



“Wake Up, Christians!”¹

Romans 13:11-14

When Tracy and I were expecting our first child to be born, we could hardly wait for his arrival. I remember the day before he was born, and I was teaching teenagers on a Wednesday night. I expressed my excitement and I said, “I wish I could just push him out and see him!” Well, little did I know that night, Tracy was going to go into labor at 36 ½ weeks! That day was a very stressful and full day, and so sleeping was welcomed. I fell asleep quickly. Tracy laid in bed awake for a little while longer, and when she turned to shut the light off, her water broke. She got out of bed, contacted the doctor, organized her stuff, waited and then about an hour after I fell asleep, she woke me up. She said something like, “Tim, you need to get up. We have to go to the hospital. My water broke.” My brain wasn’t working in awake mode, and I had some kind of non-sensical, panic response. She then calmed me and said, just lay there for a second. I laid back down and about 20 seconds later, I jolted up and said, “We gotta go!” We got everything together and we lived the next day with minimal to no sleep.

But there was something happening that was more important than sleep. Yes, the day had been stressful beforehand, but our son was coming, and we were excited! We had worked and worked to ready the house for him, and now was the time. He could not be delayed. We couldn’t say, “Can I just sleep a little longer?” We didn’t even want to say that! Our son’s arrival surpassed our temporal preferences for sleep and rest.

I’m telling you this story because of the illustration Paul uses in the text we’re studying this morning. He uses the illustration of waking up because the day is at hand. All of this needs to be explained because Paul isn’t merely talking about literally waking up from physical sleep. But I love the illustration. I think every human being can relate to wanting to stay in bed for just a little longer. We can also relate to times where we’ll sacrifice sleep and get out of bed for greater things. So, I think we can relate to Paul’s teaching here.

The passage we’re reading here, though, actually serves as a transition from what Paul’s been saying since Romans 12:1 up to this point, and then it transitions into the next section of Romans where Paul is going to confront the Roman church with their interpersonal relationships within the gathering there. Before we read this passage, let me share with you what I think the main idea is of these four verses: **Wake up and live as a loving sacrifice because Jesus is coming.** What’s interesting to me is that Paul said in Romans 12 that we are to live as sacrifices in view of God’s mercies: God’s past mercies in saving us through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Jesus, bearing the full weight of God’s punishment for sinners, has taken all the wrath away from us so that we can be right with God – and then Jesus’ righteousness clothes those who trust him! But when Paul says we are to live in light of God’s mercies, he doesn’t only focus on the past. In chapter 8 especially, Paul focuses on future mercies. The future grace of God ought

¹ This manuscript is still in the rough draft phase. I recommend you utilize these notes in conjunction to the sermon to gain greater insight and clarity.

to motivate those who trust Jesus *today*. And this is what Paul again emphasizes in these verses. Our lives should reveal that we believe something overwhelmingly joyous is going to happen. With this understanding, let's read the passage after I pray for us (pray for Sara Troyer, Harbor Lights Baptist).

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. ²

Verse 11, in the ESV says, "Besides this you know. . . ." The King James says, "And that." The NASB says, "Do this." The King James is probably the most nebulous with this phrase. The ESV's translation shows there's a connection with the previous words, but the NASB identifies a command. So, which is this? Well, you can see that the Greek is a little difficult to translate, but I do appreciate a merging of the ESV and the NASB. Paul is connecting the previous verses with what he's about to say. When you read the ESV, it says "Besides this." Besides what? Some people think Paul is only speaking of what he just said. Owe no one anything but to love them. But Paul is probably not simply talking about the verses immediately before this. It seems more likely that Paul is talking about all the verses going back to 12:1. Paul has been emphasizing the necessity of being a loving sacrifice. We are to let love be genuine. We are to serve one another in the church community, in the community around us and within government. Because of God's love towards us we have the privilege to love others with what seems like an upside down love. And then now says, "Now do this!" Now live this out.

Don't just read these words and say, "This would be great if people did this" or, "It'd be nice if I did, but I just can't." Paul actually points the finger at every Christian and says, "Do this!" I know that some people could hear this and say, "This sounds legalistic," but legalism means that we do things in order to attain God's approval. Paul says that if you've trusted in Jesus, you have God's approval – now live in that approval! But Paul also moves to another great motivation. Not only do we have God's approval, someday Jesus is coming again and therefore, we live in a specific time period. We don't live in ancient Israel under the old covenant. We live in a new covenant era and the next thing that's going to happen is Jesus is coming again! This should affect how we live. Paul says "that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep." With this illustration, Paul fleshes out how we are to live and act as Christians, in light of eternity. So, Paul reveals to us that because Jesus is coming again, we are to:

1. Wake up! (vv. 11-12a).

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. ³

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 13:11–14.

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 13:11–12.

Do what God has called you to do! God's sacrifices shouldn't argue with God. They're sacrifices! So, let's do what he calls us to do. He loves us eternally, right? He has our eternal godliness and good for us, right? Yes!

Paul says here that our motivation to wake up is because "salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed." You might hear this and say, "Wait a second. If I've trusted Jesus, aren't I already saved?" How can Paul say that salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed? This is a very important distinction to learn in Scripture. The term salvation doesn't have to only refer only to your being forgiven. Salvation can refer to your growth in godliness (called sanctification). It can also refer to the day when Jesus comes and all sin is eradicated in every form (called glorification). Salvation includes justification, sanctification and glorification. So, what's the context of the words here? Justification? No, because we already believe. Sanctification? No, because he's talking future. So, he's speaking of glorification – the future day!

That becomes clearer when we get the illustration. Paul goes on in verse 12 and says the night is far gone and the day is at hand. Throughout the Scripture, we're taught that there is going to be a future Day in which Jesus judges the world. This is called the day of the Lord. Let me give you just two verses out of many in Scripture. Isaiah 13:6 says, "Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come!"⁴ First Thessalonians 5:2 says, "For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night."⁵ The day of the Lord is when Jesus judges the world and brings in his kingdom of peace. But this is also further emphasized when Paul also talks about the night.

The day of the Lord is when Jesus judges sin. Then, what is the night? The night seems to indicate this present age in which we live. Jesus hasn't come again, but Paul's saying to us that the next thing that's going to happen in God's redemptive storyline is Jesus' return! So, we still live in the night, but daylight is coming. The sun is almost on the horizon and we can see the rays of light. Do you see them, Christian?

Now that we're piecing things together, look again at verse 11, and we see that the hour has already come to wake from your sleep. Meaning, Jesus came into this world. His glorious interference in this world has brought about a new era. And all who turn from their sinfulness and turn to Jesus for forgiveness have entered into a new mission of life: to declare his glory because he's coming again. The light's on the horizon, and Paul says, Wake up!

In our day, we might not think it's important to wake up at first sign of light, but in the ancient world, this was critical. You can see this in other cultures around the globe as well. Even in Haiti, where there is electricity, it gets a lot hotter in their days than here. I remember going to Haiti about 10 years ago, and the sun was out by 5:30. The missionary was up and even we woke up as well because when it was dark, we'd go to bed. When it was light, we were awake. Get the work done when it's cooler!

In the ancient world, you were lazy if you slept past the first sign of daylight. And Paul is saying to the Roman Christians, and to us today, don't be lazy! Don't look at the commands of chapters 12 and 13 and act like a lazy person in bed. Don't make excuses.

Now, think about this a little more. What are reasons we give for staying in bed? One could be you're simply not looking forward to the day. Too much stress maybe? Or maybe it seems mundane. Other

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Is 13:6.

⁵ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Th 5:2.

reasons could be physical pains. You know you're going to hurt in the day. You're not looking forward to dealing with it. Others of you could just like the feeling of sleep. In the winter time, we can especially appreciate our covers. We don't want to feel cold when we get out of bed. We can have many reasons to stay in bed, but we know that many of these reasons are just excuses.

Spiritually we can make the same excuses with our disobedience to the Lord. "God, I'm just not motivated." Or, "I think there's going to be pain today." Or, "Life just feels mundane." Or, "God, I love the comfort of sleep." None of these things should keep us from our obedience to the Lord. We need to get out of bed! Our sleepiness is actually an embracing of the old way of life. Think back to Isaiah's birth. We couldn't tell him to wait a little longer, and we didn't want to!

Paul indicates to us that there is a motivation for us that should lead us to great zeal. Jesus is coming again! He says salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. Think about this. Every day is closer to Jesus' return. Does that motivate you? Some of you might say, "No, it doesn't. Jesus hasn't come yet. I've got time." This response saddens me because really what this response is like you laying in bed and pushing the snooze button. Because it's not emergent, you can wait a little while longer. You can sleep. But there is an eternity awaiting you and there's an eternity that's awaiting the world. We are called to show the love of Christ to those around us. Are you going to waste your time by hitting the spiritual snooze? Wake up! Jesus is seriously coming someday. We need to get to work. The light is shining from the horizon. The day of judgment is coming! Get out of bed, Christian. Stop taking comfort in the sheets, and take comfort in the Savior.

Others of you are simply not motivated by the thought that Jesus is coming because you wonder, "how does this affect today?" Life is mundane, stressful, difficult, painful. We treat this command like our children think about waking up for school. They don't want to go. They learn, sure, but they don't necessarily like the discipline. Is that the Christian life? No! We've already learned that all things in this life are working for our godliness! Everything that happens is working for our good and God's glory! Today matters in God's eternal plan. Whether you're living in pain or pleasure, trial or relief, mundane or exciting, it's all being worked for God's children's eternal good! And God will make it plain one day when Jesus comes! Wake up! Don't hit snooze! Wake up! Jesus is coming again. Paul goes on then and gives us our second point:

2. Live as a loving sacrifice (vv. 12b-14).

"So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."⁶

"So then" is a "therefore" statement. Because salvation is nearer than when we first believed, and because we live in the final stage of God's salvation plan – meaning, Jesus will return next – then we must "cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

Paul actually gives us three different illustrations to help us in understanding what it looks like to be a loving sacrifice as people who are awake! Each illustration tells us what to do and what not to do.

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 13:12–14.

Hopefully each of these help us or at least one helps you to know what to do and how to act. SO, the first one is given in verse 12b

Put on the armor of light, not the works of darkness (v. 12b). Years ago, I remember listening to a comedian talk about how he joined the army and then was shocked when he was awoken by a drill sergeant at what seemed like an unrighteous hour. He said he could feel the light, and then he heard the yelling of the sergeant to get out of bed and get their clothes on. Thankfully he got clothes on – even though they were on all wrong!

In this illustration that Paul gives, he picks up on a warfare idea. Don't engage in the works of darkness, but put on the armor of light. The armor? Wait a second, isn't life supposed to be easier if we trust Jesus? That's how many people communicate about Christianity. If you trust Jesus, your problems will go away, you'll always feel peace and calm. But is that true? No. Sometimes people communicate this about temptations. They say that if you trust Jesus then certain temptations will cease. You won't desire sin any more.

Hold on! The apostles James says that we are all tempted *when* we are drawn away by our own desires. If you don't have desires for sin, you'll be sinless. Yet, Paul tells us in Galatians 5 that our sinful impulses still wage war against the Spirit and the Spirit is against those impulses.

Do you realize that Christianity is a religion of warfare against our sin? This is revealed in Paul's words here. When Paul says to cast off and to put on, he's giving a clothing illustration. When you wake up, you're wearing pajamas. When you get out of bed to get ready for the day, you don't wear pajamas (usually). You wear the clothes that are appropriate for the day.

Now, some people come to Jesus and they think that Jesus came to give them money and success. So, for them, they might want to put on a suit. Other things Jesus came to make life easy; so, they keep their pajamas on. But Paul says that Jesus saved us so that we can be alert and wage war against sin. The only right response for a follower of Jesus who wakes up, is to put on armor. Every day, we are in a battle against sin.

The "works of darkness" refers to sin. In Romans 6:23, Paul says that, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."⁷ When we work in sin and live in sin, our paycheck is death. Paul says that since Jesus is coming again, we must wake up and fight against sin.

This shouldn't cause you to despair, though. Some might say, "Ugh, fighting every day?" Remember what Paul is saying here. Jesus wins! He's coming again! We are more than conquerors in Jesus; so, we can wage war knowing our Lord has guaranteed our final victory! Because Jesus wins, and we win with him, that should motivate us to hate sin and not give into it.

Those who say, "Well, we're going to win anyway, let's just sin," actually go against the reality of their salvation. We win because sin is overcome. Live in light of the sinless eternity to come! Reject sinful impulses in your life. Love others around you in sin and point them to the Savior. Communicate the gospel to people around you. Disciple fellow Christians within the church community. Do what Paul says because Jesus has won and will win! Put on the armor and live in light of the victory we have in Jesus!

⁷ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 6:23.

Put on the armor. Don't be deceived and put on a fancy suit, pajamas, shorts and a t-shirt. Put on the armor the Lord has given to you. Wake up and put on the appropriate clothes. Next, Paul tells us to

Live like it's the daytime, not the nighttime (v. 13). Verse 13 says, "¹³Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy."⁸

I say live like it's daytime because Paul says that it's like we're in the in-between. The sun isn't up, but the light is on the horizon. But when the light was on the horizon in ancient cultures, they acted as though it was day. It was morning and you get to work even before the sun comes up. You don't live like it's nighttime.

