

1 Thessalonians 5:6-7 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

1Thessalonians 5:6 [so then](#) let us not [sleep](#) as [others](#) do, but let us be [alert](#) and [sober](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [ara oun me katheudomen](#) (1PPAS) [os oi loipoi, alla gregoromen](#) (1PPAS) [kai nephomen.](#) (3PPAI)

Amplified: Accordingly then, let us not sleep, as the rest do, but let us keep wide awake (alert, watchful, cautious, and on our guard) and let us be sober (calm, collected, and circumspect). ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be sober. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Night is the time for sleep and the time when men get drunk, ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: For those who are sleeping, sleep in the night time, and those who are intoxicated, are intoxicated at night. ([Eerdmans](#))

Young's Literal: for those sleeping, by night do sleep, and those making themselves drunk, by night are drunken,

1 Thessalonians Overview				
Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
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Exemplary Hope of Young Converts	Motivating Hope of Faithful Servants	Purifying Hope of Tried Believers	Comforting Hope of Bereaved Saints	Invigorating Hope of Diligent Christians

Written from Corinth
Approximately 51AD

Modified from the excellent book [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#)

SO THEN LET US NOT SLEEP AS OTHERS DO: ara oun me katheudomen (1PPAS)

os oi loipoi: (Proverbs 19:15; Isaiah 56:10; Jonah 1:6; Matthew 13:25; 25:5; Mark 14:37; Luke 22:46; Romans 13:11, 12, 13, 14; 1Corinthians 15:34; Ephesians 5:14)

Let us - Paul associated himself with his readers in this exhortatory section (cp , Ro 13:12, 13; Gal 5:25, 26)

Paul gave a similar admonitory charge to the saints in Rome to not fall asleep spiritually declaring...

And this do (love your neighbor), knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand (cp Ep 5:16-note; Col 4:5-note). Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. (Ro 13:11-note, Ro 13:12-note, Ro 13:13, 14-note)

So then - That is, because of the marked difference in the basic nature of "day people" (believers) and "night people" (unbelievers), Paul presents a description of the conduct expected from a child of the light (Col 1:13-note, Acts 26:18). One's true nature is inseparable from one's conduct (2Cor 13:5). Conduct (cp "fruit") always reflects and reveals one's true nature (cp Mt 7:17, 18-note [in context of false prophets]; Mt 3:8, Lk 3:8, 8:14, 15, Ac 26:20, 2Pe 1:10-note), either a child of God (Jn 1:12, 13, Ro 8:16, 17-note, Ep 5:1-note, Php 2:15-note, 1Jn 3:1, 2) or a child of the Devil (1Jn 3:7, 8, 9, 10). **McNeile** wrote that "The fruit is not the change of heart, but the acts which result from it".

Sleep ([2518](#)) (**katheudo** from **katá** = an intensifies meaning + **heúdo** = to sleep) is used literally meaning to sleep, to fall asleep or to be fast asleep. Metaphorically **katheudo** can mean to sleep the sleep of death. Metaphorically it can also mean (as used here) to be spiritually asleep with the result that one becomes secure and unconcerned in sin as well as indolent and careless in the performance of the call on their life and the work God has prepared for them to accomplish (cp Ep 2:10-note)

Katheudo - 22x in 20v in the **NAS** - Matt. 8:24; 9:24; 13:25; 25:5; 26:40, 43, 45; Mk. 4:27, 38; 5:39; 13:36; 14:37, 40, 41; Lk. 8:52; 22:46; Ep 5:14; 1Th 5:6, 7, 10 and is rendered in the **NAS** as asleep(8), do sleeping(1), goes to bed(1), sleep(3), sleeper(1), sleeping(8).

Others (loipoy) the rest, in context referring to those in Adam (1Co 15:22) whose only option is spiritual somnolence because they are spiritually dead in their trespasses and

sins (Ep 2:1-note). Paul makes a sharp distinction between believers and believers. And he does so to motivate believers to not become complacent, lured and lulled by the subtle snares of this passing world and its lusts (1Jn 2:17).

BUT LET US BE ALERT AND SOBER: alla gregoromen (1PPAS) kai nephomen. (3PPAI): (Matthew 24:42; 25:13; 26:38,40,41; Mark 13:34,35,37; 14:38; Luke 12:37,39; Luke 21:36; 22:46; Acts 20:31; 1Corinthians 16:13; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2; 2Timothy 4:5; 1Peter 4:7; Revelation 3:2; 16:15) (1Th 5:8; Philippians 4:5; 1Timothy 2:9,15; 3:2,11; Titus 2:6,12; 1Peter 1:13; 5:8)

But - This contrast word marks a change in direction (or at least the readers are exhorted to change directions). Too many saints live like they are "earth bound" rather than bound for heaven (Php 3:20, 21-note, Col 3:1-note, Col 3:2-note). Beloved, these things ought not to be so. Let us pay careful attention to Paul's words addressed to those who live in **the last days** (cp 2Ti 3:1-note, He 1:2-note, Ac 2:17 -- in effect, all of us reading Paul's letter).

