

Get Up and Get Dressed!
Putting On the Lord Jesus Christ
Romans 13:11-14

Text:

Romans 13:11-14 (ESV)

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, **not in** orgies and drunkenness, **not in** sexual immorality and sensuality, **not in** quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ **But** put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Introduction:

Summer is here! Finally! And yet on the other hand, I could say summer is here? Already? The school year seems to go by so quickly and yet, it's here finally!

With the arrival of summer comes a reprieve from the well-rehearsed and one-sided morning conversation between Tina and our two oldest children that went something like this:

"Mikayla...Wake up! It's time for school. Mikayla...get up and get dressed!" Or, "Brice...Brice...Brice...Brice, Wake up, Brice...Brice...it's time for school, Brice...Brice...Get up...Stand up, Brice...get your clothes on. It's time for school!" Mornings are for getting up and getting dressed. That's exactly what Paul says here in our text.

This passage is divided into two parts. The first part is vv11-12a. It talks about the time, the hour, the night, the day and waking up. It assumes that once you understand the time, you will be ready for what comes next. The second part begins with the words "so then" in vv.12b-14. It talks about putting off and putting on – getting dressed. So, mornings are for getting up and getting dressed. But, I said the first part assumes that once you understand the time, you will be ready for what comes next. The first part has to precede the second because knowing the time informs the getting dressed.

When Tina said to the kids, "Get up! It's time for school. Wake up! Get dressed!" What was she doing? She was informing them about the time. They needed to know the time because knowing the time informs what comes next, namely, their getting dressed. The valuable piece of information was "it's time for school." The fact that the day was a school day informed the kids about how they should dress – they need to be dressed in school clothes. So I want you to see that Paul writes to help you know how to dress for today.

First we must understand the time then we must understand the dress. Only, you know he is not talking about calendar days and physical dress; he is referring to spiritual time and heart dress. Given the day in which we live, what should our life look like? That's what this text is about. So we need to address this question first, "What is the time?" What do I need to know about the time in which I live?

It is apparent to most conservative commentators on the book Romans that chapters 12 and 13 form a two chapter unit for Paul's argument. One of the concluding factors in this assumption is the way the use of "time" forms a kind of *inclusio* [book-ends] (so Moo). In other words, Paul opens up the section in 12:1-2 discussing an understanding of the time and he closes the section in 13:11-14 with a call for understanding the time.

Notice 12:1-2

Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

¹ 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. ² Do not be conformed to this world [age], 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.

He calls on the readers to not be conformed to this age – this time – but to be conformed to something else. His call in 12:2 is negative – do not be conformed to this age. Why? Elsewhere, this age is referred to by Paul as the “present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). Do not be conformed to this evil age, but be transformed.

Well, in 13:11, the call to understand the time is positive. He is not calling on you to not do something but to do something. That is, he wants you to understand the time in which you live. So what does he mean? What is the time?

1 Thessalonians 5 appears to be a parallel passage that helps us understand the time.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-10 (ESV)

¹ Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. ² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ 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. ⁴ But you are not in **darkness**, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep **awake** and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are **drunk at night**. ⁸ 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**. ⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain **salvation** through our Lord Jesus Christ...

You can see all the parallels with Romans 13. He describes “the time” here as “day of the Lord” – his return. But in Romans 13, Paul has said that the time is near, salvation is nearer today than it was when we first believed. The day has dawned, in other words. But this is the time.

The time in which we live is the time between the first and second comings of Christ. We live in this overlap period between the end of the ages and the age to come. Listen to how Paul speaks in other places:

All of the events of the OT were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come (1 Cor. 10:11). When Jesus came, the end of the ages came. That is, he brought the future with him. So Christ’s first coming has brought the presence of the future. That’s the way George Eldon Ladd says it. The age to come is not here in total yet; but it is inaugurated.

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old [age] has passed away; behold, the new [age] has come” (2 Cor. 5:17). This dawning of the new creation has begun. It has not yet been completed. That won’t happen until the new heaven and the new earth. God, in Christ, is in the process of making all things new.

Another reference says that God has transferred us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col. 1:13).

