

Wake Up, Cast Off, Put On

Romans 13:11-14

Happy Mother's Day to all of you moms today. I appreciate who God has made you to be and the wonderful and difficult calling He has for your life as a parent.

One of the challenges that face moms and dads as their kids are growing up is mornings. Some kids just don't want to wake up and get moving. I'm an early riser. I usually wake up without an alarm, jump out of bed quickly and get started on my day. It wasn't always so. When I was in high school I had a sign on my bedroom door that said "Do not disturb, I wake up slow!" Sometimes I would not slide out of bed until about 5 minutes before school was due to start (good thing I lived right across the street from the high school).

One of our kids always had trouble waking up in the morning. It was so bad at times I seriously thought about getting one of those obnoxiously loud air horns and sounding it in their ear in the mornings.

In today's scripture from Romans 13, Paul sounds the air horn to wake us up spiritually. Please follow along in your Bibles as I read Romans 13:11-14:

11 And *do this*, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed.

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

Paul begins verse 11 with the phrase, "**And do this**" literally it reads, "*And this.*" And what? Paul is referring back to all that he has been saying in the last two chapters. He has urged us to present our bodies as living sacrifices, to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, to love and serve one another in the body of Christ, to love others without limits, to overcome evil with good, to be subject to authorities for the Lord's sake, and especially to fulfill the law of God by loving others. All that is wrapped up in the first words of verse 11, "*And this.*" In other words, do all this, love like this, because you know the time.

Paul wants us to recognize the urgency of what he has been teaching. Beginning in chapter 12, Paul has been calling us to action. This call to action was based on what he taught about the gospel of Jesus Christ in chapters 1-11. In Romans 12:1 He called us to action "**in view of God's mercy**" (NIV),

that is, God's mercy shown to us in saving us from sin and giving us righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ.

Now here in Romans 13:11 Paul indicates another reason for living out our faith in Jesus Christ. We are to live holy, humble, authentic, submissive, loving lives as believers in Jesus Christ not only because of God's mercies shown to us in the past, but also in view of God's mercies that will be shown to us in the future. So Paul calls us to wake up and realize the time.

1. Wake Up! (Rom. 13:11-12)

Verse 11, "**And do this, knowing the time...**" What is it about this "time" that motivates us? What time is he talking about? The rest of verse 11 and the first part of verse 12 give us some clues to this.

a. Time to awake out of sleep (13:11)

The middle of verse 11 says, "**that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.**"

What time is it? There's God's alarm clock. Do you hear it? God is saying, "It is no longer time to sleep, it's time for you to wake up." The dawn is here. The full day is approaching. It's not time for sleeping, it's time for action.

What does it mean to be spiritually asleep? Let me read you the dictionary definition of sleep. Then we'll apply it spiritually. This is what sleep is according to the dictionary. It is "*a state of inactivity with a loss of consciousness and a decrease in responsiveness to the events taking place around you.*" In other words, when you're asleep, obviously you are sort of unconscious. You don't know what's going on around you. The truth is, there are some of you in this building today, you're sitting here, your eyes are open, you are watching me, listening God's word, but you are spiritually asleep. In other words, you are not sensitive to what is going on around you spiritually.

If you are the kind of person who never opens your Bible except on Sunday at church, you may be asleep. If you are the kind of person who does not recognize the needs of people around you, you may be spiritually asleep. If there is no real difference between the way you live and your unsaved neighbors, you may be sleep. If you have no concern for the lost and for reaching the nations with the gospel of Christ, you may be sleeping. In other words you are just totally unconscious to the activity of God in this world and in this church. God says, "Wake up. The alarm has gone off." Now is the hour to awake.

Why do we need to wake up? The hour is upon us. What hour?

b. Time when our Salvation is closer (13:11)

It is near the hour when our salvation will be complete. Verse 11, "**for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.**"

“Salvation” means deliverance. It is used as a past—referring to our justification; as a present—referring to our sanctification; and as a future—referring to our glorification. We have been delivered from the penalty of sin; we are being delivered from the power of sin; and we shall be delivered from the presence of sin. Three dimensions converge in the one word—salvation. So what does it mean that, “salvation is nearer to us than when we believed”? Here Paul refers to salvation in its fullness or completeness.

It’s what he wrote about in Romans 8:23, **“Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”**

This is a word of hope to those of us who groan under the incompleteness of our salvation. Of course, our sins are already forgiven, our guilt is already removed, we are already justified (Romans 5:1), our condemnation is gone—“there is therefore NOW not condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). But oh, salvation is so much more than this. It is being done with sin. It is being done with disease. It is being done with discouragement and depression. It is being done with sinning. And most of all it is being done with seeing Christ only in a mirror dimly. Salvation is finally and fully to see him face to face. And Paul says, every day of your groaning life you are getting closer and closer to the greatest thing of all—Christ. Our final salvation is Christ. And he is nearer every day. (Piper)

So he says,

c. Time when the day of Christ’s return is near (13:12)

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand.”

“The night” stands for this age of darkness and all its sin and misery and death. And what does Paul say about it? “The night is far gone.” The age of sin and misery and death is almost spent. Christ’s return soon. You might say that 2,000 years after Paul seems like a long dawn. From one standpoint it is. And we cry, How long, O Lord, how long will you let it go on? But the biblical way to think is different in two ways.

The key way it is different is that the day has dawned in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the end of this fallen age. He defeated sin and pain and death and Satan. The decisive battle is over, Christ won it at the cross and through His resurrection. The kingdom has come. Eternal life has come.

And when dawn happens—as it did in the coming of Jesus—no one should doubt the coming of day. Not even if the dawn draws out 2,000 years. It is certain. The day has arrived. Nothing can stop the rising sun.

If we did not have this hope—that the day of evil and misery and death is far gone and the day of righteousness and joy and life is at hand—how could we live in this world of darkness? How could Christians all over the world endure

persecution? How could we handle the temptations of our flesh? How could we survive the death of our loved ones?

This is a word of hope to suffering Christians. It's a word of hope to Christians who hate their own sin and long to be done with sinning. It's a word of hope to Christians who long for the last enemy death to be overcome and thrown into the lake of fire.

2. Cast Off! (Rom. 13:12-13)

Have you ever tried to walk in the dark? Maybe it was in the middle of the night and you got up to get something in the kitchen. You didn't want to be startled awake by the light, so you were groping your way along when suddenly your shin whacked against a child's chair that was not where it was supposed to be. Ouch!

The Bible often describes this sinful world and those who live in it as darkness. Satan and his evil forces are described as "the world forces of this darkness" (Eph. 6:12). His territory is the "domain of darkness" (Col. 1:13). Unbelievers are "darkened in their understanding" (Eph. 4:18) because the god of this world has blinded them (2 Cor. 4:4). Jesus said that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). He is the Light of the world. If we follow Him, we "will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8:12; see, also John 12:35).

Verse 12 says, "**Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness.**" It's time to change what you have on. Throw off the filthy rags of your old sinful life and put on the armor of life.

Paul spells out the world's deeds of darkness with three couplets of sinful behavior. These are not comprehensive, but representative. Also, the fact that he commands Christians to lay aside these deeds of darkness shows that we are not immune from doing them. As believers, we must be on guard so that we are not enticed by these sins.

a. Sensuality "**not in revelry and drunkenness.**"

The Greek word translated "revelry" was used generally of "feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in carousing" Many first century believers came out of backgrounds where they had "pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries" (1 Pet. 4:3). Paul lists drunkenness and carousing as deeds of the flesh (Gal. 5:21). But such things are not appropriate for believers.

b. Immorality “**not in lewdness and lust.**”

Second, the deeds of darkness consist in sexual promiscuity and sensuality. The first word refers here to sexual intercourse outside of marriage. The second word means licentiousness and unrestrained lust. It is also a deed of the flesh (Gal. 5:19), characteristic of unbelievers, not of believers (Eph. 4:19-20). God has given the marriage relationship as the proper place for sexual relations. To engage in any sexual activity outside of marriage is to participate in the deeds of darkness (Eph. 5:3-12).

c. Hostility “**not in strife and envy.**”

Third, the deeds of darkness consist in strife and jealousy. These are relational sins that we often shrug off as no big deal. But they are opposed to the second greatest commandment, which is to love others as we love ourselves.

Strife speaks of unhealthy competition, a desire to be number one at all costs. Envy is anger at the success of others or anger at your failures when compared with others. These two sins of the hearts—hidden though they may be—have no place in the Christian life. They belong to the darkness you left behind the moment you came to Christ.

The night is fading away, and with it the need to wear the rags of the old life. Christian, it's time to change your clothes. Throw away those deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light!

Do you see the process? Identify particular deeds of darkness, areas of sin that have gotten a foothold in your life. Then be decisive with them. Lay them aside; cast them off. Quit playing with them and tolerating them! You are living in light of the Day of Christ's return. “The day is near,” so slink no longer! Put off these sins by the grace of God. He has given you the indwelling Spirit to help you and the sure promises to build you up.

3. Put On! (Rom. 13:13-14)

a. The Armor of Light (13:12)

Sin loves a vacuum, so you cannot just put off sin but you must “**put on the armor of light.**” “Armor,” is translated as “weapon” in other places, so it gives a military picture. He's referring to something that has you equipped for spiritual battle. Three passages shed light in helping us to understand what he means.

[2Co 6:7 NKJV] “**by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,**” Weapons are in both hands—so this is not a partial battle position but one that means we are fully engaged in battling evil with the righteousness of Christ.

[Eph 6:11 NKJV] 11 “**Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**” Then Paul identifies various

parts of the armor, picturing the soldier engaged for battle, not one comfortably hiding back home. He speaks of loins girded with truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet shod with the gospel, the shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (6:14-17).

[1Th 5:8 NKJV] 8 **But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and [as] a helmet the hope of salvation.**

Faith, hope, and love are put into the believer's arsenal against the foes of darkness.

So, when we're told to "put on the armor of light," the "light" stands in contrast to the darkness. In everything the darkness is against us, the light stands opposite. Darkness influences us to evil; light calls us to live out righteousness. Darkness promotes lying, deceit, and false teaching; light arms us with truth in speaking and as foundation for living. Darkness breeds fear that we cannot live as a Christian; light puts our confident trust in Christ and His promises. Darkness presses us to hold bitterness and grudges against others; light calls us to love as Christ has loved, forgive as Christ has forgiven, and accept as Christ has accepted us. Darkness puts a gloom over us; light causes us to live in the sure hope of the finished work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

b. The Lord Jesus Christ (13:14)

To "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" is to delight in Him above all things. That's really what is happening when we put on the "whole armor of God." We're putting on the Lord Jesus Christ by delighting in Him, by thinking of His truth, His righteousness, His gospel of peace, His salvation, His Word, and faith in Him. John Piper expressed it like this: "Faith comes from hearing, so put on Christ by listening to the word of God about Christ. Hope comes from promises, so put on Christ by remembering the promises of Christ. Love comes by the loveliness of Christ, so put on Christ by calling to mind his beauty" [Piper, www.desiringGod.org, 'Put on the Lord Jesus Christ,' Part 2].

What do well-dressed Christians wear? They wear the Lord Jesus Christ. What should you wear to work tomorrow morning? Put on Jesus! What should you wear to class this week? The answer is Jesus! How about what you wear to the store or on vacation or while you are just hanging around the house? Put on Jesus! He's always appropriate for every occasion.

Put on his holiness.

Put on his beauty.

Put on his humility.

Put on his purity.

Put on his compassion.

Put on his wisdom.

Put on his forgiveness.

Put on his righteousness.

Put on his zeal.

Put on his patience.

Put on his love.

Clothe yourself with Jesus early in the morning and you will be well-dressed all day long.

But there is one thing you need to know. Christ must be in you before he can be on you. He must live in your heart as Lord and Savior before you can take him with you to work. It's not enough to know about Jesus; you must know him in your heart and trust him as your Savior and Lord.

This very scripture is the one that God used to save one of the most influential Christians of all time, Augustine. He had been a promiscuous young man and had lived for some years with a mistress. He had come under conviction of sin and wanted to be saved, but he had not yet gained assurance of God's forgiveness. He was weeping over his spiritual condition as he sat in the garden of a friend when he heard a child singing, "Take up and read! Take up and read!" He picked up a scroll that lay nearby and his eyes fell on the words, "Not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." At that point, he said (*Confessions*, 8.12), "Instantly, as the sentence ended—by a light, as it were, of security infused into my heart—all the gloom of doubt vanished away."

It's time to wake up from our spiritual slumber, cast off the deeds of darkness, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.