Let us be alert ([1127](#)) (**gregoreuo** [**word study**] from **egeiro** = to arise, arouse, rouse from sleep, waken) means to be watchful or to refrain from physical sleep. Later **gregoreuo** came to be used in the moral and religious sphere and in this context was used to call for one to **be on the alert** (quick to perceive and act) in a **constant state of readiness** (being on the lookout especially for danger or opportunity) and **vigilant** (alertly watchful especially to avoid danger this word suggesting intense, unremitting, wary watchfulness; keenly alert to or heedful of trouble or danger as others are sleeping or unsuspecting).

Gregoreuo conveys the idea of a sleeping man rousing himself, so that he is mentally alert and in a state of mind opposite to that which characterizes one's mind while in sleep.

The **present tense** calls for saints to be in a continual state of alertness in light of the imminent return of our Lord (See Table comparing Rapture vs Second Coming). They are to continually take heed lest through remissness and indolence destructive calamity should suddenly overtake them. Don't misunderstand. Paul states that they are not destined for wrath which would include the Day of the Lord, but his point is that they should now live like that.

Gregoreuo - 22x in 22v in the **NAS** - Matt. 24:42, 43; 25:13; 26:38, 40, 41; Mk. 13:34, 35, 37; 14:34, 37, 38; Lk. 12:37; Acts 20:31; 1Co. 16:13; Col 4:2; 1Th 5:6, 10; 1Pe 5:8; Re 3:2, 3; 16:15

The **NAS** renders **gregoreuo** as alert(10), awake(1), keep watch(4), keep watching(2), keeping alert(1), stay on the alert(1), stays awake(1), wake up(2).

Secular Greek used **gregoreuo** to describe people carefully crossing a river while stepping on slippery stones. If they did not pay strict attention to their steps, they would end up in the water. So the idea of vigilance is to stay alert and cautious.

Most of the NT uses are in reference to the Christians' being spiritually awake and alert, as opposed to being spiritually indifferent and listless or **asleep**.

Most of the NT uses of **gregoreuo** are in the latter part of Gospels in the context of Jesus' imminent crucifixion and departure and the exhortation to His disciples **to be on the alert** for His imminent future return.

Thus our **Lord** declared...

Therefore **be on the alert** (gregoreuo - present imperative), for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43 But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would **have been on the alert** (gregoreuo) and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. (Mt 24:42,43)

Jesus concluded the parable of the 10 virgins with the warning

Be on the alert (gregoreuo - present imperative) then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. (Mt 25:13)

Jesus used **gregoreuo** in His exhortation to the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane in His hour of greatest attack by the Devil gives good advice for saints of all ages...

My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and **keep watch** (gregoreuo) with Me." (Mt 26:38)... And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not **keep watch** (gregoreuo) with Me for one hour?" (Mt 26:40) and finally warning them to

Keep watching (gregoreuo - present imperative = continuously = make this your lifestyle) and **praying** (present imperative), that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Mt 26:41)

Gregoreuo is used three times in Mark 13 (this should get our attention!) which closes with an exhortation to watchfulness and prayer in view of the Lord's Return. Jesus' addressing His disciples, Peter and James and John and Andrew, on the Mount of Olives tells them a parable of the doorkeeper, declaring that

It is like a man, away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to **stay on the alert** (gregoreuo). Therefore, **be on the alert** (gregoreuo - present imperative)-- for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrowing, or in the morning-- lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all, '**Be on the alert** (gregoreuo - present imperative)!' (Mk 13:34, 35, 36, 37)

Comment: Marvin Vincent comments on the significance of Jesus' using the illustration of an awake, alert doorkeeper in this parable writing that

In the temple, during the night, the captain of the temple made his rounds, and the guards had to rise at his approach and salute him in a particular manner. Any guard (doorkeeper) found asleep on duty was beaten, or his garments were set on fire. Compare [Revelation 16:15](#): "Blessed is he that watched and keepeth his garments." The preparations for the morning service required all to be early astir. The superintending priest might knock at the door at any moment. The Rabbis use almost the very words in which Scripture describes the unexpected coming of the Master. "Sometimes he came at the cockcrowing, sometimes a little earlier, sometimes a little later. He came and knocked and they opened to him" -- Edersheim, The Temple.

Luke records a similar admonition from **Jesus** Who declared...

Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find **on the alert** (gregoreuo - present tense) when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. 38 Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. And be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 40 "You too, **be** (present imperative) ready (prepared); for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect." (Luke 12:37, 38, 39, 40)

In Paul's last meeting with the Ephesian elders he warned them of the inherent and certain dangers...

Therefore **be on the alert** (gregoreuo - present imperative), remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. (Acts 20:31)

In his final exhortation in the first letter to the Corinthians Paul commanded them to...

Be on the alert (gregoreuo), **stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong**. (1Corinthians 16:13) (**Note**: all 4 verbs call for a continual action on the believer's part - present imperative)

In the final NT use of gregoreuo Jesus gives one final encouraging admonition declaring...

Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one **who stays awake** (gregoreuo) and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame. (Re 16:15-[note](#))

Comment: Stay alert beloved so that you might not be ashamed when He comes.

Do most saints really believe what Jesus so clearly declared, not just while on earth but after His resurrection? Saints are not to be looking for the Day of the Lord (for the

Antichrist) but for the Lord of the Day (for Christ), and His sudden swooping down to sweep us (as His Bride) off of our feet, literally and figuratively, taking us home to enjoy the Marriage Supper of the Lamb! Hallelujah! Oh, beloved, in light of such a blessed, sure, glorious hope, should we not all live as if every day were our last!

