

The Old Paths

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“Jonah ... Was Fast Asleep”

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In the first chapter of the book of Jonah, we see that after Jonah tried to flee “from the presence of the Lord,” he entered a ship going to Tarshish (modern-day Spain, Jonah 1:3). While on the ship, “the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep” (Jonah 1:4-5).

Have you ever wondered why Jonah could sleep while the mariners, those skilled and knowledgeable about the sea, were so scared? How could he sleep when the ship was in such a position that it could have been broken in the storm?

I do not claim to know the exact answer, but I think I know a possible reason. Consider where he was; he was inside the ship, moving WITH the ship as it moved and rocked in the ocean’s waves. A similar situation can be seen as we drive down the highway. While driving, we do not notice that our body is moving as fast as the car is moving. Why do we not notice? Because our body is moving WITH the car (Just as Jonah’s body moved WITH the ship!).

The mariners were scared because they were not asleep, but scrambling around the ship trying to lighten the load. They were not sleeping like Jonah.

I am afraid that many Christians are asleep in a similar way. They are so used to the world and its ways that eventually, they do not notice when Satan makes a move. Rather than being “vigilant” (I Pet. 5:8), they are asleep; not noticing all that is going on around them.

The Romans had a similar problem. When Paul wrote them, he said, “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:11-14).

It is high time for Christians, God’s people, to wake up and get to work. Let us notice some areas that need improvement:

Morality

The Bible teaches that we are to be “pure” in our conduct and life (I Tim. 5:22). We are not to lie, but be honest in our dealings with men

(Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9). Unfortunately, when the world has promoted such false concepts as “Situation Ethics,” and has left the world with the idea that lying is simply a part of living, is it any wonder why so few are upset when one is caught in a lie?

Consider those who use filthy language. The Bible teaches that we are not to speak like that (Eph. 5:3-4). Yet, so many use vulgar language these days, that we can hardly go anywhere without hearing it. Let me ask, what is YOUR reaction when you hear people use vulgar language? Do you laugh? Are you appalled? Does it even phase you anymore? Have you caught yourself using profane language simply because you have heard it for so long? Are we using euphemisms so that we are more like the world? These are not the only areas of morality that need work, we must also be pure in our actions and thoughts (Phil. 4:8-9; Matt. 5:27-28, 15:17-20). It is high time we woke up when it comes to morality!!

The Family

The home and the family are on the “endangered species list” in this country. This is apparent in so many ways. It is high time for Christians to wake up and acknowledge the fact that God established marriage as a life-long institution for one man and one woman (Matt. 16:4-6; Rom. 7:1-4). Though the world has, for the most part, accepted the common practice of a man and woman “shacking up,” God declares we are not to act like this (Heb. 13:4). Friends, when was the last time you talked about this with your young ones? Do they know that simply “shacking up” is unacceptable with God, and that people who engage in this activity, and do not repent will not have a place in

Heaven (I Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8)?

At the same time, we need to remember that marriage is something special that belongs to a man and a woman. The unholy union of a man with a man, or a woman with a woman is something that is "vile," "unnatural," and "against nature" (Rom. 1:26-27).

As the ship of Zion rocks and sways in the world, let us not fall asleep and allow this danger to take over! Who is on the Lord's side?

The Church

When it comes to the work and worship of the church, many promote the false concept that we can simply choose "the church of our choice." Some think that they can worship God in their own way, and completely forget about the church.

In the book of Acts, we read where Paul said that Christ shed His blood for the church (Acts 20:28). Knowing that we usually measure an object's value by what it costs us, how important do you think the church is to Christ?? He gave His life for it!!

The church was in the mind of God from eternity (Eph. 3:10-11). It was not an after-thought as the Premillennialists suggest, nor something that is of little importance. The Bible reveals that the church is "the pillar and ground of the Truth" (I Tim. 3:15). The Bible compares the church to a bride (Jn. 3:28-30; Rev. 22:17). Husbands, just how important is your bride to you (Eph. 5:25-29)? How could we allow anyone to think that the church is not important, or less

important than has been revealed by God?

Conclusion

Will you be like Jonah? Will you allow yourself to be swept away into a spiritual slumber when your help is needed the most? Let us determine to work hard now and rest later (Jn. 9:4). We must not fall asleep while on duty!

"Sentence Sermons"

- ◆ "An amazing amount of our thinking is done backwards. We first decide what we want to believe and then find good reasons for believing it."
- ◆ "A problem not worth praying about is not worth worrying about."
- ◆ "The time to teach respect for authority is the play pen; not the State Pen!"
- ◆ "Where you go hereafter depends on what you go after, here."



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"The World's Bible"

(Verse 1)

"Christ has no hands but our hands To do His work today,

"He has no feet but our feet To lead men in His way;

"He has no tongue but our tongues To tell men how He died,

" He has no help but our help To bring them to His side.

(Verse 2)

"We are the only Bible The careless world will read,

"We are the sinners' gospel, We are the scoffers' creed;

"We are the Lords' last message given in deed and word,

"What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?

(Verse 3)

"What if our hands are busy With other things than His?

"What if our feet are walking where sin's allurements is?

"What if our tongues are speaking Of things His life would spurn,

"How can we hope to help Him And welcome His return?"

(Annie Flint, J.E. Hamilton; from Hymns For Worship, #460; Sacred Selections, #512).

THINK ABOUT IT!!!

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www.southside-churchofchrist.com