

Put Off and Put On  
Romans 13:12-14

We started on the last paragraph of chapter 13, and we saw in the previous paragraph that we were admonished to love one another, and thus fulfill God's royal law. But then as we come to this paragraph he gives us another motivation to serve and love and follow God, and that is the time to make much of Christ is shorter than it ever has been before. Look at what he says in verse 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.**" He says believers know the time. They know the promise that Jesus will come back at a moment that we do not know when, but he also says that we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that it is closer than it ever has been before. And there are so many believers that are living in a spiritual slumber - not realizing how close that time is before the Lord returns or death takes us and we come into his presence. And nothing gives so much passion for believers as meditating on our great hope of being with Christ and all that means. Nothing gives greater zeal to this life than realizing that we were made for the next life. Yet you look at so many believers and it is almost as if this is all there is, and they are in a fog, and just exist for the here and now. In fact, their whole goal in life is to have more of the here and now. It is to have more money, more temporary pleasure, and more freedom.

Our salvation - the time that God calls us home or His return is closer than when we first believed. And what have we done with our lives? It is so easy to say that I am going to invest in knowing God or really having a kingdom impact, but I'll start tomorrow. What impact have you had? How have you used the time that God has given you to grow in his grace and service to others? Paul says wake up! That time is already gone. Don't waste your life any longer living for the things in the here and now.

And look how he continues this startling metaphor in verse 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.**" "The night is far gone" is talking about this age that we are living in. This age that we are living in - the age of the Great Commission, and the dark age of man's rebellion are almost spent. The meaning is that there is going to be a new age dawn. This wicked age is coming to an age, and God has given us a mission in the here and now. And it is so easy to waste your life and never realize the value of making much of Christ and living for him today. The meaning here is that there is not a moment to lose. Look at the call in this verse, "cast off the works of darkness." People's houses and where they slept were very small. Just before daybreak they would awake, and cast off any blankets that they had. They had no bed clothes but slept in their cloak, and the action was not prolonged. They would throw off the blanket and start their day.

The oddity here is that Paul calls on them to put on something, and that is the armour of light. Now what is the armour of light? And it basically everything that he has been talking about these past couple of chapters. There is similar language that is used over in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-6, "**For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 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. But you are not in**

**darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 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.”**

Notice the breastplate of faith and love - that is what Paul has been talking about in these chapters. Notice the hope of salvation - that is what he is talking about in this paragraph. The world scoffs at the truths of judgment and that the Lord will return, and the message here is: don't live as if you are in darkness. Don't live as if you are a child of the night. Now how do we know that we are living in the light? How do we know that we are awake spiritually and not wasting our lives? It is that we have put on the armour of light. And what that looks like is that you will intentionally and with effort eliminate some things that you used to dress yourselves in and put on others things or attributes. You will put off and put on. And I want none of us to waste another day. I want us too really examine if we are putting off and putting on. I want us to realize the urgency, and throw off the covers and put on Christ.

1. First, we need to throw off things in our lives. Vv. 13.

This is a fascinating verse. Look at how it begins, **“Let us walk properly as in the daytime.”** it is a call for all believers to live in a certain way. It is a call for all of us to live a life worthy of the great salvation in Jesus Christ. “Walk” is the most common metaphor in how we live and function and interact with others. But look at what he says at the end of that phrase, “as in the daytime.” It literally reads, “as if” the day time. Remember, he has just said that the day is about to dawn, but has not yet, but be ready - Jesus is coming. You will soon be in his presence. The call here based on the urgency of the time is to live as if the day has dawned - that Christ has returned; that I am living right now in his eternal kingdom before the Lamb of God.

So think of it, if I was before Christ and sin was eradicated from my life and there would be joy unspeakable to be in his presence then there would be a proper way that I would live and function. God is commanding us to do is to live that way in the here and now. It is critical that you function in this cold, dark and sinful world as if you were in glory before the king. He is saying - lives as if it is daytime. Live as if the full measure and extent of your salvation has come to fruition. That is the most meaningful and purposeful life you could live. So the question becomes: are you living that way? And if the answer is no - then why not? Time is short, make it count. How do I make it count - live as if you were already there. Wow, that gives so much direction, but what does that look like?

