closer is it now? When we take even a casual look at the day and age in which we live and “observe the signs of the times,” it is hard not to think: “Yep—Jesus is going to come back at any moment!”

i. There are natural disasters

--There are earthquakes in divers places (Mt 24:7)

--One of the descriptions of the day of the Lord is “clouds and thick darkness” (Joel 2). Is

that a reference to volcanoes? Maybe....

- ii. There is moral decay
 - There are wars and rumors of wars (Mt 24:6)
 - Evil men and seducers have waxen worse and worse (II Tim 3:13)
 - God hates the shedding of innocent blood (Prov 6:17)—yet 3000 babies per day are murdered in the United States
 - we have “men with men working that which is unseemly” (Rom 1:27)
- iii. There is spiritual decline
 - “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Mt 24:12)
 - Men are “lovers of their own selves” (II Tim 3:2) and “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (II Tim 3:4)
- iv. There are technological advances
 - We have chips that can be imbedded into animals—and a company in WI that required it of their employees
 - It seems we are heading in the direction of a cashless society
 - Instantaneous, world-wide broadcasting has been available for quite some time

These are all interesting things to observe, but the reality is that there is only **one** prerequisite for the coming of the Lord. What is it? The trumpet! **That** is the next event and could occur at any moment.

Why do we need to wake up and get busy for God?

First, because our day is closing

Second, because God’s day is coming

Third, because duty is calling

C. Reason #3—The call of duty

Verse 8 “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.”

Last part of verse 9 “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Verse 10 “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

What is the call to duty? To love our neighbor! Who is our neighbor? Jesus was asked that very question and answered it with the parable of the Good Samaritan. The message of the parable is that a neighbor is someone who is **in need**—regardless of how close they live to you.

The challenge with many of the needy is that they don’t **know** they are needy—they don’t know they have been blinded by Satan and are lost and are one heart-beat from hell! Wake up, fellow Christian—needy neighbors are dying and slipping out into eternity!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

1. The clock is ticking, our days are dwindling, and people are dying. Are we awake and alert and involved in the battle of rescuing souls from the power of darkness—or are we resting in bed; ignoring the fact that we have a duty to do?

2. Are you yourself saved? Have you believed on Jesus as **your** Savior? Is there a time when you went from not believing to believing—and passed from having eternal separation hanging over your head to having eternal life? If not, that is God’s wake up call to you. Are you listening? Will you obey?