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News of His

Vol. 47: No. 7 April 9, 2008

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Guided by His Word,
Serving in His Love

Sleeping Well

There is an old joke about a shoplifter who found religion. He wrote to a department store, saying, "I can't sleep at night because I feel guilty, so here's \$100 that I owe you for things I took from your store."

He signs his initials, but adds a little PS at the bottom: "If I still can't sleep, I'll send you the rest."

*²¹My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment,
do not let them out of your sight . . .
. . .²⁴when you lie down, you will not be afraid;
when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
— Proverbs 3:21, 24*

When considering all the promises of the Word of God, can you think of one any more practical; "*your sleep will be sweet*"? When God made us, He caused us to function best according to a regular rhythm of work and rest. It is our Father's intent that this rest be refreshing and peaceful. Of course, this rhythm is all too easily interrupted. There are times when an agitated conscience, a debilitating fear, a sinful fascination or a worrisome preoccupation can steal our sleep. The basis for sweet sleep, according to the author is "*sound judgment and discernment*" (premised, of course, on "*the fear of the Lord*" which is "*the beginning of wisdom*").

The Gospels bear evidence to the humanity of Jesus in this regard. His desire to rest is presented as a normal need, but His ability to rest was remarkable, particularly, on one occasion. The disciples were terrified for their lives as a storm swept down upon Lake Galilee. These were not the hysterical fears of weekend sailors who had no business on the lake. They were seasoned fishermen who well understood the reality of the peril that threatened them. But, where was Jesus? He was sleeping peacefully on the floor of the boat. The disciples were validly anxious for their lives. Jesus was resting just fine. Jesus understood perfect peace, because the "soundness" of His "*judgment and discernment*" was likewise perfect.

Proverbs addresses general principles and tendencies of one's life with God. Obviously, there are legitimate reasons why sleep is stolen at night. Sometimes, a person might awaken in the night sensing that God is calling him or her to prayer. There might

be physical maladies that affect our sleep. And, of course, one must lovingly bear with snoring spouses and hungry babies. But, granting such obvious exceptions, if we do not sleep well, that may very well constitute an attempt by the Holy Spirit to address a problem.

Are you living in obedience to the Word of God? Are you trusting Him in the dilemma *du jour*, determined to apply God's wisdom to your circumstance, or are you flirting with the world's pragmatic solution. Have you even been seeking God's wisdom in the matter? Is "*sound judgment and discernment*" guiding your conduct? Is God's grace being duplicated in your relationships, or is forgiveness simply a fascinating topic for Bible Studies and Sunday School classes that never really connects to your own troubled dealings with others?

Temptations, trials and terrors will come. Obstacles abound. You will stub your toe on some of them. Still, the pursuit of "*sound judgment and discernment*" will not go unrewarded. God Himself will be our confidence.

*³You will keep in perfect peace
him whose mind is steadfast,
because he trusts in you. — Isaiah 26:3*

Consider this bedtime prayer from the 11th century:

Be off, Satan, from this floor and from these four walls. This is no place for you; there is nothing for you to do here. This is the place for Peter and Paul and the holy Gospel; and this is where I mean to sleep now that my worship is done, in the name of the Father and of the Holy Spirit.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ [God] send me your Spirit; instill the wisdom of your Holy Spirit into my heart; protect my soul and body, every limb in my body, every fiber of my being, from all possible harm and all traps the Devil may set for me and every temptation to sin. Teach me to give you thanks, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. — *Euchologium Sinaiticum*. "Worship in the Early Church," *Christian History, Issue 37*.



Karl's Korner