

A Spirit of Slumber



David Wilkerson June 5, 1985

"According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day" (Romans 11:8).

"For the Lord hath poured out upon you the Spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your leaders, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed" (Isaiah 29:10-11).

One of the most heartbreaking of all Scriptures in the Bible is this: "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Romans 11:7).

Think of it! An entire race of people spent their lives looking for satisfaction, rest, and fullness; and they never did find it. Even to this day, only a small remnant of Jews have found the grace and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The rest of them are blinded!

Paul said, emphatically, "God hath given them the spirit of slumber." They are absolutely blind and deaf to the gospel! There is not an evangelist or teacher on earth who can penetrate their darkness! Very few of them are saved. Paul called them "a remnant according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:5).

Paul speaks of a day when "all Israel shall be saved... and the Deliverer shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Romans 11:26). I don't understand all of that, but I do know there are Jews dying right now-in total spiritual darkness about Christ-going into eternity under the spell of a deep sleep. They need not die in such blindness! Paul said, "And they also, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again" (Romans 11:23).

Has it never amazed you that many heathen can hear the gospel once, see it clearly, accept it, and be born again by faith in Him?! Prostitutes, drug addicts, the poor, and the illiterate-all have gladly received the message of Christ and have been gloriously saved. They have been awakened! Their eyes see it-their ears hear it!

Yet the Jew is under the grip of the spirit of slumber! A deep sleep from the Lord has fallen upon them, and they simply cannot understand anything that is said or preached about the Lord Jesus Christ!

Did God cast them away? Did God arbitrarily cut them off His vine just to save Gentiles? Were they predestinated to such horrible blindness? Absolutely not! Paul make that very clear! "Because of unbelief they were broken off" (Romans 11:20). "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and stubborn people" (Romans 10:21).

They were the natural branches; they were those who should have obtained what they were looking for. They should have accepted Christ. They should be the present-day preachers of the gospel. They should be the ones going as missionaries to the world, preaching the message of Christ! They should have found what we Gentiles found! Jerusalem should have become the Christian capital of the world.

But they stubbornly held to their unbelief! They refused to yield to His lordship! They said, "This man shall not reign over us!" They hardened their hearts and provoked the holy One of Israel. They tempted God, proved Him, and saw His mighty works, yet they maintained an "evil heart of unbelief." What they heard was not mixed with faith. They would not hold on to a confidence in the Lord. They were so deceived by their sins, they purposely hardened their hearts.

They preferred Moses above Christ! None of them could enter into rest. None could find or obtain what they were seeking, and God grieved over them. Paul wrote, "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19).

What a tragedy-millions of spiritually hungry, searching, seeking Jews; and they cannot find what they are looking for. The Messiah came-He lives today-and they can't see Him! They can't hear Him! They are in the dark about Him! They are in a spiritual coma!

But Paul is writing all this to Gentiles-Christians! His message really is: "Don't say, Poor blind, slumbering Jews! No! But rather say, Poor blind, slumbering saints!"

It is clear he is warning those who are in the faith. He said, "Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee" (Romans 1:20,21). Paul goes further and warns those in the faith of the severity of God. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shall be cut off" (Romans 11:22).

We hear much preaching today about the goodness of God! It is said, "Just believe; God is good; He wants only goodness and blessings for you!" Very true-but that is only half the gospel. The other half of the gospel is this: God is very severe with those who harden their hearts through unbelief!

There are those who preach, "Once in the vine, always in the vine! Once you are in, you can never be cut off again!" But what does the Word say? "Toward thee, goodness-if thou continue in His goodness. Otherwise, thou shalt be cut off. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He spare not thee."

Let every drunken, sodden, adulterous Baptist hear it loud and clear! Let every lukewarm, backslidden Pentecostal open his ears! Let all playboy Christians hear it: "Take heed, lest He spare not thee!"

They come to our street rallies, staggering out of bars, harlots draped over their shoulders, deacons and elders-some of them yelling, "Praise the Lord!" They stand up to us and reply, "We are saved! We love Jesus! We reckon ourselves dead with Christ. Jesus paid it all! See you in heaven!" So they stumble down the street, eyes full of adultery, minds closed, eyes closed, ears closed-going to hell in a deep sleep!

Some preacher has made them believe they are going to be redeemed because, way back, they prayed a little prayer and made a public confession; but then they went back to their old ways. No power on earth can wake them up. They have been blinded by the deceitfulness of sin! They are under the spell of the spirit of slumber.

I listen to street harlots, smiling in my face with a trick on their arms, boasting to me, "I am saved! I am just as holy as you are! Jesus loves me just as I am! I am on my way to glory!" And I say to myself, "What kind of blindness is this? How can one like this actually believe such a lie?" Then I realize they are asleep, in a spiritual coma, under the spell of a strong delusion!

I. I am more concerned about the deep sleep that is falling upon believers in the house of God!

In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus said, "They all slumbered and slept" (Matthew 25:5). This suggests the whole church is asleep just prior to the Lord's return! All of them-asleep! The majority will be "caught unaware."

When the midnight cry was made, all ten virgins awoke and went out to meet the bridegroom! Five of them had lamps that were going out! Those words send a chill up my spine-lamps going out! A fire that is dying! A vessel in which there is no more oil! The anointing is gone! A lamp that once burned so brightly-going out! At midnight, with Jesus' coming at the door-going black, dark, empty! No joy, no faith, no confidence, no leading or convicting of the Holy Spirit! What it means is: The glory of the Lord is departing from some in this midnight hour!

Preachers who used to thunder with unction and anointing are now squatting in front of the TV idol, getting fat and

lazy, with no word from God, no fresh unction! Their lamp is going out! They are asleep!

Christians who once were on fire for God, once full of love and joy in Jesus, once looking for His return-are now drifting, cold, full of doubt and fear. They are half asleep, but will soon fall into a deep sleep! They once had the glory of God, the power of the Holy Ghost. But now, their lamps are dim and dying! They now have adultery in their hearts; they play hard; they eat and drink; they act religious, but their hearts now grow cold and a hardness is setting in.

Look at the wise virgins with their lamps ablaze. They are full of Holy Ghost fervor and excitement, and they are going out singing, marching into the marriage supper! Their eyes are only on their Beloved and they are ready to leave this wicked world.

But look at the foolish ones-weeping, rushing about, trying to regain the fire! They are rushing about in circles, begging, pleading, "Somebody, help me! Oil-I need oil! My lamp is going out!"

I look at multitudes in God's house half asleep on to Lord, and I must warn loud and clear: Your lamp is going out! You have just a spark left! You are spiritually empty! You need a fresh baptism of the Holy Ghost! You are living on an old anointing! It isn't enough! You need more! You are in real danger of missing the marriage supper! You will be outside in the dark and He will say, "Depart, I don't know you!"

If we took God at His word, we would not be so lazy and half-hearted! We would not live another minute in doubt and unbelief! I don't fear the Devil and all the forces of hell as much as I fear God's curse of a spirit of slumber! I take it like it's written, "God hath given them the spirit of slumber... For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep... You are blind, deaf; the word is sealed up."

I refuse to shrug off this awesome warning to the people of God! These were God's people-an unbelieving, rebellious, doubting people of the Lord; and God put them into a spiritual coma.

I've seen Christians who are living under that deep sleep from the Lord. Their favorite expression is, "I don't see it! I just don't understand! I'm not convicted! I don't feel anything." They are empty; they have no zeal, no fire, no commitment! They coast along! They are drifting with the spirit of this wicked age.

You can preach like Paul to them; they can sit through precious Bible studies; they can be around other Christians who are growing in the Lord-but they go nowhere! They simply shrug it all off. They don't believe it's necessary to change anything in their lives. They are not hearing what God is saying! They have rejected the Lord's Word for so long, they have wallowed in fear and unbelief for so long, they have complained and griped so much, they have lived for so long all to themselves-they are falling into a spiritual coma! Soon they will be numbered by the spirit of slumber. They will go around in a deep sleep and not even know it! They are deaf, blind, and dumb to the things of God!

II. A spirit of slumber leads to two hopeless conditions -an inescapable trap and an everlasting burden!

"And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them... and bow down their back always" (Romans 11:9,10).

Paul quotes David from Psalm 69:22, "Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap." David said, "Thou preparest table before me in the presence of mine enemies" (Psalm 23:5).

The table of the Lord represents worship; blessings of His Word; all that is intended to comfort us, make us grow, build us up, and make us rejoice! It is the house of God, good Christian friends, His holy Word, and the presence of the Holy Ghost! It is all part of the table He spreads!

"Let it be a trap-a stumblingblock." It is almost unspeakable-too awful to contemplate-but so true that those who are overcome by this deep sleep, the curse upon their stubborn unbelief, enter a trap every time they get near the table of the Lord. For them, walking into God's house is walking into a trap! Being in God's holy presence is a stumblingblock!

Here Is How It Works

Every message now only hardens them. It is just another layer of hardness piled upon layer after layer of

hardnesses, caused by other meetings and other messages sent from God! None of it registers!

While they sing, they dig their graves even deeper. God called and called, so often, so long-and they rejected it all. Now they are trapped. They fear going back to the Devil. They know there is nothing for them back in sin, but neither is there anything for them in God's house at His table. It bores them. They go through the motions, but they are trapped in a spiritual vacuum!

They are trapped in a lukewarm, no-win situation. They enjoy nothing. They can't enjoy the company of true saints. They simply endure worship. But they are just as miserable outside God's house! They are uncomfortable with both crowds. And because they are neither hot, nor cold-but trapped in lukewarmness-God will spew them out of His mouth. "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16).

I wonder why some even go to church. They don't enter in; they get very little out of it, and if they are in a deep sleep, nothing in God's house can help them. They are dead! They are like the man in the hospital-totally paralyzed, yet able to hear every word but unable to move-lost in coma!

Every time the church doors open, multitudes walk right in, week after week, sitting there trapped! They are the walking dead! That which should have been for their welfare has become a trap! They should be getting blessed; they should go away comforted; they should be encouraged and set aflame! Instead, it adds to their sorrow! They become spiritual zombies-walking in their sleep.

"Bow Down Their Back Always"

David goes on to explain what this heavy burden is that bows them down. "Let their habitation be desolate" (Psalm 69:25). Let their homes be a place of emptiness, weariness, and joylessness! Let them become places of grief, misery, and ruin. Nothing could be worse than to be trapped in the house of God and in a home that is a desert-a place without love, peace, or happiness. When will the church wake up and recognize that the desolation in Christian homes is the result of a complaining, unbelieving, lukewarm spirit?!

The home becomes a burden; it is no longer a place of refreshing and joy, but a place of death and gloom! That is why multitudes of Christian couples merely exist. They are in a deep sleep! A spirit of slumber has endangered their homes and they are trapped both in church and at home!

David adds, "Let none dwell in their tents" (Psalm 69:25). There is such gloom there in that home, such desolation, no one will want to enter or stay there. Finally, a husband or wife leaves, and it ends up closed down-shut up! Up goes the "For Sale" sign. "Let them no longer live in that home! Let their habitation be desolate!"

I look about and I see empty, bored Christians sitting in God's house, trapped. Then I see their messed up homes, their sadness and lack of joy, their existing from day to day-and my heart cries out, "My God, how severe! How tragic! What horrible judgment You pour out upon the lukewarm and the doubting!" Then I ask myself, "Why can't they see it? Why won't they wake up and shake themselves before they are hopelessly lost in that terrifying deep sleep from the Lord?"

III. God's Word promises a mass resurrection of believers from the dead - in these last days!

God took Ezekiel into a valley full of dry bones, and there gave him a revelation about what the Holy Spirit is going to do before Christ returns.

"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry" (Ezekiel 37:1,2).

What a vivid picture of the church right now-one big valley of very dry, very dead, bleached bones. "And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest" (Ezekiel 37:3). That is the question the Holy Spirit now puts to all godly shepherds-all true men and women of God! "Do you see how dead and dry My people are? Do you see death as far as the eye can see? Do you see evidence of life? Is there a sign of Holy Ghost breath anywhere? Do you believe that I can change all that? Do you believe I can breathe once again by My Spirit and raise up an army of live, vibrant worshippers?"

"Don't Give Up On My Church!"

God is saying, "Don't give up on my church!" There is a great shaking coming, a great breathing of God's holy breath! New life is coming! An army of resurrected saints, once dead, are now being raised in power!

"Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel 37:4-6).

It's a day of judgment and destruction of this nation. The wicked and the violent will be cast down. But it is also a day of resurrection! It is a day of revival-a time of Holy Ghost activity.

"So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, and exceeding great army" (Ezekiel 37:7-10).

"O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves... And I will put my spirit in you, and ye shall live" (Ezekiel 37:12-14).

This is a dual prophecy from God; first, to Jewish Israel-and second, to Israel of faith-the believers.

An exceeding great army is going to come walking out of their graves! Spiritual Lazaruses, ripping off grave clothes and breathing new life, will walk out of the valley of dry bones and join the ranks of the overcomers! Many who have been in that deep sleep, bound by the grave clothes of a spirit of slumber, will be breathed upon by the Holy Ghost and will spring to life!

We are instructed in this passage to call upon the Holy Spirit to come and breathe! The prayer of all who walk with God should be, "Come, Holy Spirit, awaken the dead. Awaken the slumbering; open their graves; bring them up and out of death and dryness-to new life!"

If the the Spirit of God be in you, you will live! He is the Spirit of life. There can be no death nor slumber where He abides!

The remnant is "an exceeding great army." If only one-tenth of the world's present population will be saved, that is one-half billion redeemed! It is a remnant only as compared to the great numbers of the unbelieving and damned. Get Ready to Be Shaken

Are you dead? Dry? Get ready to be shaken! Get ready to be re-made, worked over! Get ready to be visited by the breath of almighty God! You have an appointment; you are chosen to live, to get out of your grave! God will say to you, "Live!" And you will rise up-and live! That is, you will live if you respond to the mighty breathing of the Spirit upon you.

Saints of God, O holy remnant-rejoice! The wind of God is blowing! The breath of almighty God will rattle the gates of hell and send every demon into shock as the spiritual graves open and as those who have been very dry for so long come out of their bondage and become alive to holiness and worship in spirit and truth.

As certainly as Satan could not keep Christ in the grave, he can neither hinder nor stop this great awakening from the dead in God's house! Just before judgment falls, He will breathe upon all flesh in even greater power. The remnant will respond, rise, and walk in new resurrection life!

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