Glad you asked, because if I was before Christ this very day there would be things that could not and would not exist in his presence. There are activities that people engage in to fill the void of hopelessness and emptiness that Jesus has filled in my life. And what we have here are three sets of two activities. These are activities that people who are either in darkness or who are sleeping do. This is the philosophy of the hedonist that the greatest pleasures are found in bodily functions and not found in Christ where there is joy unspeakable, and my personal gratification is God. Look at

the first two in this list, **“not in orgies or drunkenness.”** The word “orgies” was a word that was used of excessive celebration. The nearest connotation would be after a great sport victory. If a Canadian team won the Stanley cup there would be excessive partying, damage to property, overturning or setting a blaze cars or even riots. It is basically being out of control. And what is usually associated with this behaviour is drunkenness. And it is amazing that the alcohol use among believers has steadily increased. We want to come close to the world as possible, and celebrate like those of the world rather than celebrating as if we are in the presence of Jesus Christ. It is my right and my freedom. Would you really be claiming it if you were in the presence of Jesus Christ?

Look at the next two - **“not in sexual immorality and sensuality.”** There is no thought about what these past two chapters have been about with these two vices and that is loving your neighbour. Sexual immorality is having sex with someone outside of the marriage relationship. And sensuality is anything sexual whether pornography or anything else. It is self-love. It has nothing to do with the other person other than they are an object for gratification. There is no love for God and no love for your neighbour. We have believed that the highest joy and pleasures of life are some sort of biological function and the commands that God gives me are not for his glory and my good. My union with Christ is my highest good and should be my highest pleasure. Listen to how deplorable this sin is in 1 Corinthians 6:15, **“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!”** We love the security and truth that I am one with Christ forevermore but this has practical concerns in how we live and function. What person who truly loves Christ would ever join him with a prostitute? What believer would ever use someone made in the image of Christ as just a commodity of personal gratification? I know we know this but there will be no internet sites in heaven. There will be no immorality but only the highest and most glorious joy. Live in that joy as if the day has dawned!

And the last two characteristics that are not part of the coming age here are **“not in quarrelling or jealousy.”** We know what quarrelling is - it is having an argumentative spirit. Little things become big, and everything seems to be a battle with other people. And jealous is believing that you deserve what others have. You cannot be happy that others have good things. The thing that holds these two characteristics together is self-indulgent egotism. Self is always at the centre. And you look at a person who cannot control his tongue or his desires, you look at a person that is always arguing and never satisfied with what God has given him or her in their lives, and they probably have other major sin issues in their lives. If he lacks self control in one area you can be sure it is the same in other areas. Proverbs 25:28 says, **“A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.”** Because there are no walls, no self-control anything and everything comes into a person like this. If one area has no self control then you can be sure others areas are the same way. And quarrelsome individuals are very divisive but it is always someone else’s fault.

Yet life before God, when that day has come there will be no quarrelling or division. We will be amazed at God’s goodness not just in that hour, but as we look back at the goodness of God all the way through our lives. The gospel is a message of

what we do not deserve. There is no quarrelling here or jealousy. How can there be? I am getting what I do not deserve. Live in light of that glorious truth now. If we live for Christ today as if we are before him there are many things that will never appear in our lives. Our lives and hopes will be radically different from the world around us. And if we are not living for those things of the world, then there is room to add new things or new character and cultivate that into my life. And that is our second point.

