

AWAKE ZION AWAKE

July 25, 2020

The following excerpts are taken from a sermon that C.H. Spurgeon delivered at, “Exeter Hall” on Wednesday, April 27th, **1881**. The text of his message was based on Isaiah 51:1-5,(vs3 in particular): “Listen,(hearken), to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the Rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was only one man, and I blessed him and made him many. The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing. "Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: Instruction will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm.” (Isa 51:1-5 TNIV), (Parens for alt translation) **Note:** The excerpts are only selected portions of Spurgeon’s sermon and not the complete message.

C.H.S; “It is habitual with some persons to spy out the dark side of every question or fact __ they fix their eyes upon the “waste places”— and they study them till they know every ruin and are familiar with the dragons and the owls. They sigh most dolorously,(aching, agonizing, sorrowfully), that the former times were better than these and that we have fallen upon most degenerate days. They speak of “shooting Niagara,” (see NOTE below), and of all sorts of frightful things. I am afraid that a measure of this tendency to write bitter things dwells in almost all of us at this present season, for certain discouraging facts which cannot be ignored are pressing heavily upon men’s spirits. The habit of looking continually towards the wildernesses is injurious because it greatly discourages and anything that discourages an earnest worker is a serious leakage for his strength. Perhaps a worse result than honest discouragement comes of depressing views, for they often afford an apology for indifference and inaction. The smallest peg suffices to hang an excuse upon when we are anxious to escape from the stern service of faith. “I pray you have me excused,” is a request which was supported in the parable by the flimsiest of pretences and discouragement makes one of the same sort. The sluggard’s argument is on this wise—“I will not attempt the work, for it is far too heavy for my poor strength. I fear the times are ill adapted to any special effort. Indeed, I am not quite certain that success will ever attend the general work.” **NOTE:** “Shooting Niagra” is a term used in the 1800's to emphasize hypocrisy at its worst, i.e.: insincerity, unfaithfulness, impiety, etc.

“It is, therefore, a dreadful thing when the Christian church begins to be discouraged and means must be used to stop the evil. Such means we would use this day. Lo, we lift the standard of the divine promise. “Comfort you, comfort you, My people,” sounds out like a silver trumpet in the front of the host! Be encouraged, O you of the faint heart—there are no more difficulties now than there were of old! The cause is no more in jeopardy than it was a thousand years ago!”

“The result, the end, the consummation of all things is absolutely certain—it is in His hands who cannot fail—therefore be of good courage and in waiting upon the Lord renew your strength! Remember, you that are cast down, that there are other voices besides those of the bittern and owl from the “waste places.”

“You have listened long enough to dreary suggestions from within; to gloomy prophecies from desponding friends; to the taunts of foes and to the horrible whispers of Satan! Now hearken to Him who promises to make the wilderness like Eden and the desert like the garden of the Lord! O you whose eyes are quick to discover evil, there are other sights in the world besides waste places and deserts and, therefore, my text has near to it twice over the exhortation, “Look”—“Look unto the Rock from where you are hewn.” (End of Exerpts)

Years ago we were often blessed when singing various choruses about Zion, one of which is inspired by Isaiah 52:1: “**Awake Zion Awake**, Awake and trim your lamps, (repeat); For the stars of heaven shall fall; And the moon will turn into blood, And the sons of God shall arise ___ Zion Awake!” Through the years there have been various versions of this chorus written and sung, but they all begin with the same call to, “Awake Zion Awake ___ Awake and trim your lamps.” Other choruses include a call to God’s people to, “Sing and rejoice,” or, for the redeemed of the Lord to, “Come with singing _ unto Zion,” These reminders and the encouragement we receive from our former experiences, dreams, revelations ___ and, “Yes,” our shortcomings and failures, have all been part of the processing that continues to be a vital part of our growth and development as we follow on to “Know the Lord.” It is my conviction that we need to “awaken” to the joy afforded us in singing the songs of Zion.

“And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and those the LORD has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”(Isa 35:8-10 TN IV)

“Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: (Babylon), "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away. "But let no one bring a charge, let no one accuse another, for your people are like those who bring charges against a priest. You stumble day and night, and the prophets stumble with you. So I will destroy your mother--my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children. The more the priests increased, the more they sinned against me; they exchanged their glorious God for something disgraceful.” (Hos 4:1-7 TNIV)

In a recent email I received, there was a timely reminder for us to be vigilant while walking the well lit and smooth path the Lord has put us on and, not to deviate from the safety that it provides. On either side ___ of the Way ___ are hidden among the trees: “snakes and all kinds of scary creatures,” that would harm us and interrupt our journey. Even as we mature, there are, “snares and pits,” in our way ___ which make us to know the weakness of the flesh and that our strength is only in Him.

“By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land? If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy. Remember, LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. "Tear it down," they cried, "tear it down to its foundations!"

Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy are those who repay you according to what you have done to us. Happy are those who seize your infants and dash them against the rocks.” (Psa 137:1-9 TNIV)

“Here is the message the LORD spoke through me about the city of Babylon and the land of Babylonia. He said, 'Announce this message among the nations. Lift up a banner. Let the nations hear the message. Do not keep anything back. Say, 'Babylon will be captured. The god Bel will be put to shame. Marduk will be filled with terror. Babylon's gods will be put to shame. The gods its people made will be filled with terror.' A nation from the north will attack it. That nation will destroy Babylonia. No one will live there. People and animals alike will run away. "A new day is coming," announces the LORD. "At that time the people of Israel and Judah will gather together. They will come in tears to me. I am the LORD their God. They will ask how to get to Zion. Then they will turn their faces toward it. They will come and join themselves to me. They will enter into the covenant I make with them. It will last forever. It will never be forgotten. "My people have been like lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them down the wrong path. They have caused them to wander in the mountains. They have wandered over mountains and hills. They have forgotten that I am their true resting place. Everyone who found them destroyed them. Their enemies said, 'We aren't guilty. They sinned against the LORD. He gave them everything they needed. He has always been Israel's hope.' "People of Judah, run away from Babylon. Leave the land of Babylonia. Be like the goats that lead the flock.” (Jer 50:1-8 NirV)

“Arise, LORD, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. May your priests be clothed with your righteousness; may your faithful people sing for joy.” For the sake of your servant David, do not reject your anointed one. The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever." For the LORD has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling, saying, "This is my resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it. I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor I will satisfy with food. I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her faithful people will ever sing for joy. "Here I will make a horn grow for David and set up a lamp for my anointed one.” (Psa 132:8-17 TNI V)

A Song. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. “Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King.” (Psa 48:1-2)

A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A Song. “ His foundation is in the holy mountains. The LORD loves the gates of Zion More than all the other dwelling places of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. Selah. "I shall mention Rahab and Babylon among those who know Me; Behold, Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia: "This one was born there." But of Zion it shall be said, "This one and that one were born in her"; And the Most High Himself will establish her. The LORD will count when He registers the peoples, "This one was born there." Selah. Then those who sing as well as those who play the flutes shall say, "All my springs of joy are in you.” (Psa 87:1-7 NASB)

Considering the current conditions throughout the world and the number of “enemies” we face each day, it becomes a priority for each of us to stay “focused” and to fix our eyes upon Jesus, keep our eye single toward Zion and our hearts and minds free from entanglement in worldly affairs. As John said in 1 John 2:15: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

(To be Continued?)

