

**Time to Wake Up!**  
Romans 13:11-14

---

**Introduction:**

How many of you would put yourself in the camp of “recovering Fundamentalist”? By that I mean that you were reared in the tradition of a strict separatist view of the world. Movies, drink, smoking, dancing, dress, etc. were all touted as taboo in order to demonstrate one’s separation from worldliness? By that I also mean that you were reared in the tradition of a harsh judgmental spirit that caused you to either look down on others or to feel that you were constantly being despised by others. And now many of us want nothing to do with such a stance or spirit. How many of you find yourself in that camp?

As I walk further away from the stance and spirit of fundamentalism, I am growing more concerned with those recovering Fundamentalists. What seems to be left in the wake is a bunch of weak consciences that are touting “freedom” all the while coming under the power of real sin. I have seen this trend in my own life and I see it continually in the lives of young people my age. We love the new stance and spirit of freedom and so we plunge head-long into the once-forbidden zone of “worldliness:” music, dance, drink, movies, dress, tobacco, cussing and the like. And while those things, in and of themselves, might be doable in freedom, I am afraid they are establishing a new watered-down version of godliness that sets up certain circles for real sin.

As I walk further away from the stance and spirit of Fundamentalism, I am rubbing shoulders more and more with people I otherwise would not have met. These people fall under the heading of “recovering pagans.” These are genuine believers who have been rescued from blatant iniquity and perverse living and converted to a real heart-hunger for Christ. As I speak with them, I am stunned to find a different world going on in their minds. These types have no desire to dabble in drink. Why would they? That leads to all kinds of debauchery. They have seen it. They have done it. They hate debauchery. But I am even more intrigued to hear them speak of my type. They are blown away that we would even think to get close to the line where the power and seduction of certain practices can sweep you into real sin. C.S. Lewis regarded himself as a converted pagan in the midst of lapsed Puritans. And I wonder if there isn’t an increasing divide today between converted pagans and recovering Fundamentalists.

Now hear me well. There is real sin and there is perceived sin. I am concerned with real sin. Others might perceive me to be sinning when I participate in certain activities; that’s true. But what about real sin? Do I have a clear-headed, well-grounded, biblically-sanctioned reason for doing what I do? Do I live for myself and my appetites or do I live for another’s?

There are weak Christians and there are strong ones. And the two groups exist in the same church. How do they handle one another? We will get to that in chapter 14 next week. What do we do when one thinks alcoholic beverage is sin and another one does not? We’ll get to that.

But first: do you know how to handle your own mind with regard to your own sin? Do you know when you cross the line into real sin? First, we need a wake-up call to holiness!

Romans 13:11-14 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

<sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

### **Wake Up! It's nearly Dawn!**

Do you know what to do with words like that? This passage is a firm wake-up call from Paul to all his readers. Time is running out! You don't have time to engage in sleep! Get up! Get dressed! Go to war! That's what he says. (That will be our outline: Get up! Get dressed! Go to war!)

### **Put the Passage in It's Place**

#### ***Broad Context***

This passage really is a conclusion to the section begun in 12:1-2:

<sup>1</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, ***holy*** and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (emphasis mine)

Did you hear the word "holy"? Recovering Fundamentalists cower under the word "holiness." They're afraid of it. Don't run from holiness. Holiness is about being useful for a purpose. It is about a king separating something out for a specific use, something to be useful for his mission. We are on mission. And we will not be useful in the mission to reach the world if we are continually being pressed into the world's mold ("conformed to this world"). Who shapes you? Someone does! Do you know who? You are on someone's mission. Do you know whose? These are the questions Paul wants us to ask of ourselves.

The connection for our passage is the use of two related words, "time" and "age." "You know the time..." This is the time when one age is drawing to a close and another age is about to dawn. Why would you allow this age to shape you when it is about to close? Furthermore, you are not really of this age. You have been born for the next age. Why are you settling in here as if it is home when you know it is not? When I frame it in this way, can't you already hear other biblical passages coming to mind?

**1 John 2:15-17 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves

the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.

<sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

This present evil age is coming to a close. Do you know what time it is?

Furthermore, there is a third connection between Romans 12:1-2 and our text (13:11-14). Specifically, Paul intimated that the way to keep from being pressed into the world's mold and conforming to their image takes place as you renew your mind. Now, in our passage, as we will see a bit later, the way you take up the battle is in your thought-life. Verse 14 says "make no provision for the flesh." That really means "take no thought..." We'll come back to that.

### *Near Context*

There is a powerful connection between our passage and the preceding one which spoke of the debt of love we all owe humanity. As God's blood-bought, chosen children, we have been graced. Therefore, we owe it to others to be gracious. We have been mercied. Therefore, we owe to others to be merciful. Why? Well the first reason Paul gave was because to love others fulfills the law. We said last week that it gets to the heart of the gospel. It gives us reason to go on mission. Jesus redeemed a body and we have become his hands and feet. We carry out the love of Jesus to others with this debt of love we owe.

But now, our passage is a further motivating factor for the command of love begun in 13:8. Do you see how v.11 begins with the words "besides this..."? Paul is giving another motivating factor for paying your debt of love. Besides the motivation that flows from fulfilling the law, there is an additional motive that flows from understanding the time. It is as though Paul were saying: "You owe it to love all men because (1) it fulfills the law and besides this, (2) you know what time it is."

This is similar to the words in Hebrews 10:24-25:

<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Our passage is a wake-up call for loving others. Do you love others? Do you despise others? Do you manipulate and use others? Do you know what time it is? Do you know whose mission you're on?

So let us hear the wake-up call: Get up! Get dressed! Go to war!

### **Get Up!**

This part of the wake-up call is quite obvious from the second phrase in v.11: "the hour has come for you to wake from sleep." Phrases like this ring in my ear because I am the son of my father. My dad had a cardinal rule against sleeping in. If you were not out of bed by 6 a.m. you were a sluggard of the first order. If you were not already elbow deep in work by 7 a.m. you were a lazy sack of nothin' – of the first order. We were reared

with an intense work ethic that included early rising. We hated those summer mornings when all our friends were sleeping-in until noon and here came our dad at 6 o'clock, "Wake up! It's nearly lunch time. Fun is work and work is fun! Let's go!" Lunch for my dad was between the hours of 9 and 10. He would already have a half-a-day in by then. When there is work to be done, there is no time for sleep. That is what Paul is saying.

Look at v. 12: "The night is far gone; the day is at hand..." Time for sleep is over. Get up! Morning has broken. But getting up is tied not just to the hour, but to understanding the nature of that hour. Both v.11, "the hour has come for you to wake from sleep..." and v.12, "the night is far gone; the day is at hand..." are grounded in the last phrase of v.11: "For salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed."

It is time to wake up because salvation is nearer now than it has ever been. Salvation's dawn is closer now than ever. Therefore, the night is nearly spent. Wake up!

And the wake up call is not so much an alarmist routine, but a call to arms. Fight to the finish deliverance is almost here. Hope! This is here for hope!

- For those who struggle with sin, the day has almost dawned – get up! Get dressed! Go to war!
- For those who are discouraged, the sun is rising on the horizon – don't sleep. Get up! Get dressed! Go to war!

Do you understand the time? We live in this paradoxical overlap between the closing of one age and the dawning of new one. This paradoxical overlap has been here for nearly 2,000 years. It dawned with Jesus' earthly ministry of the cross and resurrection and it will be consummated with his return. You are born for another time. You really don't belong here.

In a parallel passage, Paul uses the words "light" and "dark" as labels of identity.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:1-10 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. <sup>4</sup> But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup> For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. <sup>7</sup> For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

This parallel will help us understand our second point, Get dressed!

**Get Dressed!**

When Paul said in v.12 of our text: “The night is far gone; the day is at hand, so then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light” he is using language of dress. Take off one garment and put on another. We are familiar with this “put off” / “put on” language from Ephesians 5. Here, the clothes that we put on are described by two phrases, “armor of light” (v.12) and “Jesus Christ” (v.14). Somehow, we are able to wear Jesus like a garment. How? Well, the armor metaphor is very helpful.

What is the armor? In 1 Thessalonians 5:8 we have Paul’s answer: “Put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.” Notice the triad: faith, hope and love.

There are elements of this present evil age under the control of its ruler, Satan, that will continually attack your faith, hope and love. These three elements work in tandem so that Jesus is addressing your entire being:

- **Hope** → comes through the mind in the form of promises and commands
- **Faith** → regards those commands and promises as supremely valuable and beneficial at the level of your affections and emotions
- **Love** → carries out the mission of Jesus as we are ultimately filled in him and serving others.

You cannot act in love if you are uncertain of your future. You cannot act in love if you are unsettled in your identity.

Clothing is an identification factor. The point of the Thessalonian parallel is all about identity. Can you be identified with Jesus? Do you live in such a way that people automatically know you are a follower of Jesus? Are you identified with him? Or are you identified with the world?

- Can the world identify you as Jesus in the world by the way you use alcohol?
- Can the world identify you with Jesus by the way you act and speak with regard to sexuality?
- Can the world identify you with Jesus by the way you speak of yourself? By the way you defend your rights (“jealousy”) or the way you treat those who differ from yourself (“quarreling”)

List to how John puts it in 1 John 2:8

<sup>8</sup> At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. <sup>9</sup> Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. <sup>10</sup> Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. <sup>11</sup> But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

There is a way to treat others that betrays your true identity. Are of the light or of the darkness? Are you a child of the day or a child of night? Are you wearing sleep attire or armor? Do you understand the time?

Go to War!

If you are going to cast off the works of darkness and not be given to real sin like drunken carousing, sexual immorality and quarreling and jealousy, then you are going to have to fight. It will be war. That means that you cannot coast and sit idly by. You have to be tenacious and zealous to protect your holiness.

So Paul says that the way you put on Jesus and cast off works of darkness is to “make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.” Literally, he says “take no thought unto desires...” Do not let a single thought into your mind that has as its aim the satisfaction of sinful passions. Just as in 12:2, so here: the battle for the ages is determined in the mind.

Putting Jesus on like a garment means putting on a breastplate of faith and love and guarding your mind with the helmet of the hope of your salvation.

When I am lonely, depressed or discouraged, don't let any thought into your mind that offers up drink as a solution. That's not Jesus!

When it comes to being entertained, don't allow any thought to enter your mind that offers up sexuality and promiscuousness as a legitimate end.

Do not seek to justify your rights in your mind in such a way that it leads you down paths of despising another person. Do not so craft your thoughts against others that would cause you to be conceited in quarreling. Do not even begin to think in such a way that things look like you. Craft every thought so that every affection and every action that follows looks like Jesus.

People can identify you by your clothes. Do your actions identify you with Jesus? Or the world?

### **Conclusion:**

You know what time it is...the night is nearly done. The morning is dawning. Keep fighting the fight for faith. Keep on mission. Get up! Do not slumber in despair.

Get dressed! Get dressed in the armor of light. Jesus has come. The real light has dawned. You are a child of light. Dress like one. Look like Jesus in the world.

Go to War! Fight to have Jesus in your mind. Fight for hope. Camp on promises and commands of Jesus until they look lovely to you. Then, with love for others, live them out.

Are you wearing Jesus today?