

IT IS HIGH TIME TO AWAKE!

“And that knowing the time, that it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is salvation nearer than when we believed” (Romans 13:11). It is a dangerous thing to be asleep spiritually! In the parable of the tares, Jesus stated that “while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares...” (Mat. 13:25). We are admonished repeatedly in the New Testament to “watch” (see 24:42; 26:41; 1 The. 5:6; 2 Tim. 4:5; 1 Pet. 4:7). It is impossible to “watch” and sleep at the same time. The devil and his cohorts are always awake seeking opportunities to “devour” (1 Pet. 5:8) us through deception. Paul admonished us, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith...” (1 Cor. 16:13). Sin can lull us into apathy, sleep. When we depart from the Truth, sin has a deadening effect. Sin sears our consciences (1 Tim. 4:2) and causes us to sleep spiritually (1 Cor. 11:30). This can happen to individuals and to congregations (Rev. 3:15). To protect ourselves from evil and to keep in the narrow path that leads to life eternal we must be awake, alert.

Elders, have a special obligation to be awake and watchful. The Hebrews writer tells us that they “watch for your souls” (Heb. 13:17). Paul tells us that these men are to protect the church from false teachers by “holding fast the faithful word” and thereby exhort and convict the gainsayers. Furthermore, he tells us that these elders have the responsibility to stop the mouths of those who teach things they ought not, subverting whole churches by their false doctrines (Tit. 1:9–11). There are false teachers. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1). Individual Christians also have the responsibility to examine those things that they are being

taught and to compare them to the teaching of Scripture (Acts 17:11). Members of the church must therefore be alert and wide awake. Even if the elders of the congregation of which they are a part are not watching and protecting the congregation from harm, every member has the responsibility to protect himself with the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17).

There are many elders, preachers individual Christians, and congregations of God’s people who need to be told, “It is high time to awake out of sleep!” The devil is by no means sleeping, but he has been able to cause many of us today to sleep. We need to wake up regarding:

The danger of drifting: Often movement away from God and the Truth comes very gradually. It comes as a result of neglect more often than as a deliberate radical departure (Heb. 2:3). The warning is clear: “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip (lest haply we drift away from them, ASV)” (Heb. 2:1). There is the danger, which is ever present, of wanting to become like the nations round about us. When we yield to this desire, we can expect change to be slow and the result will always be destructive. The road to ruin is walked one step at a time. Trace the consequences of this desire in ancient Israel. God’s people today are called out of the world to be a people uniquely belonging to God. God’s people are to follow God’s Word and not the people of the world. Many congregations have become like the denominations and are no longer following God’s Word. It is high time that these congregations and their elders wake up and return to the old paths.

The danger of false teachers: We have some smooth-talking (Rom. 16:18), ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing (Mat. 7:15) within the flock of God today. Instead of their mouths being stopped, their "good words and fair speeches" are itching the ears of multitudes. Sometimes our brethren will travel many miles to the ...Tulsa Workshop or to other places just to have their ears tickled with the "feel-good" philosophies of men and to be entertained by the showmen of the brotherhood but will not go across the street to hear the Truth of God's Word proclaimed. It is high time that we wake up to the fact that it is the Truth that makes us free! The church of Christ is not in the entertainment business; souls are not saved by the teaching of error, even if these lies cause the hearers to feel good. Sin deceives, and error destroys. We need to oppose false doctrine and false teachers, not support them with our money and our presence. We need to stop inviting false teachers into the flock to hold Gospel Meetings or otherwise fill our pulpits. We need to stop buying their books and going to hear them speak. We need to wake up!

The danger of fellowshiping those who are not in fellowship with God: Those who teach error and/or practice false doctrine are not in fellowship with God (2 John 9). Paul warned, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful workers of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Paul did not say we could have a **little** fellowship with error; he did not say we could have **much** fellowship with error; he said **NO** fellowship. Brethren who encourage by their words and by their behavior fellowshiping denominations and those who have gone out from us have departed from the Truth. We cannot fellowship such without becoming partakers with them in their evil ways (2 John 11). Fellowshiping those in error is a departure from Truth; it is a departure from God.

It is high time that elders, preachers, individual Christians, and congregations wake up to the error of such fellowship! “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men (Be courageous!, English Study Bible), be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13).

—Lester Kamp

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