So if you take these three references, you begin to see what Paul meant when he said, “know the time!” The end of the ages has come, the new creation has come, the kingdom is now. Do you understand the time in which you live? You and I can live today with the power of Christ because the life-giver has come, the deliverer has conquered, the king reigns. We live in the power and presence of the age to come. We simply groan as we eagerly await the consummation.

So what is the time in which we live? We live in the overlap between the end of this age and the age to come.

- We live in the overlap between this present evil age characterized by sin and death and pain, and suffering and ruled by Satan and the age to come characterized by righteousness and eternal life and bliss and ruled by Christ.
- We live in the already-but-not-yet time.
- We live in the inaugural but not consummated time.

But notice what Paul says about the time in v. 11: “salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand.” Do you realize that the night is far gone? Do you see the dawning sun as it has begun to eclipse the horizon? Do you understand your time? Do you understand the tension between pain and healing? Do you understand the tension between justification, sins forgiven and yet still sinning? Do you understand the tension between death and life? We live in this crazy time of overlap. We live in the shadow lands, as C.S. Lewis called it. We see only the shadows of forever. As the writer of Hebrews said, we can “taste the goodness of the powers of the age to come” (Heb 6.5). Do you taste that goodness?

Once you understand the crazy tension of the time in which you live – the tension between the already and the not yet – you can understand how to get dressed. Look at what he says in the second section beginning in the middle of v.12: “So then, since you understand the time, that the hour has come for wakefulness, get dressed by casting off the works of darkness and putting on the...[and here is where you might expect him to say something other than what he says. But he says...put on the] **armor of light**. Now what does that tell you about the time in which we live? It is a time of warfare! When a person comes to Christ in this life, their life, most often does not get easier, it gets harder.

I am finding out that the more a person begins to understand Christianity, they harder life gets for them. This is especially true in a marriage where one partner starts to understand life in Christ when the other does not. This does not make life easier – in fact – it upsets the happy equilibrium that had been enjoyed for years – the copasetic arrangement that just overlooked, ignored or whitewashed issues. Jesus said that when he came, he came to set a mother against a daughter and a father against a son (Matt. 10:35).

The more you deal with your own sinful heart, the harder life gets! You come to see that what was once regarded as a friend on a lonely night is now an enemy – TV, movies, drink, nicotine, friends, work, hobby, shopping, reading material, internet, etc.

In fact, Paul continues by giving us three pairs of sins – 6 in total – but probably three categories of sin – not to be limited to these that he mentions, but they serve their purpose:

- Orgies and drunkenness – *Substance Abuse*
- Sexual immorality and sensuality – *Sexuality*
- Quarreling and jealousies – *Self-promotion*

We will label these three sins as categories of sins: Substance abuse, All-things Sexual, and Self-promotion (really, any hyphenated “self” word, e.g., self-protection, self-defense, etc.).

So what Paul says is that by way of casting off the works of darkness and putting on the armor of light, we are going to be living in a way that is fitting the day dwellers and not the night dwellers. You see, there are only two categories of people: the night dwellers and the children of light. There are only two outfits: the works of darkness and the armor of light. What are you dressed in today? Understand the time! It's war. Yes the dragon has been defeated. The fatal blow has been delivered between the scales of his rough exterior but he is still breathing out fatal fire as he writhes in the pains of death. Do you get the picture? Satan is defeated! But he still writhes. He can still do you damage. Be dressed for war!

In the 1 Thessalonians parallel that we read earlier Paul spends his time describing what the armor of light looks like. He talks there about the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of salvation. You can hear the usual trio of faith, hope and love. You need the breastplate and the helmet. You need to guard your heart and mind. That is where Satan attacks. And we know this is where Paul puts the battle because in Romans 12:2 he has already addressed the need to not be conformed to this present evil age by renewing your mind. So if we were preaching in Thessalonians we would spend our time addressing the positive attire – the armor of light. But here in Romans, Paul spends the majority of his paragraph describing what is to be cast off as works of darkness. And really, you must not misunderstand! This is not an either or. You do not get undressed and walk around without getting dressed. Getting undressed is to get dressed. Casting off the works of darkness is to be putting on the armor of light.

