

**AWAKE, YOU WHO SLEEP,**

**ARISE FROM THE DEAD,**

**AND CHRIST WILL GIVE YOU LIGHT – EPHESIANS 5, 14**

**OUR FRIEND LAZARUS SLEEPS, BUT I GO THAT I MAY WAKE HIM UP – JESUS**

This is the season of meditating on the Cross and celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I personally like the Lenten season, because for those who seek the Lord more than their usual time it is really a time which pulls one closer to God. In Madurai, in our locality, there is a fairly small church run by Tribal Outreach Mission, where during Lenten days they have prayer at 5 am. It is located on the fringe of society, most of them very poor and from very downtrodden background who earn on a daily basis. But the wonder of it is that on some days, the attendance to this early morning prayer surpasses the number on a Sunday Service, which is 30 plus. The Pastor of the church tells me that this time of the year is when there is literally a revival in the hearts of these people. Though there is no compulsion to come for this prayer, nevertheless they throng for they taste the refreshing of their souls. True to its meaning Lent brings forth fresh new leaves, lives.

But the problem is when this season with a great majority becomes purely ritualistic. No this message is not a critique whether we uphold Lent or leave, but it is all about me and my relationship with God. Is my relationship with God real or ritualistic? There is a danger of any Spirit filled believer slipping into a ritualistic piety in our walk with God. Sometimes our relationship to God can become very ritualistic in spite of being baptised in water and Spirit. We might have been powerfully anointed one day and today probably our walk with God may be only out of a sense of duty that one day the Lord touched our lives. Sounds familiar? These are some of the unseen snares our soul gets caught. We may be waxing eloquent how the

long seven message Good Friday services are very very ritualistic sans(without) life, but little would we know about our own soul that we also have become ritualistic Christians. We know the rules of the game, lifting our hands during the time of worship, speaking in tongues when we are expected to, acknowledging the word of caution for others and appropriating the word of appreciation for ourselves.

Yes my friend, in our busy lives we can be entrenched in the affairs of the secular world and ministry, can go on with a soul less relationship with God. I write this only out of my own experience. When the Lord's hand was heavy on my life, I could only think of God, His Kingdom; His Kingdom and God. There was nothing else. Early mornings I was always out there seeking His presence. But then the business entered in, work , ministry so on. I really didn't know when but gradually I was too tired to seek God's Presence and sending an apologetic prayer from my bed, "Lord let me sleep today," off I slipped into the land of dreams. Even when I sat for my regular prayer times and devotion it was more out of a sense of duty and not out of passion and love as it was once upon a time.

Somehow God has His own way of dealing with our deadened piety. Two weeks back when this verse : **AWAKE YOU WHO SLEEP, ARISE FROM THE DEAD AND CHRIST WILL GIVE YOU LIGHT** was read out in my Church in Madurai, it literally caught me off guard. It went through my heart literally like a searing double edged sword. It came with a frightening clarity, that when my heart dozes off and does not feel the presence of God, then I am already in the company of dead people. A soul that slumbers is as good as dead. Even though God has chosen me to be a light, I could still hide it under a bushel and sleep. It was such a loud wakening bell that I have to get up, rise up and get going to the place where I met my God in secret. That is when my heart went back to the beautiful passage in John 11, when Jesus

knowing well that Lazarus is dead tells His friends, **Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up** (11,11).

This is what I need for my soul, that Jesus walks into my life once again and pull me out of the tomb, the tomb that is stinking after the body has perished before four days. But the beauty is that it does not matter for Jesus whether I am completely, dead or stinking or only sleeping. It is all the same for Him, but Jesus being the Resurrection and Life needs to reach out and call us out with a loud voice, touch us with His tenderness and make our lives alive again. He is still able to do that and He still intercedes for us.

This has been my prayer for the last weeks asking Jesus to come back and call my soul out among the sleepers and the tomb, so that the light of Jesus may once again shine upon my life in all His Glory. Let us evaluate the kind of company we keep. A socially virile, volatile group can be totally dead before the eyes of God. In which company am I found, among the sleepers of the world or a loner at the top of the mountain with ears attuned to hear the **small still voice**?

Dear Jesus come into my life, walk into the stinking tomb that is now my heart and call me out from the desolation and darkness, so that my relationship with you is renewed like the first leaves of the season. Lord let Your purpose in my life be fulfilled, make me alive for Your plans and purposes. Shine Your light on me Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen.