

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

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Romans 13:11-14 "Christian Living in the Last Days"

Intro. Last Sunday in vv. 8-10 we learned more about the Christian's duty to love others. In our text today we are given a good reason why we should love. Notice v.11, "And *do* this, knowing the time...." This introduction therefore indicates another reason why the readers are to fulfill the great commandment to love, since they "know the time." We need to love one another, especially when you consider the days in which we are living. In the last days hatred and violence will abound, and we need to love one another all the more.

The Bible teaches that this present evil age is going to end. Sin, sorrow, and death will not continue indefinitely. The night of this present evil age will some day give way to the dawn of a new age. Jesus Christ is coming to earth again, and put an end to the curse of sin, and the rebellion of man, and the work of Satan. The Bible does not tell us when He will come, but based on the signs of the times, He could come again soon. So any love you show must be shown now. Any people we are going to win to Christ must be won now, before it is too late. At the close of this section of the letter Paul cries out, "Jesus is coming; wake up! Get busy serving Him while there is time."

Many of the New Testament writers preached the Second Coming of Christ as an incentive for godly living and active service. Peter said in 2 Pet. 3:11, "since all these things are to be destroyed, what manner of men ought you to be in all holy living and godliness." John said in 1 Jn. 2:28, "Little children, abide in him that when He appears, we may have confidence, and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming." So today I will take Paul's appeal as my own, and remind us of the truth that Jesus is coming again, and may our lives be transformed by this truth.

Now in light of the soon return of Christ, the first thing we need to do is:

I. WAKE UP!

I believe Paul is using an analogy in this text of a person who is called upon to wake up, cast of their night clothes, and put on what they need to walk in the light of day. So Paul is calling upon Christians to wake up. There are too many Christians who are asleep spiritually. Too many Christians have gone to sleep on the job! Like ole Samson, they have gone to sleep in the lap of Delilah. We need revival. We need to wake up!

Do you know what Napoleon said when he looked at China? Napoleon saw the vast teeming millions in China, and he said, "There lies a sleeping giant. Let him sleep, because if he awakens, he will shake the world." I really believe the devil says that about the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There lies a sleeping giant. The devil wants us to sleep, but what would happen if the church would only wake up! And so notice what Paul says in v.11, "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep...."

Now what does this verse mean? Though you might want to use this verse to get your children out of bed on Sunday morning, Paul does not have in mind waking out of physical sleep. He is not even talking about those who are literally asleep in church. "Sleep" here is the state of worldly carelessness and indifference to sin, & the things of God. Jesus said in Matthew 26:4, "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." Temptations will abound, especially in these

last days. Many Christians are even asleep to the things of God. They are complacent, non-aggressive and lazy in their Christian life and service.

Also, we are to be awake and watchful for His coming. 1 Thess. 5:6 says in a context of the return of Christ, "Therefore let us not sleep, as others do; but let us watch and be sober." Jesus said in Matthew 25:13, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." How can you "watch" for His coming? One way is to look for the signs of the end times. I'll talk more about that later. We also need to maintain an attitude of looking & longing for His coming. There are too many Christians who are living their lives as if Jesus were not coming again. Their attention is focused too much upon living in this world, and not enough on the return of Christ.

Now Paul gives 3 reasons for this command in my text to wake up:

A. Because It is *Time* to Wake Up – [Have sound operator play a rerecorded alarm sound?] Paul says in v.11, "And do this, knowing the time..." Most of us do not wake up just any time we feel like it. We wake up when the alarm goes off, announcing that it is time to wake up. As I get older, I wake up at daybreak, which also announces it is time to wake up. Paul says here that "now it is high time to awake out of sleep." Literally, he says it is already the hour to wake up. God's alarm clock is going off around the world. Have you listened to the news lately? So what hour is it on God's timetable? I use the word "timetable" because the word "time" here (*kairos*) does not refer to chronological time. It refers to a special, fixed period of time. We are living in that time period described in v.12, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Paul is referring to the last epoch of history preceding Christ's return.

Paul's readers knew that, in one sense, they were already living in the last days. God promised that He would send a Messiah. He's done that. Isa. 53 & Psalm 22 predicted that He would die a terrible death for our sin. He's done that. Psa. 116 predicted that He would rise from the dead. He's done that. Psa. 110 predicted that He would be exalted and sit on the throne at the right hand of God. He's done that. Jesus & the prophets predicted the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all of God's people. He's done that. The prophets predicted that the Jews would be restored to their land. He's did that in 1948. In fact, in 2006, for the first time in 1900 years, there are once again more Jews living in Israel than in any other place on Earth.¹ Jesus predicted in Matt. 24 that this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all nations, and then shall the end come. Well, he's just about done that. Depending on how you interpret prophecy, there could be little or nothing left before the next event in God's timetable, which is the return of Christ. So it is time to "awake out of sleep," for Jesus is coming again. Let Him find us awake and working for Him when He comes.

So knowing the time, we should also wake up:

B. Because Our Salvation Is Near - Notice what Paul says in the last of v.11, "for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed." Paul is talking about our final, completed salvation, including our glorification. If that was true in Paul's day, it is even more true today! Then in v.12 he says, "...the day is at hand..." The "day", without further characterization or specification, is used by Paul and other New Testament writers as an end times designation, such as "the Day of the Lord" or "the Day of Christ." For the believer in Christ, the "day" means the end of trouble and the beginning of our eternal reign with Christ. It's as if the sun of the kingdom age is just beginning to cast a few rays of light over the horizon. With the anticipation of the trumpet of

¹ Washingtonpost.com, by Charles Krauthammer, Friday, May 5, 2006.

the Lord's advent ringing in our ears, Paul sounds the reveille for God's soldiers in this world to wake up.

Besides, the anticipation & excitement of the near coming of Christ should wake us up. For example, as a child, I would wake up on my own very early only two times each year: at Christmas and when we went on vacation. The excitement and anticipation made it easy to wake up. Even so, we should wake up easily as we think of the Second Coming of Christ.

Finally, we should wake up:

C. Because the Night Is Almost Over – Paul says in v.12, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” That which precedes the return of Christ should be called “the night,” for this present evil age is a time of moral darkness (Gal. 1:4, etc.). According to prophecy, the darkness of night will get even darker before this age is over. We are living near the end of this age of darkness. When Paul says in v.12, “The night is far spent, he is using an old word (*prokopto*) that literally describes someone who is leading & making progress by cutting their way through new territory. This evil age is making progress to completion.

How long will this night last? It may indeed end soon, for there are many signs that we are in the last hour of the night of evil. The sands of time are running low. 2 Tim. 3:1-3 says, “...in the last days... men shall be without natural affection...” Natural affection is the natural love that parents have for their children. We keep hearing stories of mothers killing their own children, just because they were getting in the way of having fun! Many are turning over their kids to be raised by grandparents, and foster parents. The book of Revelation, chapter 13, predicts there will be something like a world government led by a powerful figure, called in Scripture the Antichrist. We are rapidly heading in that direction. Other prophecies predict though that the Antichrist will begin with a revival of what was the Roman Empire, a united Europe. That is happening right before our eyes. Europe even has a common currency now. Revelation 18 predicts the fall of a great world-wide economic system. That world-wide economic system has been rapidly coming together with trade agreements like NAFTA. The internet is creating a world economic system. Have you heard of the World Bank? Have you heard of the International Monetary Fund? I could go on and on giving the signs of the times that are already present upon us.

So the night may soon be over! It is time to wake up and do something for God. When the night is over, our opportunity for service in this life will be over. The Lord Jesus said, “I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work.” Paul said in Eph. 5:16 that we are to be “redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” My friend, life is too short, eternity is too long, souls are too precious, and the gospel is too wonderful for us to merely take it easy. There's one thing you won't do in heaven, and that's win souls. Have you ever thought about it? If that loved one is going to be saved, they better be saved soon, because the night of this present evil age will soon be over. And even before the dark night of this present evil age is over, the opportunity to be saved will be over for many. For 2 Thess. 2:11-12 says, “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be condemned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

In light of the time in which we are living, what else should we do? Well notice secondly that we should not only wake up, but also:

II. GET UP & TAKE OFF YOUR NIGHT CLOTHES!

Verse 12 says, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” The language is vividly picturesque. A band of soldiers lies-asleep. Light begins to stir and whisper over the horizon. As the twilight begins to dawn, the bugle call summons them to awake, to throw off their night-clothing, namely, the works of darkness, and to brace on their armor of light. Too many of us wake up when we hear a good SS lesson, or a good song, or a good sermon, but then we just roll over and go back into a state of sleep as soon as church is over!

So we not only need to wake up, but we need to cast off the clothing that is used for sleeping. To be specific, Paul lists some sins that are common among people who are still living in moral darkness. Though we are men & women of light, we sometimes clothe ourselves with darkness, which is a contradiction. Christian, it is time to put off these works of darkness. My friend, this is not the time for the child of God to live for the things of this world. So notice some examples of such works. Paul gives 3 types of sins that we are especially to put off:

A. Partying – Paul says in v.13 that we are to walk “not in revelry and drunkenness.” “Revelry” is from *kamos* in Greek, which originally referred to a festal procession in honor of the god of wine. The word degenerated to indicate carousing in general. So the word refers to feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night. Practically, this means that no Christian should attend a function where lustful passions are aroused. The companion to reveling is drunkenness. No Christian should ever get drunk and lose control of their moral senses. When you are drunk, you are not spiritually awake, as Paul exhorts in v.11.

Folks, we have an epidemic of this problem of drinking parties on the high school & college campuses today. We have a real problem with drunken parties even among middle school students. Soon, thousands of college students will go to the beach on spring break, and engage in riotous, drunken behavior, some of which is even put on TV! And too many of our teenagers, who name the name of Christ, are being sucked into these parties, and sinning against the Savior.

How would you like for Jesus to come again and find you at one of those parties? You need to wake up to the times in which we are living, and take a stand against sin, and for your Lord Jesus Christ!

The next type of sin that we are to put off is:

B. Immorality – Paul says in v.13 that we are to live “not in lewdness and lust.” Now the Greek word translated “lewdness” literally refers to what takes place “in a bed.” But since the word is linked to the word for uncontrolled sexual lust, it must refer to any kind of sex outside of marriage, no matter how “harmless” it may appear to be. The second word, *aselgeia*, refers to unbridled lust, or to excess, shameless behavior that would shock normal public decency, including adultery, homosexuality, and other sexual sins most find offensive. Surely there has been an increase in these sins as we move closer to the return of Christ. In fact, according to a Gallup survey, most Americans now (2004-05) say that sex outside of marriage is morally acceptable, up from 21% in 1969. 44% say that even homosexual behavior is morally acceptable. We Christians had better wake up to what is happening around us, or we will get sucked into the sexual debauchery of this world.

There is a lot of shameless, lewd material on the internet, and no Christian should be viewing that stuff. If you use the internet, you need to make sure you have the kind of software that will protect yourself from internet lust.

Finally, we are to put off:

C. Quarreling – Paul says in v.13 that we are not to live, “in strife and envy.” We need to put away strife from our lives. The strife is often fueled by the other word “envy” or “jealousy,” and the rivalry it produces. Strife and jealousy are too common among Christians. This is opposite to the truths of vv. 8-10. We need to love each other. Sometimes churches are better known for their fighting than for their love. In these last days, people need to find refuge from strife and violence among the people of God. We should not be fighting each other. The battle is out *there*, not in here!

Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man.” How was it in the days of Noah? Wickedness and corruption abounded (Gen. 6:5,11a). The earth was filled with violence (Gen. 6:11). What is it like today? More and more it is filled with violence. It is amazing how descriptive v.13 is of the last days in which we are living. These problems are fueled by the fact that there is so much envy, strife, and violence on TV, the movies, & video games.

And so our whole society has plunged into the sins of drug & alcohol abuse, sexual immorality, and violence. You can’t go to a secular business party without alcohol being served. You can’t go to a professional ball game without the stench of beer being near by. You can’t hardly watch TV or go to the movies, or listen to popular music without seeing or hearing sexual sin being promoted. We Christians are not to participate in these sins which will be so common in the last days.

Now that Paul has told us the kind of night clothes to put off, let’s talk about how to do it. For one thing, Paul says in the last of v.14, “make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” “Provision” is from *pronoia* – “foresight, forethought.” Unbelievers plan ahead for how they will satisfy their lusts after work, or on the weekend. We are not to be like that. It’s one thing to yield to temptation in a moment of weakness. It’s much worse to actually make plans to sin against your Savior.

We are not just to put off certain things, but also on a more positive note, we are to:

III. PUT ON YOUR DAY CLOTHES

When you wake up, you put off your bed clothes, and put on the clothing that is appropriate for the day. Have you noticed that no one came to church in their pajamas! So what should we put on while we wait for the Second Coming? Some say we should put on our festive robes, go off to some secluded place, and wait for His Coming. But Paul does not say that. Instead, we are to put on our battle gear. We must do battle against the darkness until Jesus comes again. And so notice what Paul says we should put on in these last days. He says in the last of v.12, “let us put on the armor of light.” I’m confident that the word translated “armor” (*hoplon*) should actually be translated “weapons.”² So we should put on:

A. Weapons of Light - Even now Christians are “in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as light in the world” (Phil. 2:15b). So how do you drive back the darkness? We do so with light. As long as light is covered up, darkness will prevail. Uncover the

² Paul either has in mind the weapons which are light (genitive of apposition) or weapons which are characterized by light (descriptive genitive).

light, and darkness retreats. So what kind of light do we need to put on? Light represents two things in Scripture: truth and righteousness. So we are to put on at least two weapons. First, we take up:

1. The Sword of the Spirit, the Truth of God's Word – In Eph. 6:17 Paul says we are to take “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” We must learn the truth of God's Word and believe it and speak it. The end times will be days of lies and deception. More than ever, we need to give out the truth of God's Word.

Secondly we also must put on the weapon of:

2. Righteousness - In 2 Corinthians 6:7 Paul speaks of the “weapons (*hoplon*) of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.” The true armor and weapon of a Christian man is a godly, righteous, Christian character. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:11, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” You ought to so live that your life stands as a rebuke to sinful men. Wickedness will prevail all the more if we do not rebuke it, and live as examples of righteousness for others to see. So examine your life. Is your life truly lived in righteousness? Is there any unconfessed, habitual sin in your life?

Likewise, in v.13 Paul says, “Let us walk properly....” “Properly” is from *euschemonos*, decently, becomingly, properly, in a seemly manner. It is the opposite of the word translated “lust,” which refers to unbridled, shameless behavior. Likewise, Paul says in 1 Thess. 4:12 that we should “walk properly (*euschemonos*) toward those who are outside....” We should walk properly as a good witness for Jesus Christ.

Paul illustrates what it is to live “properly” by saying we are to walk “as in the day....” When people are living in sin, don't they generally prefer to do so under the cover of darkness? John 3:19 says, “...men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” So in contrast to that, we should always live in the light of God's presence, and in the light of God's Word.

Furthermore, we are to put on the weapon of light known as:

3. Love - Paul wrote in 12:21, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” We fight darkness with the light of love. In fact, Paul said in 1 Thess. 5:8 that we are to put on “the breastplate of ... love.”³

Paul not only tells us to put on our weapons, but more importantly, we are to put on:

B. Lord Jesus Christ – He says in v.14, “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ....” What does this mean? Well if you are truly a Christian, Jesus is already on the inside. But often He is not very visible on the outside. Paul is urging believers to put on Christ in the sense of manifesting Jesus outwardly. Wear Christ like a suit of clothes. Let people see Jesus in you. This also refers to clothing the soul in the moral disposition and habits of Christ. Ask yourself in each situation, What Would Jesus Do?⁴

So when Jesus comes again, you want to make sure you are dressed properly: you have put off your old sins, and have put on Jesus, and the weapons you need to serve Him in this evil world.

When Dwight Eisenhower was President, he vacationed in Denver, Colorado. There was in Denver a six year old boy who had incurable cancer. The boy expressed the wish that he might see President Eisenhower. One Sunday morning President Eisenhower arrived in his Presidential

³ See Eph. 6:13-17 for more detail on the Christian armor.

⁴ And notice that we are to put on the “Lord Jesus Christ.” Do we put Him on as Lord; bowing our whole wills to Him? Everybody ought to know that Jesus is Lord of our lives. Do we put on Jesus, recognizing in His manhood the pattern of our lives? Do we put on Christ, the one anointed with the Divine Spirit, who will also anoint us as well? Christ is in us; let us allow Him to manifest Himself outwardly.

limousine. He walked up to the front door and knocked. The father opened the door in his blue jeans and his old shirt and with a day's growth of beard. When he saw the President, he was speechless! The President took the six year old boy out to see the Presidential limousine and talked with the little boy for awhile. He shook his hand and left. For many days after that the father would recount the story and he would say, "And just to think, there I stood with my blue jeans, with my old shirt and with a day's growth of beard. What a way to meet the President!"⁵

Would it not be embarrassing for our Lord to appear and find us still wearing the old clothes of drunken parties, immorality, and strife? Jesus is coming again soon. Make sure you are dressed to meet the King of kings, and Lord of lords!

Conclusion: Do you know Jesus as your Savior. Do you know for sure that you are a Christian? Would anybody at school or work think that you're a Christian? Well, if you are not sure that you are a Christian, why not make sure this morning? After all, when Jesus comes again, it will be too late to be saved.

Christian, are you living for the Lord. Have you been going to sleep in your Christian life? Have you failed to put off the works of darkness? When Jesus comes again, how will He find you living? Will He come again and be pleased with your life?

Sources: Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, vol. 4, "God's Discipline" (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964); F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); Bruce Corley & Curtis Vaughan, *Romans: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); John Murray, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible [CD-ROM]* (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Dr. Adrian Rogers (notes from his sermon on this text); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Romans (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). Hobbs, Wiersbe, & McBeth read, but no additional material used or found helpful.

⁵ Jerry Vines, *Family Fellowship: An Expository Experience in 1 John* (Dallas: Crescendo Publications, 1976), 158-159.