Here in our text, Paul changes his words at the start of v. 14 from putting on the armor of light to putting on Jesus Christ. And what I want to finish off with this morning is by unpacking the means Paul gives for how you get undressed – casting off the works of darkness and how you get dressed – putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. The means that Paul gives is in the phrase, “and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

I have chosen this paragraph from Romans to preach to you because since I have come to understand these verses, they have been the single most helpful nugget of truth for my spiritual warfare. I have seen this type of warfare all throughout a book by the Puritan John Owen called, *Sin and Temptation*.

“The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business, all their day, to mortify [put to death] the indwelling power of sin.”

“Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live, cease not a day from this work; be killing sin, or it will be killing you.”

“When sin lets us alone, we may let it alone.”

“Every rise of lust, might it have its course, would come to the height of villainy.”

“Let not that man think he makes any progress in holiness, who walks not over the neck of his lusts.”

It is this thought that I have found very practically in Paul here in v. 14: “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” What does he mean?

The word “provision” is the word *pronoia* – “forethought.” And when I read v. 14 in English: “make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires” to mean do not put yourself in a position where you have opportunity to gratify a desire – don't go to the beach – don't go to the bar – don't go to the movie theatre – don't rent a movie at Blockbuster – *Don't be a stumbling block to yourself*. Do you see what I mean? In English it seems that we are not to make provision for the gratification.

There is a problem here, however. If I understand Jesus aright, having the scratch that wants itched is sin in and of itself whether or not you can have it scratched. I can still desire sensuality without going

to the beach. I can still crave the numbing affect of alcohol without going to the bar. I can still...Do you see?

How do I walk over the neck of my lusts? And that is what this verse is all about!

The verse literally says, "Make no forethought unto desires." That is as literal as you can get. I think Paul means this: "Don't let any thought enter your brain that could possibly awaken a desire in your body." Once the thought is in there, you're cooked!

I think Paul means – don't be conformed to present evil age by renewing your mind (Romans 12:2); I think Paul means – bring every thought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5); I think Paul means – be big time about guarding your thoughts.

Here is what it looks like if we take these three categories:

Substance Abuse – If you are lonely, tired, frustrated, stressed out, discouraged, or depressed, do not even begin to let the thoughts form in your head that would ponder the relief alcohol, marijuana, nicotine, or food could bring. I said food because I tend to run to food when I get stressed. Run to Christ. Put on Christ. Cast off the clothes of darkness and put on the armor of light. Substance abuse leads to drunkenness and orgies. Don't simply avoid drunkenness and loss of control. Walk over the neck of your lust by not even allowing the thoughts to brew in your head that would awaken the desire!

Sensuality – If you are alone and bored some night surfing the web, do not even allow the thoughts of intrigue to enter your head of what a few pornographic pictures could do for you. If you are a woman married to a man who simply does not understand you or who does not take interest in the things you're interested in, don't even begin to day dream about Mr. Perfect. If you wonder why there is no Mr. Right or Ms. Right to hold you and embrace you at this stage in your life, don't even begin to formulate thoughts in your head of what you would want them to do for you. To awaken the desire would only lead to sexual immorality or sensuality – works of darkness. Walk over the neck of your lusts and don't even let the thought in.

Self-Promotion – Maybe you have been hurt by someone, wronged, misunderstood, overlooked, forgotten, or belittled. Don't let any thoughts toward self-pity be aroused in your brain because they can only produce feelings for resentment, anger, covetousness or envy that lead to quarrellings and jealousies – works of the flesh. Walk over the neck of your lust for self-promotion and self-protection.

Conclusion:

Church, we must be big time about guarding our thoughts if we are going to live in this time of overlap. We live in a day filled with sin and sensuality. Yet we live in this time with all the power of the age to come at our disposal. You are a child of the king living in the power of his kingdom. You are not a citizen of this territory. You can roam these streets clothed with the armor of light. You must look like a earth dweller, a night dweller.

Renew your mind.

Take every thought captive unto obedience.

Do not make any forethought that would awaken desires that can only be carried out in works of the flesh. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ!