

40. Wake-up call and marching order

February 1, 2009

A horrible sound came from somewhere in the darkness early in the morning. Yes, it was my alarm clock going off. What I usually do that moment is that I come up with a dozen reason why I don't need to get up as early as I originally intended. On the contrary, my wife Karen gets out of the bed like a little doll pops out of a box. It doesn't matter what time she went to bed or what time she has to get out of it. She gets up dark thirty in the morning and goes to work.

In other words, I generally do not like wake-up calls by my alarm clock. But I have to use it every morning.

Wake-up call brings forth a new page in individual's life. Each person can decide what he or she is going to do for that day. That would be his or her marching order of the day.

I believe that we all need a serious walk-up call and marching order from the Lord. The more I see what is happening in the world and this country, the more I realize that we are literally living in the last days.

In Romans 13:11-14, apostle Paul urges us to open our eyes, to wake up to what time it really is. There's a new way to live in light of the dawn of the eternal day.

A. IT IS HIGH TIME

Romans 13:11a And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep;

Although the kingdom of God will not be fully realized until Christ's earthly reign during the millennium, it has been set in motion by His resurrection and ascension almost two thousand years ago.

I've heard non-believers often say, "Jesus said that He would be back two thousand years ago. It will continue as it has been." They don't know it as a fact, rather they are hoping it so that they can continue in their ungodly lives.

I asked you to underline "do this". What is "this"? "This" refers to at least the preceding three verses, and at most all, of chapter 12 and the rest of chapter 13. In 13:11-14, then, Paul is establishing an endtimes perspective for how Christians should live.

In spite of what the non-believers want to believe, the Lord controls all events, people and nations and He directs history to a predetermined end. It is like a cruise ship. The passengers can do whatever they want or believe whatever they want. But the ship goes as its intended course.

This unveiling of high time gave Paul a sense of urgency, a sense that all of us should have. He also equates 'sleep' with spiritual lethargy which I call 'Christian pew potato syndrome.' I am not saying that the people with 'Christian pew potato syndrome' are not saved. But if they continue in their course, they will have a rude awakening when they get to heaven and stand before Almighty God.

What would be 'Christian pew potato syndrome'? See if you are in any of these categories:

1) The people who don't live for God wholeheartedly.

The people who are in this category are more concerned about what they can have from this world than what God wants them to do.

2) The people who don't care to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Though these people are saved by the grace of God, they don't want to be known as "Jesus Freaks" or "Bible Thumpers" by non-believers. They don't talk about God nor want others to come to know Him through them by evangelizing to these people. I call them "Secret Agents of God". Don't take it as a compliment.

3) The people who don't serve the Lord and His body, the church.

These people always have excuses why they don't serve God. Instead of coming up with excuses to God, They should say, "I don't want to be a servant and I want others to serve me." That would be more honest, because God knows the real reason.

I hope that none of you fall into these three categories, but I would be naive if I believe that none of you are in 'Christian pew potato syndrome.' If you think what I just said is too harsh, consider it as a wake-up call from God. Because if you are living for God and serving Him, you wouldn't think what I said is offensive. It is my job to tell the truth of God, not pamper you, nor make you feel all cuddly without His truth.

Last time when I challenged you guys like this, a couple left the church because that couple did not want to serve others. They didn't go against what I said, rather against the God's Word.

B. SALVATION IS NEAR

Romans 13:11b for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. What does Paul mean by "our salvation is nearer"? Isn't our salvation secure? Do we need to live up to a behavioral standard in "the hour" in order to receive our heavenly reward? Absolutely not!

In this context, Paul used "salvation" as a comprehensive term describing our past justification, our present sanctification and our future glorification. When he says that our salvation is "*nearer than when we first believed,*" he simply means that every passing moment brings us closer to the end of "the hour" – closer to our glorification.

C. THE DAWNING REALITY

Romans 13:12a The night is far spent, the day is at hand. We all know that right before dawn, it is the darkest time. I truly believe that we are living in that time.

Europe has passed far beyond help when it comes to spiritual integrity, decency and morality. America is fast following the path of destruction after Europe. I am not just talking about the entertainment world, but including the churches in America. The vast majority of believers are not studying the Word of God, nor applying the Word into their lives. Consequently, they are easily taken by new winds of doctrines that scratch their itching ears and they become preys of the devil.

We need to look forward to a glorious future with Jesus our Savior. We have so much to offer to this world which is dying without hope of Jesus. Not only can we offer people a place in heaven – a comforting truth in itself – but we can also give them a purpose. We can give them the opportunity to contribute to God’s work and to one day hear those blessed words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

D. THE ARMOR OF LIGHT

Romans 13:12b Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

The Christian’s job – glorifying God and witnessing to the world through righteous, loving, joyful living – is best accomplished while wearing the armor of Christ. In fact, our mission is simply impossible without His protective armor.

Before we can put on our armor, however, we first need to make sure we’re not wearing anything else – “*the works of darkness.*” What are the works of darkness? Paul explains in the next verse.

Romans 13:13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

Note that the first four works of darkness deal with morality. If we want to put on the armor of light, we can not embrace these sinful habits. We cannot have both. Either we put on the armor of light, or cast off into the works of darkness.

Are you into pornography which destroys the sanctity of marriage? Are you into gambling? Are you into drinking alcohol? At the beginning all of these, it started as you think that you are in control. Now you are no longer in control. Not very long ago, I had a chance to talk with an alcoholic. He told me that he can quit it anytime. But without alcohol, he shakes worse than a reed in front of wind.

The last two deeds listed in v13, strife and jealousy, seem a little out of place with the other sins. But these relational sins can be just as destructive as the others, even if that destruction is not as immediately noticeable. Unfortunately, the church tolerates these less apparent sins a lot more than the other four sins. Strife and jealousy among brothers and sisters literally destroyed church after church.

It is known as church split. The majority of church splits are caused by strife and jealousies, not doctrinal differences.

E. PUT ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, NOTHING ELSE

Romans 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* from *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, a boy named Edmund was easily won over to the side of darkness by the wicked white witch. Her method was simple – she appealed to his love for rich, sweet food, as well as for status and revenge. The Turkish Delight she offered him was delicious, and it left him craving even more. So strong was its appeal that it led him to betray his brother and sisters.

The appetites of the world and the flesh are powerful and addictive tools of the devil. He appeals to our love for what satisfies our selfish and sinful desires and uses it to tempt, control, discourage, defeat and destroy us. We crave power or money or food or alcohol or clothes or sex, even though we are in danger of sacrificing our friends, our loved ones, and even our relationship with our Savior to satisfy our carnal desires.

How can we resist the temptations of Satan? The Word of God gives us a clear instruction:

Galatians 5:16-17 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ daily and walk in the Spirit. That's how to break the power of the darkness. God provides the armor to withstand temptation, but we must put it on.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) We identify with Christ by His name. This shows our solidarity with Christ and other Christians.
- 2) We exemplify the qualities – love, humility, truth and service – Jesus showed while he was here on earth.
- 3) We train ourselves in the use of spiritual weapons: prayer, Bible study and daily devotion, fellowship with other believers, and other specific habits that we can learn from Jesus.
- 4) We need to train our minds not to be persuaded by our desires for gratification.