**BROOKS BY THE TRAVELLER'S WAY - ADDRESSES BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**11. PERILOUS SLEEP by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"I think it meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance."*

*2 Peter 1:13*

*"I stir up your minds by way of remembrance."*

*2 Peter 3:1*

The peril suggested by the Apostle is that of an insidious sleep. His readers were not inclined to any deliberate revolt from the truth. They were not meditating any act of open and avowed treachery. They were in no immediate danger of consciously allying themselves with the evil one. They were not mustering their forces in hostility to the Son of God. The peril was of another kind. They were in danger of almost unconsciously dropping their enthusiasm, of losing the keenness of their discipleship, and of subsiding into a fatal sleep. The Apostle therefore seeks to "stir them up," to keep them awake, to preserve their vivid apprehension of truth and their sense of the glory of the grace of Christ. This perilous sleep, which so easily encroaches upon the Christian life, may be induced in many ways, and our meditation may gather round about those which are perhaps the most prevalent.

**I. There is a sleep which is begotten of familiarity with the truth.**

That which once startled us may ultimately minister to a deeper slumber. The Christmas bells awoke me in the hours of night, but I lay awake until they lulled me into sleep again. The alarm bell which originally stirred us into the brightest vigilance may act at last as a lullaby to lead us into deeper sleep. The green of the spring time arrests us by its novelty, but by summer time the observation of most people is satiated, and the attention has gone to sleep. The permanent grandeur of the night sky has long since induced the majority of people into a profound sleep, while a display of fireworks will stir them into most deliberate attention. What is the principle underlying all this? Unwilled observation is soon satiated and goes to sleep. Willed observation, vision with executive force behind it, is full of discernment, and is continually making discoveries which keeps the mind alert and interested. Get a will behind the eye, and the eye becomes a searchlight, and the familiar is made to disclose undreamed-of treasure. We must "stir up the mind" by allying it to a strong, deliberate, and directive will. If the familiar thing is to abound in fruitful revelations, if I am not to sleep in mental satiety, I must control my observations with a strong hand, so that, in all its work, it is as sharp and penetrating as a needle.

Is not all this equally true as to our familiarity with Christian truth? Here in the Word of God we have pictures of the life of Christ, revelations of His mind and disclosures of His heart. We may become so familiar with them that our attention goes to sleep. There are no further unveilings, no novelties, nothing unexpected, and the familiar vision ceases to arrest our attention. What do we need? We need to "stir up the mind," to put some force behind it, to direct it in a strong, fresh, eager inquisitiveness. We need to put it into the attitude of "asking," "seeking," "knocking," and the familiar presence will reveal itself in unaccustomed guise. The familiar puts on wonderful robes when approached by a fervent inquisitor. Truth makes winsome revelations to her devoted wooers. Every day the ardent lover makes a new discovery. If men would come to the familiar pages of God's Word with mental alertness analagous to that which they bring to the inspection of a stock-and-share list, they would have gracious surprises, which would make the heart buoyant and glad. The Book promises its wealth to the wakeful. There is no book has more to say about "unfolding," "revealing," "manifesting," "showing," "declaring," and the only condition is that the spectator of the promised apocalypse should be an ardent seeker, stirring up his mind in eager and determined quest.