2. There are things that we need to put on. V.14.

Our relationship with Jesus Christ and having a life that is growing to look more like Christ, and seeking to love others takes work and effort. No one just falls into a growing and loving relationship with Christ. There is effort and self-denial that is need. If I love my wife then there are things that I will do but also many things that I will deny myself because I love her, and even want to foster a more loving relationship with her. And yet believers in Christ expect growth and a life that is impactful for God's kingdom just to happen. It doesn't just happen. If you look at a mature Christian that you admire he or she just didn't fall into that maturity, but with God's help there are many things that they said yes to and many other things they said no to. And it was not always easy. Many times there is an inner battle in our hearts of doing what God wants us to do and not doing what he does not want us to do.

So look at what God commands here, "**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ.**" And it is kind of a clothing metaphor. And notice the contrast. Instead of putting on the vices just named in the previous verses, he says put on "the Lord Jesus Christ." And it is amazing that he uses the full name of the Lord here. And there are a couple of reasons for that. One is that we realize the whole goal of our sanctification is to have Jesus Christ fully formed in us. Romans 8:28-29, "**And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.**" How do things that seem so harmful work for our good and God's glory? They are used to conform us to Christ. It is the highest goal for our lives. It is not your careers or bank accounts or early retirement or whatever. It is Christ formed in you the hope of glory. And this is the meaning here of being clothed. That Jesus is seen more and more through your life and through your character. You are constantly learning of him, and seeking to put on his righteousness, holiness, compassion and love. We want to show the nature of the one that we so loved.

So he says put on "the Lord Jesus Christ," because that is the great goal. But the other reason he uses Jesus full name and title is to remind us that he is not only Saviour but he is Lord of our lives. We look so often at the commands of Scripture as optional. Well, if it works out in my life I will put a little effort into trying to look like Christ today. No, you are not your own, you have been bought with a price. We take our orders and direction from another - the Lord Jesus Christ. Life is not about me but about him. If life is all about him in the next life and he is the great Lord then life is all about him now. He has not changed. He is Lord. Do you live that way? Is it seen in how you live and function? Remember this takes effort to do the will of another. There are times where you will not feel like going to church, or engaging in a Wednesday night

Bible study or just doing daily devotions. There are times where we just will seem so dry and want to hide from the world and hide from God. What are we to do? We are to volitionally and intentionally put on the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to seek his will. Notice he doesn't say only if you feel like it. No, put him on - emulate him, learn of him, serve others, and seek his will today. It is such a strong command.

Now look at the second half of this command, **“and make no provisions for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”** This simply means do not put yourself in harm's way when you know you can fall. The meaning of “provision” is to plan for or to put yourself in a place where you can fall into sin and gratify the desires that you have been entertaining in your heart already. Psalm 36:4 describes this kind of attitude of making provision so clearly, **“He plots trouble while on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he does not reject evil.”** You know the areas that you struggle in. and you might convince yourself that you do not want to do those activities but you have not gotten ride of the provisions. You have made it so easy to fall and fall again by gratifying the desires of the flesh. We all know the principle of Galatians 5:17, **“For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”** If the desires of the flesh are against the desires of the Spirit then we have to go to battle with them. We have eliminate or destroy or make it as difficult as possible to gratify those desires. Now that does not make us a spiritual person but it does give us an opportunity to cultivate a greater desire for the things of the Spirit or the things of Christ. The question is: are we doing battle? Are we eliminating not only trying not to fall but even eliminating the provisions that make it easier to fall?

I read a quote this week that was quite alarming. And it was this: there are very few Christians that finish well. And that is probably true. There are times where we are living well and trusting Christ and ministering to others. But there are other times where your life and the desires of your heart are so much like the world that you wonder if Christ came back today whether you would hear, “Well done my good and faithful servant.” And here is the truth: the day is about to break. The finish line is closer than it ever has been before in your life and my life. I am that much closer and you are that much closer to coming into the presence of the Lord. We cannot do anything about the past but please do not waste the present or what is left of your life. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. I can guarantee you as his child that when we are finally safe with him and our journey is all over none of will look back at this life and wish for a little more lust or sin or any gratification for the flesh because we have the one thing that can satisfy and that is none other than our Lord. Live as if this is the day that you will see him, and you will not be disappointed in that day that you do see him.