As **Augustine** wisely stated

The last day is a secret, that every day may be watched (**Comment:** That we may be looking for Him every day and live accordingly).

Wiersbe writes that believers are to...

Live expectantly. This does not mean putting on a white sheet and sitting atop a mountain. That is the very attitude God condemned (Acts 1:10,11). But it does mean living in the light of His return, realizing that our works will be judged and that our opportunities for service on earth will end. It means to live "with eternity's values in view." Believers who live in the expectation of the Lord's return will certainly enjoy a better life than Christians who compromise with the world. At the end of each chapter in this letter, Paul pointed out the practical results of living expectantly. Take time now to review those verses and to examine your heart. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor or Logos](#))

Thus believers are to be like soldiers "in active service" (2Ti 2:4- note), like shepherds watching over their "spiritual" flock (Acts 20:28, 31) constantly vigilant and watchful (Mt 24:42). How does one stay "watchful"? (Col 4:2-note). Why do we need to "keep awake"? (1Pe 5:8-note; Acts 20:31 [see Acts 20:30], Mt 25:13 26:41) What's the "reward" for maintaining vigilance until He returns? (Lk 12:37,39)

Staying alert involves the duty of vigilance catalyzed by frequent fellowship and communion (abiding) with the Father in His Word, being taught of His Spirit Who even stimulates us to prayer, as we all the while are mindful of the day or hour when the Son of man shall arrive.

Sober ([3525](#))(**nepho** cp **nephaleos** = "wineless," "unmixed with wine") in the literal or physical sense was used to refer to either complete abstinence or in a relative sense to refer to temperance (drinking but not to the point of intoxication). The idea is freedom from the influence of intoxicants.

In the NT **nepho** is used only figuratively meaning to be free from every form of mental and spiritual "intoxication" or as Vine says "freedom from credulity, and from excitability" The idea is to be calm and collected in spirit, circumspect, self-controlled (as part of the fruit of walking in the Spirit - Ga 5:16-note, Ga 5:23- note), well-balanced, clear headed. Be selflessly self-possessed (perhaps a more accurate description would be "Spirit" possessed, Ep 5:18-note) under all circumstances. It speaks of exercising self-restraint (again enabled by the Spirit) and being free from excess, from evil passion, from rashness, etc.

Vine comments that...

As “watch” denotes alertness, so “sober” denotes stability; as the former is in contrast to the lethargy of sleep, so the latter is in contrast to the excitement of drunkenness, cp. Ephesians 5:18... The corresponding adjective, nephaios, is used to describe one of the qualities that should mark bishops (“bishop” is derived from the Greek word episkopos, lit., “overseer”), 1Ti 3:2, and the wives of such as take the lead among the saints, 1Ti 3:11; they are to be neither credulous nor excitable. Aged men are exhorted in a similar sense, Titus 2:2; it is to be observed that the Christian sobriety of mature years is the result of self-control and the study of the Scriptures in youth. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson or Logos](#))

The **present tense** calls for this to be the saint's continual mindset. See A W Pink's discussion below on "[Sleepy Saints!](#)"!

Nepho is the antithesis of mental "fuzziness". The Greek culture highly valued **sober** judgment in both individual and public life.

Our English counterpart is to be levelheaded, well-balanced, and in control of one's faculties. By extension it includes the ideas of being stable, unwavering, steadfast.

To be sober-minded means to live with your eyes open and with a calm, steady state of mind that evaluates things correctly, so that it is not thrown off balance.

Soberness is an attitude of self-discipline that avoids the extremes of the 'reckless irresponsibility of self indulgence on the one hand, and of religious ecstasy on the other.'

Nepho conveys the idea of freedom from excitability (a contrast to the excitement of drunkenness) and thus means to be calm and collected in spirit, **temperate** (marked by moderation, keeping within limits, not extreme or excessive), not given to excessive indulgence in drink or any other activity, **dispassionate** (not influenced by strong feeling; especially not affected by personal or emotional involvement), **circumspect** (careful to consider all circumstances and possible consequences, prudently watchful and discreet in the face of danger or risk), with **equanimity** (evenness of mind especially under stress and suggests a habit of mind that is only rarely disturbed under great strain), **cool** (marked by steady dispassionate calmness and self-control) and unimpassioned.

William Hendricksen adds that

The **sober** person lives deeply. His pleasures are not primarily those of the senses, like the pleasures of the drunkard for instance, but those of the soul. He is by no means a Stoic. On the contrary, with a full measure of joyful anticipation he looks forward to the return of the Lord (1Pe 1:13, 14-note). But he does not run away from his task! Note how both here and also in 1 Peter 5:8-note the two verbs to be watchful and

to be sober are used as synonyms. ([Hendricksen, W. New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981](#)).

Here are the 6 uses of **nepho** in Scripture (none in Lxx) (note some are discussed in more detail below)...

1 Thessalonians 5:6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and **sober**... **5:8** 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.

2 Timothy 4:5 (note) But you, **be sober** (present imperative) in all things, **endure** (aorist imperative) hardship, **do** (aorist imperative) the work of an evangelist, **fulfill** (aorist imperative) your ministry.

1 Peter 1:13 (note) Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep **sober** in spirit, **fix your hope** (aorist imperative) completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 4:7 (note) The end of all things is at hand; therefore, **be of sound judgment** (aorist imperative) and **sober spirit** (aorist imperative) or the purpose of prayer.

1 Peter 5:8 (note) **Be of sober spirit**, (aorist imperative) **be on the alert** (aorist imperative). Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Stay sober even in regard to "**Christian things**" for it is easy to be carried away and become intoxicated by the newest craze or technique, whether it's casting out demons, preaching pop psychology with a token sprinkling of the Name "Jesus" and/or Scripture (often taken out of context which leaves the Scripture dangerously wide open to misinterpretation and the even more tragic result of misapplication!), subtly drifting toward non-Biblical practices of "new age like" mysticism in prayer (such as visualizing Jesus coming to you, etc), removing the Cross from behind the stage (which often no longer has a pulpit for preaching the Gospel), no longer preaching a Gospel that calls sinners to repent and believe and confess (just close your eyes and hold up your hands and no one will see if you "confess" Christ as Lord and Savior!), no longer encouraging the saints to bring their "big, heavy" Bibles to worship service, removing the hymns (especially those that mention the "blood", the precious blood as of a lamb, the foundational new covenant in His blood!) from the worship service (or singing a token hymn to keep the old folks happy) or singing secular songs in an attempt to "make the Gospel" modern and relevant to the world. Remember that the Church of Jesus Christ is called to be purifying her garments, coming out from the world, not becoming like the world (Re 19:7, 8-see notes [Re 19:7](#); [8](#)). And when she does seek to be conformed to the image of her Bridegroom (Whom the world hated and still hates) she will be less like the world, and paradoxically will have the most impact on the world! In many modern churches I fear there is a drift toward the world and not toward heaven. Let us be sober. Not judgmental.

Not legalistic. But Biblically sound and sober doing all things for the glory of God our Father.

John MacArthur has an interesting comment observing that..

Night people can only be night people. They are not human chameleons who can suddenly become day people. Furthermore night people cannot do the deeds of the day people. But tragically the reverse prescription can exist so that day people can do the deeds of the night! We can reach back to old patterns of behavior, the dirty paths we used to walk on, but when we do we are the most miserable of people because we have not only our innate conscience screaming at us, but even more impacting, we have the still small voice of the Spirit reminding us of our wayward ways. Obviously day people because of Romans 6 (eg, Ro 6:4-note) which teaches that **Sin** is no longer our master (Ro 6:11-note; Ro 6:12,13-note), do not have to carry out night deeds. Certainly to do so is not consistent with our new nature, identity and sphere of life in Christ (Col 3:3-note). And to do so as the habit of one's life without ever having experienced freedom brings into question the validity of one's new birth (Eph 5:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 -see **notes** Eph 5:1-2; 3-4; 5-6). We are day people living in the light, but we can do the deeds of darkness but when we do such deeds, we do them in broad light and with full understanding of God's righteous anger against sin (regardless of who commits it). Paul is emphasizing that there is no place for night life and the deeds of darkness among believers who are day people. Paul wants the believer's behavior to be consistent with his or her new nature. He wants the believer's behavior to be distinctive so that others know we are of the day. And because we know we are of the day, we do not fear the Day of the Lord, nor do we fear God's wrath, His judgment or the ultimate fate of night people -- eternal separation away from the presence of the Lord.

Spurgeon sums up this verse noting that...

Watchfulness and sobriety are appropriate duties for the day. To be ever serving our Lord with constancy, and to keep ourselves from the fascinations of the world which make men's minds drunk — may these two things be our daily care.

Dr John Walvoord writes that...

In 1Thes 5:5 the doctrinal section is brought to its close. 1Th 5:1, 2, 3, 4, 5 have revealed that the Day of the Lord will come suddenly as a destruction upon the wicked, but we as Christians will have no part in it because we do not belong to that period of time. In 1Th 5:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 Paul makes the application. All true prophetic teaching has an application. The study of prophecy is not just for prophecy's sake. God has taught us concerning future things because He wants us to be informed and, being informed, to be better Christians. One of the reasons for presenting the doctrine of the imminent

return of Christ is that it is an impelling motive to be living for Him every day. There is no better reason for working for Christ, apart from real love for Him, than the motive that we may see Him today. It makes a tremendous difference whether Christ is coming now or whether our prospect is that we will go through the tribulation and our only hope of seeing Him without dying would be to go through that awful time of trouble. The imminency of the Lord's return is a precious truth.

On the basis of this hope an exhortation is given, based upon the imminency of the Lord's return: "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." The word sober in the original means exactly what is meant by it in English. It is the word for not being intoxicated. We are so prone to be intoxicated, not necessarily by liquor but by the stimulants of the world — its glamour, pleasures, and appearance. Paul's message to these Thessalonian Christians reveals also that we should be watching for the coming of the Lord. If we realize the solemnity of the event for us and for those who will be left behind, how earnestly it should make us watch and be sober! How we should be diligent in our Christian life and profession because of the imminent coming of Christ!

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On the night of April 8, 1871, evangelist D. L. Moody preached to his largest Chicago audience ever on the topic, ""What then shall I do with Jesus?"" At the end of his sermon, Moody urged everyone present to return in one week with a response--to follow Jesus Christ or not. But as the audience left the meeting hall, fire bells were ringing throughout the city. The Great Chicago Fire had begun, the hall was destroyed, and the following week there was no meeting.

For the rest of his life, Moody regretted not having given an invitation to receive Christ that very night. Some of the people in his audience died in the Fire, and that night may have been their last chance. Chicago and Moody were caught off guard by the fire. Christ's Second Coming will also be unexpected, but Scripture is full of warnings for us to be watchful and to live holy lives (see 1Ti 4:7).

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Your Last Day - What if you were told this morning that today was to be your last day on earth? How would you spend its fleeting hours? Whom would you insist on seeing? Would your behavior differ radically from what it usually is?

Someone has wisely said, "You should treat every day as if it's your last one, because one of these days you're going to be right."

There's no getting around it. Whether our earthly life ends by accident, illness, the ravages of age, or our Lord's return, one of these days will be our last. That's why we should guard so carefully the things we do and the words we say.

We ought to be tying up the loose ends of long-neglected matters by expressing our love and gratitude to others, by seeking reconciliation with an alienated friend, or by sharing the gospel with a neighbor.

Perhaps you've even been putting off accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior until some more convenient day. But that day may never come. Since your last day on earth can be so unexpected, heed Paul's inspired words: "Now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

Are you living each day as if it were your last?-- Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Believe in Christ, redeem the time,
Prepare without delay;
That death is certain should affect
The way you live today.-- Hess

What would you change if this day were your last?

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[Our Daily Bread: A Daily Devotional](#) has an excellent illustration of the believer living alert and sober... The ancient sport of falconry used trained hawks or falcons in the pursuit of wild game. When the "educated predator" was allowed to fly, however, it often rose too high for human eyes to see it. So a hunter often carried a small caged bird called a **shrike**. By watching the antics of the little bird, the man could always tell where his hawk was, for the shrike instinctively feared the predator and cocked its head to keep it in view.

The Christian desperately needs the alert perception of the shrike when it comes to detecting his spiritual enemy... We're to be always on the alert. It would be nice if God had giant sirens to warn us of an attack by the devil. But the Lord doesn't operate that way. Instead, we must read the Bible regularly, meditate on its truths, maintain a prayerful attitude throughout the day, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Only then will we be sensitive to an imminent onslaught of the evil one, and be armed by grace to meet it.

Is your spiritual "shrike system" working well? --(M R De Haan II)

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OUR LORD'S RETURN - "'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus?"

--Revelation 22:20

Nearly 2,000 years ago Jesus said, "I am coming quickly." Since then, some have wrongly tried to predict when He will return. Others have scoffed. Was Jesus wrong? Did something happen that He didn't foresee?

Of course not! We view time from the perspective of our own brief life span. But to the eternal God, "One day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8).

Jesus told His disciples that God had not given them specific information about "times or seasons" (Acts 1:7). He wanted them -- as He wants us -- to live in an attitude of

expectation. Paul echoed this when he spoke of Christ's return as "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13).

But how do we live expectantly? Jesus instructed the disciples to be witnesses to all the world (Acts 1:8). Paul said, "Watch and be sober" (1Th 5:6) and love other believers (1Th 5:12, 13, 14, 15). John urged us to walk in close fellowship with Jesus (1Jn. 2:28, 3:1, 2, 3) and to purify ourselves so that we will "not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1Jn 2:28).

The Lord's any-moment return is no cause for date-setting but for watchful expectation. Let's serve Him in every aspect of our lives, and one day we'll hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Mt. 25:21).-- Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Blessed are those whom the Lord finds watching,
In His glory they shall share;
If He shall come at the dawn or midnight,
Will He find us watching there?-- Crosby

A watching Christian will be a working Christian

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J C Philpot (1Th 5:6) - Here sobriety is opposed to sleepiness, and is connected with walking in the light and in the day; just as sleepiness and its frequent cause, drunkenness, are connected with darkness and night. One of the greatest curses God can send on a people and its rulers, its prophets and seers, is a spirit of deep sleep, as the prophet speaks--"For the Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes; the prophets and your rulers, the seers has he covered." But to be sober is to be awaked out of this sleep, and, as a consequence, to walk not only wakefully but watchfully. It implies, therefore, that careful, circumspect walking--that daily living, moving, speaking, and acting in the fear of God, whereby alone we can be kept from the snares spread for our feet at every step of the way. How many have fallen into outward evil and open disgrace from lack of walking watchfully and circumspectly, and taking heed to their steps. Instead of watching the first movements of sin and against, as the Lord speaks, "the entering into temptation," they rather dally with it until they are drawn away and enticed of their own lust which, as unchecked, goes on to conceive and bring forth sin, which, when it is finished or carried out and accomplished in positive action, brings forth death.

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C H Spurgeon (1Th 5:6) - There are many ways of promoting Christian wakefulness. Among the rest, let me strongly advise Christians to converse together concerning the ways of the Lord. Christian and Hopeful, as they journeyed towards the Celestial City, said to themselves, "To prevent drowsiness in this place, let us fall into good discourse. " Christian enquired, "Brother, where shall we begin?" And Hopeful answered, "Where God began with us. " Then Christian sang this song-

"When saints do sleepy grow, let them come hither,
And hear how these two pilgrims talk together;
Yea, let them learn of them, in any wise,
Thus to keep open their drowsy slumb'ring eyes.
Saints' fellowship, if it be managed well,
Keeps them awake, and that in spite of hell."