**II. There is a sleep which is begotten of decided opinions.**

There is a very suggestive sentence in one of John Stuart Mill's essays, which will enable me to make my meaning perfectly clear: "The fatal tendency of mankind to leave off thinking about a thing when it is no longer doubtful, is the cause of half their errors." That is to say, a decided opinion may make a man thoughtless about his opinion and may induce a mental sleep. It so frequently happens, that when a man has attained a decided opinion, he ties a bit of tape about it, puts it away in a pigeon hole, and lapses into unconscious slumber. He leaves off thinking about it. When the matter was still doubtful, he was engaged in constant examination. While the conclusion was still uncertain, he remained a persistent explorer. But now that his judgment is decided, the explorer goes to sleep. What is the issue? We lose a thing when we cease to think about it. It is well to have decided thoughts, but it is bad and fatal to stop thinking. There is need in every life for a fresh stream of thought to be continually playing about the most cherished opinions, principles, and beliefs. When the photographer is developing his plate in a dark room, he keeps the liquid in constant motion, moving over the face of the plate, and evolving into clearer outline its hidden wealth. Our thought should be continually moving over the face of truths and beliefs, bringing out into discernment lines and beauties never before conceived. You have a very decided opinion on the Atonement? Then there is a peril that you may cease to think about it. The thing is settled and you may go to sleep. The man who has not a very decided opinion about the Atonement may be moving with doubtful thought round about the great mystery, and may, after all, be gathering fruit which may be unknown to you. Let us "stir up our minds" and turn the stream of our thought on to our accepted beliefs and our decided judgments, that the wealth of these may not remain stationary, but may reveal more and more of the hidden wisdom of grace.

**III. There is a sleep which is begotten of failure.**

Success can make a man sleep by making him cocksure. Triumph can make men careless and thoughtless. The glare of prosperity can close men's eyes in slumber. There is a "destruction that wasteth at noon-tide." A perilous sleep can also be begotten of failure. When repeated disappointment visits the life, when the "wet blanket" is frequently applied to our fervent ambitions, when the fire in the soul is damped, and enthusiasm dies out, the life is inclined to a most dangerous sleep. How many there are who were once awake and enthusiastic in civic service, or in seeking social ameliorations, or in the ministry of Christian instruction, who are now sunk in the indifference of a profound sleep. They were disappointed with the results. The grey conditions at which they worked never gained any colour. The unattractive lives to which they ministered were never transfigured. The desert never revealed even a tiny patch blossoming like the rose. And so their enthusiasm smouldered. They became lukewarm. Their reforming energy abated. They went to sleep. This is "the pestilence that walketh in darkness." Is not this the peril that the Apostle Paul anticipated for young and enthusiastic Timothy? He was beginning his Christian discipleship, fervent, hopeful, optimistic, with the eager consecration of his entire strength. The Apostle knew that disappointment would confront him, that cold water would be thrown upon his enthusiasm, that many a hopeful enterprise would issue in apparent failure, and the young recruit would be exposed to the indifference of a fatal sleep. "Stir up the gift that is in thee." Stir it into flame! Keep thy first love ardent and vigorous. Feed thy fires. Let disappointment only deepen thy consecration, and failure keep thee near the well-spring of eternal life.

**IV. There is a sleep which is begotten of the enchanted ground.**

When difficulties appear to have vanished from our life, when Apollyon no longer encounters us with dreadful front, when there is no lion in the way, when the giants are miles in the rear, and the precipitous hills, that took so long to climb, are away back on the far horizon, then we are in imminent peril of a most dangerous sleep. "I saw then in my dream that they went on till they came to a certain country, whose air naturally tended to make one drowsy if he came a stranger into it. And here Hopeful began to be very dull and heavy of sleep, wherefore he said unto Christian, I do now begin to grow so drowsy that I can scarcely hold up mine eyes. Let us lie down here and take a nap.' By no means,' said Christian, lest sleeping, we never awake more. Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.'" And how did these two pilgrims contrive to keep themselves awake as they journeyed over the enchanted ground! "Now then," said Christian, "to prevent drowsiness, let us fall into good discourse." "With all my heart," said the other, "where shall we begin? Where God began with us?" The great dreamer has summed up their conversation in this marginal note, "Good discourse prevents drowsiness." They had an experience meeting. They began with the very first stages of their conversion, and told each other the story of God's redeeming grace. They reviewed the miracles of the Lord's mercy. That is the secret of safety for any traveller over the enchanted ground. Begin your review "where God began with you." Tell over to yourself, or to others, the early story of the Lord's dealings with you. Stir up your mind with a rehearsal of the wonders and favours of God, and so far from lapsing into sleep, you shall be kept awake in a grateful song. The grace of the Lord will occupy your heart with such intensity that spiritual lapse will be impossible.

"Watch therefore ... lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping."