

Faithful Sleep

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❖ Introduction

It is hard to imagine an activity that all humans engage in for more of their life than sleep, and yet we teach about so infrequently. Why a study on sleep? The Word of God is authoritative wherever it teaches and it teaches on everything—even sleep. Why shouldn't a third of our lives be subject to the Scriptures?

Generally speaking, we have difficulty sleeping in two areas, the first is usually restless sleep and the second is unsettling dreams. The scriptures give us answers on how we should sleep and what our attitudes should be towards these problems for our own blessing as well as our children.

❖ Application

“ Even in the midst of strife, God sustains us in our sleep - *Psalm 3*

There are numerous realms in our lives where God has given us degrees of responsibility. There are things that we must accomplish within time deadlines. There are also many disastrous things that may affect our lives. We may take steps to mitigate the effects of these potential perils but when you lie down to sleep, you are completely unable to protect yourself. This is a very good thing. But the truth of the matter is that we are completely helpless during one third of our lives and we are just shy of complete helplessness the other two thirds. When we stop living, walking and sleeping by faith, our lives are filled with anxiety.

“ God alone is our protector whether awake or asleep - *Psalm 4*

What could be a better picture of trust and total reliance than a content, peaceful and joyful sleep? It is true that we should take steps to protect our homes, our families, our reputations, etc. But we only fool ourselves if we think that our efforts *really* provide protection. In our own strength and ability, we cannot protect ourselves against anything. But we can do things to protect ourselves by faith in hopes that God in His mercy will use our actions to provide *real protection*.

This is the way it always works—we raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord not because our actions in themselves bring salvation but in hopes that God will use our labors to grant real repentance. We buy insurance not because we deny the sovereignty of God but precisely the opposite, because He alone is sovereign and we hope that He use our meager (although faithful and wise) actions to provide real protection. He alone is our protector and because of that, we take steps to protect ourselves. Therefore, you may rest peacefully all of your days.

“ Parents teach their children to sleep in faith and without fear - *Proverbs 3:21-26*

Frequently, children are tempted to great fear during sleep. Usually this can be attributed to fear of darkness, fear of separation from parents and fear of peril from innumerable sources. When they are very young (perhaps less than 3), the best sources of comfort is mom or dad's compassionate touch. Later, as they get older, fathers especially should begin to teach the attributes of God and demonstrate how those attributes affect our lives.

We do our children a disservice when we make promises to them that we will ensure their protection at all times. We may take any number of steps to remove harm from their path but again, we are not actually able to really protect them from anything. However, if you teach your children that God alone is our protector and He gives promises to keep us safe or grace to endure hardship then they will begin to understand what it means to trust in His sovereignty.

If children are having bad dreams pray with them or over them. Pray that God would give them sweet thoughts and demonstrate to your children your reliance upon the sovereignty of God. You may want to also consider taking a closer look that what they are reading, watching or participating in at school. Fostering a tender relationship with your children will ensure that your children confide in you about the various fears they have. Then you will be able to bring the Scriptures to bear on the topic and encourage them to trust God just as you are. You can also give thanks for the bad dreams because God may be using them to remind us of our dependence upon Him.

“ Satisfying sleep is a gift from God - *Psalm 127*

Endless toiling after gain is vanity. There are those people who are so driven to accomplish more or acquire more that they feel like sleep is a nuisance and a hindrance to true productivity. We can see God's intentions for sweet sleep in the Old Testament Sabbath. One day a week, God demanded that we not work and the Scriptures declare that the Sabbath was to be a delight. The over industrious could not delight in the Sabbath because of the loss of production or accomplishment that resulted in the observance of the Sabbath.

However, if our attitude while we wake is that God is using our efforts to provide all things to us we will also be able to sleep knowing that He will use our obedient sleep to provide as well.

.. **The love of sleep leads to ruin - *Proverbs 20:13; Proverbs 6:6-11***

As with most other blessings, when we begin to worship the gift and not the gift-giver, something that was given to be a blessing becomes a curse, so too we see that the love of sleep can lead to ruin. It is a good thing to long for peaceful, restful sleep. But when our love for sleep causes us to neglect other areas of responsibility, then our sleep becomes disobedience.

Another way this love of sleep can be manifest is by laziness. Laziness is the desire for sleep 24 hours a day. Just as the Scripture teaches that a man who will not work should not eat, it can also be deduced that if a man will not work, he should not sleep.

.. **Sleep is sweet because God does not sleep - *Psalms 121***

The creator of heaven and earth is also the creator of waking and sleeping and He has made us to sleep. Knowing that God is still overseeing all things even while we sleep should be great comfort and peace. If it does not bring peace when we sleep it is certain that there is no peace while we are awake. Knowing that God's eyes are never shut or that His attention is never distracted should bring calm, faithful hard work on our parts. It is futility to think that we can add even an hour to our lives by any degree of worry.

If we are having trouble sleeping at night, it would be wise to look at what we are doing while awake. If our lives are characterized by a frantic pace and continues right up until the time our head hits the pillow, then it is no wonder that our frantic pace invades our sleep. Examine yourselves to see if your countenance during the day may be characterized by walking in faith. Also consider slowing down before hitting the sack, that is, prepare for sleep and long for its sweetness.

.. **Sleep is sweet when we have worked hard - *Ecclesiastes 5:12***

At the end of a hard day, it is a good thing to long for sleep. When we have worked hard (not endless frantic toiling) but hard faithful work, it is a good thing to long for a sweet sleep. When you lie down at the end of the day and you notice how tired you are, don't think that something must be wrong...actually it probably means that something is very right. God has called us to be producers and He sustains us in this by giving us a restful, peaceful sleep. Just as you labor by faith, also rest by faith.