Christians who isolate themselves and walk alone, are very liable to grow drowsy. Hold Christian company, and you will be kept wakeful by it, and refreshed and encouraged to make quicker progress in the road to heaven. But as you thus take "sweet counsel" with others in the ways of God, take care that the theme of your converse is the Lord Jesus. Let the eye of faith be constantly looking unto him; let your heart be full of him; let your lips speak of his worth. Friend, live near to the cross, and thou wilt not sleep. Labour to impress thyself with a deep sense of the value of the place to which thou art going. If thou rememberest that thou art going to heaven, thou wilt not sleep on the road. If thou thinkest that hell is behind thee, and the devil pursuing thee, thou wilt not loiter. Would the manslayer sleep with the avenger of blood behind him, and the city of refuge before him? Christian, wilt thou sleep whilst the pearly gates are open—the songs of angels waiting for thee to join them—a crown of gold ready for thy brow? Ah! no; in holy fellowship continue to watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. (Morning and Evening)

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Colonist Victory - During the Revolutionary War, a loyalist spy appeared at the headquarters of Hessian commander Colonel Johann Rall, carrying an urgent message. General George Washington and his Continental army had secretly crossed the Delaware River that morning and were advancing on Trenton, New Jersey where the Hessians were encamped. The spy was denied an audience with the commander and instead wrote his message on a piece of paper. A porter took the note to the Hessian colonel, but because Rall was involved in a poker game he stuffed the unread note into his pocket.

When the guards at the Hessian camp began firing their muskets in a futile attempt to stop Washington's army, Rall was still playing cards. Without time to organize, the Hessian army was captured. The battle occurred the day after Christmas, 1776, giving the colonists a late present—their first major victory of the war. (Today in the Word, MBI, October, 1991, p. 21)

1Thessalonians 5:7 For **those** who **sleep do** their **sleeping** at **night**, and **those** who **get drunk get drunk** at **night**. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [oi](#) [gar](#) [katheudontes](#) ([PAPMPN](#)) [nuktos](#) [katheudousin](#), ([3PPAI](#)) [kai](#) [oi](#) [methuskomenoi](#) ([PPPMPN](#)) [nuktos](#) [methuousin](#); ([3PPAI](#))

Amplified: For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk, get drunk at night. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: Night is the time for sleep and the time when people get drunk. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Night is the time for sleep and the time when men get drunk, ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: For those who are sleeping, sleep in the night time, and those who are intoxicated, are intoxicated at night. ([Eerdmans](#))

Young's Literal: for those sleeping, by night do sleep, and those making themselves drunk, by night are drunken,

FOR THOSE WHO SLEEP DO THEIR SLEEPING AT NIGHT, AND THOSE WHO GET DRUNK GET DRUNK AT NIGHT: oi gar katheudontes (PAPMPN) nuktos katheudousin, (3PPAI) kai oi methuskomenoi (PPPMPN) nuktos methuousin; (3PPAI): (Job 4:13; 33:15; Luke 21:34,35; Romans 13:13; 1Corinthians 15:34; Ephesians 5:14)

Sleep (2518) (**katheudo** from **katá** = an intensifies meaning + **heúdo** = to sleep) in this context using the picture of physical sleep to illustrate those who are spiritually asleep, careless and unconcerned in their sin and unaware of the grave danger they are in should they die.

Vine explains that...

in this statement of the ordinary fact of human experience the metaphorical language of the preceding verses is explained. As sleep is natural in the night, so indifference to God characterizes man in his unregenerate state. But for regenerate man to be spiritually asleep is to seem to be of the night, not of the day, of the world, not of Christ. (Ibid)

Spurgeon comments that...

There are a few who have reached to such a pitch of shameless idleness that they sleep in the day, and there are others who have come to such a state of debauchery that they are drunken in the day. But this is not the common way of things, nor even in the judgment of the most licentious of the world is this at all a proper state of things. "They that sleep sleep in the night. They that are drunken are drunken in the night." Let us who are of the day be sober, and let us of course be awake, but let us be more than awake, since watchfulness is here joined to wakefulness, and watchfulness in a soldier requires that his armor be on. So Paul pushes the parallel a little farther.

AND THOSE WHO GET DRUNK GET DRUNK AT NIGHT: kai oi methuskomenoi (PPPMPN) nuktos methuousin; (3PPAI): (1Samuel 25:36,37; Proverbs 23:29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35; Isaiah 21:4,5; Daniel 5:4,5; Acts 2:15; 2Peter 2:13, cp Acts 2:15, Luke

21:34; Ro 13:12, 13)

Those who get drunk - Scripture warns

Drunk ([3182](#)) (**methuo** from **méthu** = wine) means to drink to intoxication or to make drunk. They carouse in the night because their innate nature is those who are night people, people of darkness. Such behavior is natural and expected.

The tragedy is when **day people** walk in the darkness and forfeit their assurance of salvation (they don't lose salvation but they do often lose the confidence that they are saved) and they become fearful of God's judgment. John speaks to this fearfulness of judgment, exhorting believers to avoid it writing...

And now, little children (believers), abide (continually live at home) in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence (bold speech) and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. (1John 2:28).

Peter pictures the **day person** who walks in **darkness** as one

who lacks these qualities (2Pe 1:5, 6, 7, 8-see notes 2Pe 1:5; 1:6; 1:7; 1:8) is blind (unable to see clearly) or short-sighted (unable to see far off), having forgotten his purification from his former sins (the fact that they have been cleansed identifies them as genuine believers and not just professors of faith in Christ). (2Pe 1:9-note)

Day people will not be caught in the **Day of the Lord**, but it is possible for day people who fall into sin to lose assurance that they will be caught up to be with Lord and to begin to fear that they might experience that horrible day of God's wrath! On the other hand when **day people** live consistent with their new nature (in Christ, indwelt by His Spirit, sons and daughters who can cry "Abba, Father") they will experience comfort, because living a righteous, godly life brings assurance of salvation. And so Peter exhorts believers to conduct themselves as day people writing...

Therefore, brethren, **be all the more diligent** (aorist imperative) - command given even with a sense of urgency) to make certain about His calling and choosing you; (Why is it important to conduct yourselves as those who are genuinely born again?) for as long as you practice (habitually, as your way of life) these things (Virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly affection, love are the evidence that our trust in Christ is genuine, saving faith), you will never (strong double negative = absolutely not ever) stumble (aorist tense pointing to a fall that is final and from which there is no arising - he is not saying one can lose their salvation) for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2Pe 1:10, 11-notes)

Comment: MacArthur gives a slightly different interpretation writing

As the Christian pursues the qualities enumerated by Peter (2Pe 1:5, 6,

7) and sees that his life is useful and fruitful (2Pe 1:8), he will not stumble into doubt, despair, fear, or questioning, but enjoy assurance that he is saved.

SLEEPY SAINTS

by A W Pink

What an anomaly! Drowsing on the verge of eternity!

A Christian is one who, in contrast to the unregenerate, has been awakened from the sleep of death in trespasses and sins, made to realize the unspeakable awfulness of endless misery in hell and the ineffable joy of everlasting bliss in heaven, and thereby brought to recognize the seriousness and solemnity of life.

A Christian is one who has been taught experientially the worthlessness of all mundane things and the preciousness of Divine things. He has turned his back on Vanity Fair and has started out on his journey to the Celestial City (Php 3:20, 21-note). He has been quickened into newness of life (Ro 6:4-note) and supplied with the most powerful incentives (Mt 25:21, 23, 2Co 5:10, 1Co 3:11, 12, 13, 14, 15) to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Php 3:14-note). Nevertheless, it is sadly possible for him to suffer a relapse, for his zeal to abate (cp He 6:11, 12-note), his graces to languish, for him to leave his first love (Re 2:4-note, Re 2:5-note), and become weary of well-doing (2Th 3:13, Ga 6:9). Yea, unless he be very much on his guard, drowsiness will steal over him, and he will fall asleep. Corruptions still indwell in him, and sin has a stupefying effect (He 3:13-note). He is yet in this evil world (Gal 1:4KJV), and it exerts an enervating influence. Satan seeks to devour him (1Pe 5:8-note), and unless resisted steadfastly (Jas 4:6, 7, Ep 6:11-note, Ep 6:13-note) will hypnotize him. Thus, the menace of this spiritual "sleeping sickness" is very real.

Slumbering saints! What an incongruity! Taking their ease while threatened by danger. Lazing instead of fighting the good fight of faith (1Ti 6:12). Trifling away opportunities to glorify their Saviour (Mt 5:16-note, Col 4:5-note), instead of redeeming the time (Ep 5:16-note): rusting, instead of wearing out in His service (cp Re 14:13-note, Re 22:12-). We speak with wonderment and horror of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning, but far more startling and reprehensible is a careless Christian who has departed from God, bewitched by a world which is doomed to eternal destruction (1Jn 2:17, 2Pe 3:10-note, 2Pe 3:11-note). Such a travesty and tragedy is far from being exceptional. Both observation and the teaching of Scripture prove it to be a common occurrence. Such passages as the following make it only too evident that the people of God are thus overcome.

"It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11-note).

"Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (1Corinthians 15:34).

"Awake thou that sleepest" (Ephesians 5:14-note).

Each of those clamant calls is made to the saints. So, too, is that exhortation addressed to them,

"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1Thessalonians 5:5,6).

Am I Spiritually Asleep?

What are the Marks?

... **Before we can truthfully answer the question, Am I spiritually asleep? we must first ascertain what are the marks of one who is so.** Let us then, in order to assist the honest inquirer, describe some of the characteristics of sleep. And since we are not making any effort to impress the learned, we will be as simple as possible. The things which characterize the body when it is asleep will help us to determine when the soul is so. When the body is asleep it is in a state of inactivity, all its members being in repose. It is also a state of unconsciousness, when the normal exercises of the mind are suspended. It is therefore a state of insensibility to danger, of complete helplessness.

Spiritual sleep is that condition wherein the faculties of the believer's soul are inoperative and when his graces no longer perform their several offices. When the mind ceases to engage itself with Divine things, and the graces be not kept in healthy exercise, a state of slothfulness and inertia ensues. When the grand truths of Scripture regarding God and Christ, sin and grace, heaven and hell, exert not a lively and effectual influence upon us, we quickly become drowsy and neglectful.