This is the timeframe we live in. The New Heavens and New Earth isn't here. But it is coming. So, let's get ready and get to work in preparation for this. Paul says that there's a way you walk when it's daytime. We should understand this illustration fairly clearly. In the daytime, people are more prone to walk properly. In the nighttime, people do evil things. Have you ever heard the phrase, "Nothing good happens after midnight?" Humans tend to allow themselves more sinful leniency when it's dark and people can't see us. But when the light is shining on us, we are more hesitant. Why is this? Because sin thrives in darkness.

Well, take this illustration. Jesus has shone on many of our hearts here, and so we now walk in the light of Christ! As we ponder Jesus and revel in all the mercies we have in Jesus, we are prone to grow in wanting to reveal his majesty and love to the world around us. Whereas you might look at all the commands in chapter 12-13 and say, "This is impossible." Or, "This seems upside-down," Paul simply calls all of this proper. This is just how you live as a soldier in the daytime.

The reality is that you will live this way in eternity future, let's prepare for eternity future. If you don't want to live like this today, what makes you think you'll want to live that way in eternity? Think about that statement? **If you don't want to glorify God today, what makes you think you'll want to glorify him in eternity future?** But if you want to glorify God in the future, then you would be a person praying to glorify him in your daily life.

Therefore, live like it's daytime, not the nighttime. I say nighttime even though Paul doesn't say it that way. He gives examples of nighttime living. The first two sets sound overtly awful: orgies and drunkenness, and then sexual immorality and sensuality. I actually don't prefer the word "orgy" because I don't think that helps us to understand the Greek idea here. The merging with drunkenness seems to indicate drinking parties and drunkenness. The next set is a reference to sensual license. How often people turn to drunkenness to make them feel better. In 2015, a study showed that in people over 18, about 27% reported binge drinking. Paul says this isn't consistent with living as a soldier. How beneficial is a drunk soldier? How can we fight against sin if we're drunk? We won't be filled with the Spirit because we're filled with alcohol.

But then Paul goes on to talk about sensuality. The question is, "What does this mean?" Sensuality is anything outside of God's intention of sex between a husband and a wife. Pondering a person's body or actions that would arouse you is sensual. Jesus says if you lust in your heart, this is sensual. This includes pornography, written forms that are sensual, actions that arouse your senses sensually outside of the

⁸ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 13:13.

marriage relationship. Any action or thought is sensual. If you think, “Really?! That’s a high standard.” Yep, it is. But this matters because Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 that the marital union was meant to point to Christ and the church. Jesus doesn’t not simply use people for selfish purposes. He loves! And, Jesus is committed to one bride – not many. Living in the light means being faithful to the gospel message in your actions. If married, you’re faithful to your spouse. If you’re not married, you’re faithful to Christ’s call and dependent on him to honor him.

The final set might seem out of place. Don’t quarrel or be jealous. When you think of drunkenness and sex, you might place those in a higher category of sin. And that’s a danger for us a Christians. Certainly, there are certain sins with greater consequences than others, but as Christians, we cannot be content with sins in our lives. All sin is kind of like a secret agent or double agent or a mole. The thing about a mole is that he’s going to make it seem like he’s your friend and on your side. He might even point out things to fight against that we should fight against, but he doesn’t want you to fight against him. Why? Because he’s trying to take you down secretly!

As Christians, we must take all sin seriously. The issues of quarreling and jealousy were probably mentioned here by Paul because these were issues within the Roman church. We’ll see this more in chapter 14, but there was fighting against each other and there was jealousy that took place. Do you have that attitude towards other Christians? Do you have a quarrelsome attitude or an attitude of love where you would sacrifice and serve others? And, if they have good things in their lives, do you rejoice with them or are you jealous? Living in the day time means we kill these impulses and every sinful impulse that we might want to justify! There is no justification for sin in the life of a Christian. While sin is ever present with us, by God’s grace, we see to put to death the sin! So, put on the armor, live like it’s daytime. Finally, put on Jesus.

Put on Jesus, not fleshly provisions (v. 14). Verse 14 says, “¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”⁹

This illustration seems to fight the first one about putting on the armor of the Lord. But there’s a slight variation. He doesn’t simply say to put on God’s armor, but put on Jesus. Our fight against sin and our pursuit of holiness requires a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen, God doesn’t simply want us to do the right things. He wants us to engage daily, moment-by-moment, with Jesus.

To put on Jesus, I think, takes us back to what Paul said in Romans 12:1-2. We are transformed by the renewing of our minds. Or, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “**And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.**”¹⁰ We put on Jesus by meditating on him in the Scriptures. In the elder’s regular accountability forms, one question that we’re asked is: How well are you able to see and savor Jesus in the Scriptures? We ask this question because if we don’t see and savor Jesus in the Scriptures then we won’t be transformed from one degree of glory to the other. We won’t grow in godliness. We won’t know the glory of God if we don’t see Jesus! In addition, if we don’t meditate on Jesus, we won’t follow the Lord. We won’t put sin to death. But if we see Jesus as the Lord and the Messiah, we will trust and obey him. As Messiah, he has done all to reconcile us to God. As Lord, he reigns.

⁹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 13:14.

¹⁰ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 3:18.

So, if I can word it this way, Paul is telling us to remember “who we are wearing!” Listen, depending on what you wear, you communicate different things to people around you. You even influence yourself and your own actions. Obviously, thinking about armor, that affects how you move. But you could have armor on and use it in the wrong ways, fighting against the wrong things.

But putting on Jesus affects how you behave with the armor! You’re not going to work to the demise of true believers. You’re not going to use evil with evil towards people who are against you. When you have Christ on, your behavior will move accordingly. Think about this a little differently. On the back of my van, there’s a small Ventura Baptist Church sticker. That sticker can affect how I think about my driving. That’s just a small sticker. Shouldn’t being completely clothed by Christ affect me and my actions?

And, ponder this even more! This is the most amazing benefit and blessing. In our day, name brands can matter much. If you have an Armani shirt, what might people think? What if you’re wearing a custom New York tailored suit? We tend to think we’re important because of a name. And, you know what? It’s true. But those clothes fade away. Jesus never will fade! Whether you’re wearing broken down armor or the fanciest of all clothes, if you have Christ, you have all you need! And you are truly important. You are loved by God and clothed by grace. Oh Christian, know this blessing. Whereas God could have rejected us and not cared for us. Whereas he could have let us be clothed in our sinfulness, he clothed us with Jesus himself! Let’s live in this freedom and joy! Let’s wake up and get moving!

Finally, Paul then adds, “make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.” Here’s something important to know, Christian. The flesh refers to that part of a Christian that still wants sin. The flesh is never godly. There is never less sinful in the flesh. Our spirit can become more godly, and we can grow more in our godly actions. But our flesh always wants sin. This is taught in Romans 7. Paul says evil is always present with him. Now, the flesh always has sinful desires. And so Paul says here to make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Interestingly, he doesn’t say don’t give into the flesh. He doesn’t even say, “Don’t sin.” He says to make no provision to gratify desires. This is extreme action, Christian! Sometimes Christians will say certain actions are ok because it’s not sin. But the question is, “Will this action open the door for the desires of the flesh to grow?” So, think of it this way. A few weeks ago, I decided to basically give up on social media. I still have an account. I’ll sign in rarely, but generally, I don’t want to use it. I found my brain wasn’t focusing. I was losing my attention span. I watched a Ted Talk where the person shared that social media developers use casino computer gurus to try to get people to stay in on social media. Now, I’m not saying that social media is sinful, nor am I saying it’s sinful for you. But my desires always get triggered on social media. My brain can relax and I can just scroll numbly. I’ve found that’s not helpful for my godliness and it wastes my time. Jesus died for me. Jesus is coming again! His glory needs to be my aim, and I believe I can serve him better without social media consistently in my life.

Some might say, “But Pastor Timothy, you can grow in discipline.” Maybe so, but I know my own heart for the last 10+ years. Every time I give myself allowance, I give my flesh a taste, and my flesh doesn’t even want a taste. It wants a buffet. What about you? How do you give an opening to gratify your flesh? Is it unlimited computer usage? Is it YouTube? Do you fall into pornography? What ways do you open the door when it comes to all types of sins you are drawn to? Put on Jesus. Know who you’re wearing. If you do, then you will not want to even walk into the sin!

Now, let's take the entire illustration Paul gives here. Jesus is coming, Ventura. This should shape how you think about your relationship to the church: make disciples. This should shape how you view your jobs and relationships with people: make disciples. This should shape how you think about government: point to Jesus' rule!

Jesus is coming! We have a limited time on this earth, and then there will be eternity. When we arrive at eternity's gate, may we all say that by God's grace, we were zealous for his glory in this earth. Live in the reality of the salvation given to you. Wake up, Christians! Live as a loving sacrifice, putting on the armor, living in the light and putting on Jesus.

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