A slumbering faith is an inactive one. It is not exercised upon its appointed Objects nor performing its assigned tasks. It is neither drawing upon that fullness of grace which is available in Christ for His people, nor is it acting on the precepts and promises of the Word (eg, 2Pe 1:3-note, 2Pe 1:4-note). Though there still be a mental assent to the Truth, yet the heart is no longer suitably affected by that which concerns practical godliness. Where such be the case a Christian will be governed more by tradition, sentiment, and fancy, rather than by gratitude, the fear of the Lord, and care to please Him. So too when his hope becomes sluggish, he soon lapses into a spiritual torpor.

Hope is a desirous and earnest expectation of blessedness to come. It looks away from self and this present scene and is enthralled by "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." (2Ti 4:8-note) As it eyes the goal and the prize, it is enabled to run with patience the race set before us. (He 12:1-note) But when hope slumbers he becomes absorbed with the objects of time and sense, and allured and stupefied with present and perishing things (1Jn 2:17).

Likewise when love to God be not vigorous, there is no living to His glory; self-love and

self-pity actuating us. When the love of Christ ceases to constrain us (2Co 5:14KJV) to self-denial (Mk 8:34, Lk 9:23, 14:33) and a following the example He has left us (1Pe 2:21-note), the soul has gone to sleep.

Where those cardinal graces be not in healthy exercise, the Christian loses his relish for the means of grace, and if he attempts to use them it is but perfunctorily. The Bible is read more from habit or to satisfy conscience than with eager delight (contrast Ps 119:16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 143, 174), and then no impression is left on the heart, nor is there any sweet meditation thereon afterwards.

Prayer is performed mechanically, without any conscious approach unto God or communing with Him.

So in attending public worship and the hearing of the Word: the duty is performed formally and without profit. When the body sleeps it neither eats nor drinks: so it is with the soul. Faith is the hand which receives, hope the saliva which aids digestion, love the masticator and assimilator of what is partaken. But when they cease to function the soul is starved, and it becomes weak and languid (cp Mt 4:4). The more undernourished be the body the less strength and ability has it for its tasks. In like manner, a neglected soul is unfit for holy duties, and the most sacred exercises become burdensome. Thus, when a saint finds his use of the means of grace wearisome and the discharge of spiritual privileges irksome, he may know that his soul is slumbering Godward...

The consequences of spiritual sloth are inevitable and obvious. Space allows us to do little more than name some of the chief ones.

1. Grace becomes inoperative. When faith be not exercised upon Christ, it nods and ceases to produce good works. When hope languishes and becomes inactive, the heart is no longer lifted above the things of time and sense by a desirous expectation of good things to come. Then love declines and is no longer engaged in pleasing and glorifying God. Zeal slumbers and instead of fervour there is heartless formality in the use of means and performance of duties.
2. We are deprived of spiritual discernment, and no longer able to experientially perceive the vanity of earthly things and value of heavenly, and the need of pressing forward unto them.
3. A drowsy inattention to God's providences. Eyes closed in sleep take no notice of His dealings with us, weigh not the things which befall us. Mercies are received as a matter of course, and signs of God's displeasure are disregarded (Isaiah 42:25).
4. Unconcernedness in the commission of sin, so that we cease mortifying our lusts and resisting the Devil. Spiritual stupidity makes us insensible to our danger. It was while David was taking his ease that he yielded to the Devil (2Samuel 11:1, 2).
5. The Holy Spirit is grieved and His gracious operations are suspended and His comforts

withheld.

6. So far from us overcoming the world, when our spiritual senses be dulled, we are absorbed with its attractions or weighted down by its cares.

7. We are robbed by our enemies (Luke 12:39)—of God's providential smile, of our peace and joy.

8. Fruitlessness: see Proverbs 24:30, 31.

9. Carnal complacency: peace and joy being derived from pleasant circumstances and earthly possessions, rather than Christ and our heritage in Him.

10. Spiritual poverty: see Proverbs 24:33, 34.

11. Indifference to the cause and interests of Christ: it was while men slept Satan sowed his tares, and abuses creep into the church.

12. A practical unpreparedness for Christ's coming: Luke 21:36; Revelation 16:15.

Let us now point out some of the correctives.

1. Spiritual sleepiness is best prevented by our faith being engaged with the person and perfections of Christ; it is not monastic retirement, nor the relinquishment of our lawful connection with the world, but the fixing of our minds and affections upon the transcendent excellency of the Saviour, which will most effectually preserve us from being hypnotized by the baits of Satan. A believing and adoring view of Him who is "Fairer than the children of men" will dim the luster of the most attractive objects in this world. When the One who is "altogether lovely" is beheld by anointed eyes the flowery paths of this scene become a dreary wilderness, and the soul is quickened to press forward unto Him, until it sees the King in his beauty face to face.

2. Especially will a keeping fresh in our hearts the unspeakable sufferings of the Saviour draw us away from threatened rivals, and inspire grateful obedience to Him. "For the love of Christ [particularly His dying love] constraineth us" (2Corinthians 5:14).

3. By praying daily for God to quicken and revive us (Ps 119:25- [note](#)).

4. By being doubly on our guard when things are going smoothly and easily.

5. By maintaining a lively expectation of Christ's appearing (Hebrews 9:28).

6. By attending to such exhortations as Hebrews 12:2, 3, allowing no abatement of our vigor.

7. By putting on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18).

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