

# Time to Wake Up

Romans 13:11-14

July 14, 2019

## Introduction:

I'm not a morning person. Not that I'm especially grumpy in the morning, it's just I would much rather stay up late at night than wake up early in the morning. Thankfully it's not so bad in the summer, when it's warm outside and there's plenty of sunlight to start your day with, but winter is the worst. Having your alarm clock go off when you're in the middle of a dream, warm and comfortable under the covers, only to groggily force open your eyes and find that it's still as dark and frigid outside as it was when you went to sleep, that's no fun at all. In spite of my deep desire to cocoon myself into hibernation for another hour or so, my relentless alarm clock nags me with its incessant buzzing, reminding me that, "It's time to get up," regardless of how much I want to deny that reality.

Since my alarm clock isn't near my bed, it forces me to get out of bed in order to turn it off, which then begins my typical morning ritual of stumbling over to the closet to pick out the clothes I'm going to wear for the day and then immediately hopping into the shower, which is for me the equivalence of having a cup of coffee – it's what really helps to wake me up.

Well, this idea of waking up and getting ready for the day is the metaphor the apostle Paul uses to call us to action in the passage we'll be studying this morning. There are three things we're commanded to do: we're to wake up, cast off, and put on. Sounds a lot like what we all do every morning: we wake up, cast off our pajamas, and put on the clothes we're going to wear for the day ahead. Except Paul isn't giving us a morning ritual; he's instructing us on how to live in light of Christ's return.

So let's take a look at what Paul has to say by opening your Bibles to Romans 13. Our passage can be found on pg. 948 of the hardcover Bibles in the pew in front of you, if you happen to have forgotten to bring a Bible with you. We're going to cover the last four verses of Romans 13, v. 11-14. So then, trusting that you have located it, please follow along as I read v. 11-14 from the thirteenth chapter of the book of Romans. **"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. 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. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."**

So this passage can be divided up into three commands and the first of these is this...

## 1. Wake up

I have three teenage girls who like to sleep, like Autumn who slept in until almost 1:00 PM yesterday! Often mom or dad need to go into their room and gently inform them, "It's time to wake up." But thus is life: we all have to wake up each day because there

are things we need to do. During the week, I need to go to work, so as much as I'd like to sleep in, I have to wake up and get ready for the day. It's time to be productive: the night is for sleeping, the day for action.

In the same way, Paul says we need to get up and get ready as Christians. In v. 11 he says, "**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. The night is far gone; the day is at hand.**" It's time for us to wake up! But what does Paul mean by that? What time is it? The time - the hour - I wake up in the morning is at 7:00 AM, but Paul isn't talking about that. He's not referring to a specific time of the day such that we could set our alarm clock to it.

The "**time**" and the "**hour**" being referred to in the first half of v. 11 is specified for us in the second half of v. 11. He says, "**For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.**" Paul is talking about our salvation, saying the time and hour of our salvation is nearly upon us. Now that can be a bit confusing at first because of how the Bible talks about salvation both as something we're experiencing currently as well as something we're looking forward to. So let me explain this.

On the one hand, salvation has already occurred. As soon as you trusted in Christ, you were saved. God's wrath against you was satisfied, your sins were forgiven, you died with Christ and were raised with him into newness of life. In Christ, you are, right this moment, fully justified, fully redeemed. So there's a real sense that salvation is a past action. You have *been saved* through faith in Christ.

But on the other hand, salvation is also a future hope. We still live in our mortal bodies. We still struggle with sin. We still live in a fallen, broken world. Our final salvation, when our bodies are glorified and we'll enjoy the presence of God for all eternity, is still in the future. We don't have that yet. We have the certainty of the promises of Christ and the down payment of the Holy Spirit who guarantees our final glorification, but the fullness of our salvation we'll experience in heaven is something we're still waiting for. So then, one day *we will be saved*, glorified in heaven.

So what Paul is saying to us is that the time of our final salvation is near. The return of Christ is coming closer, when all of his promises will be realized, when the kingdom of God will be manifested fully as people from every tribe, tongue, and nation are raised from the dead and enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb as glorified saints. Each day we get closer to it. Either it's one day closer to when Christ returns or it's one day closer to your evitable death, when you will be ushered into the presence of God. And since we don't know precisely when that will happen, we should "**wake up**" from the slumber of sin and live as those who are alive in Christ. For us, the "**night is gone**" in that the old ways of spiritual darkness which once characterized our lives has passed. You don't need to live in the darkness of sin anymore; "**the day is at hand**" because Christ has saved you so you can wake up and live your life for him.

So Grace Fellowship, wake up! Stop sleeping in sin. The night is over. Your Lord will return soon and you ought to be ready and waiting for him. And if he doesn't come for

you first, you surely will go to him once you die and there's no guarantee of how much time you have left before that happens. So whether he comes to you or you go to him, the day of your salvation is closer now than when you first believed and so you ought to live in light of the salvation awaiting you.

I think this is an especially important passage for us because we can get so caught up in the affairs of the world that we lose sight of the big picture. We forget where we stand in the timeline of God's redemptive work. The world was in darkness before Christ came. Without the light of the gospel, there wasn't much hope other than the small flicker put forth weakly by the Jews, who often smothered the light through their disobedience. But now the light has come into the world through Christ. A new day is dawning. He's hasn't come in all his fullness yet, but the dawn is breaking and soon we will see Christ in the full splendor of his glory.

The time right now is like the very early morning, when you don't see the sun yet but you know it's rising because the sky is growing ever-brighter in the east. Any moment the sun will appear over the horizon, but it's not quite there yet. That's what the time is for us right now. The full dawn of our salvation is almost here, so it's time to wake up! Stop sleeping as if it's the middle of the night and get prepared for the coming day.

How then, how do we do that? What does waking up from our sleep look like? Paul gives us two more commands here that elaborate on what this means for us. So the first way we wake up is by casting off those things which we previously engaged in when we lived in the darkness of sin. So after waking up, we move now to our second point which concerns our need to...

## 2. Cast off

Look back in your Bibles and follow along as I read, starting at the middle of v. 12. **“So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”**

Part of waking up in the morning is changing out of your pajamas into the clothes you need for work or for whatever else you have going on for the day. Getting ready for the day ahead involves casting off clothing that was fit for nighttime, but which isn't fit for wearing during the day (unless you're going to Wal-Mart, because people for some reason will go shopping there wearing their pajamas. Do enough people watching at Wal-Mart and you'll know what I'm talking about!). So this idea of casting off what was appropriate for the night in order to be properly dressed for the day is similar to what Paul is instructing us to do here. He says, **“cast off the works of darkness.”** Those aren't appropriate anymore. You're not bound in the darkness of your sin any longer and so it isn't fitting for you to engage in deeds of darkness any longer. Cast them off. Get rid of them! Remove them from your life. Don't dress yourself in the ragged and filthy evening gown of sin any longer. Cast it away!

Paul then spells out some of the **“works of darkness”** we need to cast off in v. 13. The kind of behavior we should not engage in, that should not characterize us, he tells us is **“not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.”** This short list is known as a “vice list” and there’s a number of them in the New Testament, most of which are much longer than this. So this isn’t meant to be exhaustive; it’s only representative of the many kinds of sinful behavior we should no longer be involved in as believers.

So the first pair have to do with what we would call “partying” or “carousing.” It’s the idea of going to a party or a bar and getting drunk and the resulting shenanigans that often come with it. Of course, far too often drunkenness in such a setting will lead to the second set of vices, to **“sexual immorality and sensuality.”** Scripture warns us repeatedly about the need to remain sexually pure and so this kind of behavior is the exactly opposite of what should characterize Christians. Then the final pair mentioned is **“quarreling and jealousy”** which is just two of many kinds of sinful attitudes that can harm or even destroy our relationships with others. Of course, Paul could have added many, many more items to this vice list, but these six are sufficient to illustrate his point. These are the type of sins we ought to **“cast off”** and be rid of. They once may have been true of you before you trusted in Christ, but now the light of Christ has enlightened you and so these wicked behaviors are no longer appropriate.

Another way Paul puts this idea of casting off the works of darkness is in v. 14 when he says at the end, **“make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”** Paul fully recognizes something about us that we all need to come to terms with. Even though you’re a Christian, you still have sinful desires. They don’t just magically disappear in a puff of smoke once you become a Christian. When you’re born again, the Holy Spirit transforms you so that you’re given new desires, so you begin to hunger and thirst for righteousness. But those old desires are still there, right alongside them. They may be weakened, but they’re not eliminated. It’s like a person who goes on a diet and finds that he likes the healthy food he needs to eat, but that doesn’t mean he still doesn’t get a craving for a Snickers Bar or a bowl of mint-chocolate chip ice cream. The desire for both healthy food and junk food can be present simultaneously, and so if he’s going to maintain his diet, he’s going to have to make no provision for gratifying his desire to order three scoops of the flavor of the day at Culvers.

So we’re to cast away our sin by making **“no provision for the flesh.”** A provision is a supply of something, like how food and water are provisions you might take along with you on a long hike. It’s something you’ll use to help you make the journey. It helps you get there. It helps you achieve your goal. So Paul says, don’t provide your flesh what it needs to be successful in its journey into sin. Don’t feed it. Don’t nourish it. So it means if getting drunk is a temptation, don’t make provision for that by going to a party where all your friends are drinking. If lust is an issue, then make no provision for the flesh by toying around with websites that can tempt you towards sin. Don’t feed that lust or greed or pride or whatever sin you struggle with by purposely being around things that will lead you into sin. Cast it off. Avoid them. Don’t go near it or click on that link or be around those people.

We need to be clear from a passage like this that the Christian life is one of actively seeking to put to death sin. You have to work at casting off the works of darkness and starving the desires of your flesh. It doesn't just happen accidentally; intentionality on your part is necessary. So is this true of you? Are you striving to cast off the sin in your life? Are you at war against the sinful desires of your flesh or have you made peace with them and are giving them provision to keep them alive and well? God's Word tells you to cast them off! Don't live like that any longer. The night of your enslavement to sin is over; the light of Christ has shined upon you. You've been set free to cast off the sin that once so easily entangled you and live freely in the daylight of Christ's salvation, purchased for you on the cross. So this needs to be an active part of living for Christ; you need to strive with serious intentionality to cast off sin.

But once we cast off sin, we need to replace it with something else. Just like removing your pajamas in the morning is a necessary part of starting the day, it is not sufficient. After removing your pajamas, you need to put clothing on before you head on out the door. So for our third and final point, we need to flip the coin from what we need to cast off to what we need to instead put on. So our third point is...

### 3. Put on

Twice in this section Paul instructs us to **"put on"** something. First, he says at the end of v. 12, that we're to **"cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."** Now this metaphor readily reminds us of the same armor metaphor Paul used elsewhere in Ephesians 6. Hold your place here for a moment and turn a few pages ahead in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. You can find it on pg. 979 of the pew Bible. It's in the last chapter of the letter to the Ephesians. Paul elaborates on this idea of putting on the armor of God, saying this starting in v. 10 of Ephesians 6,

*"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication."*

What Paul is saying here is the Christian life is a battle, and you need to be properly geared up to wage war. He identifies our enemies as the devil, as well as cosmic powers who rule over the present darkness and spiritual forces of evil. So there are forces arrayed against us from without. We're warned in 1 Peter 5:8 that our adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking who he may devour. So we need to

put on spiritual armor to defend against our spiritual enemies. The armor of light, Paul tells us here, consists of the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We need to put these on in order to enter into battle.

But there are also enemies within. Paul said in Romans 13:14 that we should “**make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.**” We have to wage war against the sin inside of us, the desires of our own sinful flesh that wage war inside our hearts and minds. So this is a battle that takes place on two fronts – from the devil without and our sinful desires within. So we need to gear up and put on the armor of light in order to defend ourselves against the darkness that threatens to engulf us.

How effective would a Roman soldier be in battle without armor, without a shield or a sword to use in battle? If the enemy came into camp while they were sleeping, when they were unprepared, without any armor on, what would happen? They would be easily slaughtered. So to prepare for battle, Roman soldiers needed to wake up, cast off their night clothes, and put on their armor. So it is for us. Are you daily putting on the armor of God, preparing for battle against the devil and your flesh? It’s time to wake up Christians! Stop lazily lying around in sinful pursuits; get up and get dressed for battle. Put on the armor of light and begin waging war against sin.

We need to have a war-time mentality to our lives. The Christian life isn’t meant to be one of coddling comforts; it’s a call to war. We know Christ will win the war, but we still must each fight in the battle. We can’t just lay down our arms and pretend our enemy has been defeated. He will be, but not yet. Sin still wages war in your heart. We still have the desires of our flesh that battle to defeat the us in the pursuit of righteousness. Satan still seeks to tempt us, to deceive us, to cause us to fall into sin and despair. So the battle is real and you and I must wage it. Put on the armor of light each day and fight the good fight of faith. Wage war against sin. Don’t be comfortable with it. Don’t make peace with it. Fight it and defeat it.

But there is a second thing Paul tells us to put on in v. 14 of the thirteenth chapter of Romans. Go back to Romans now. In addition to having told us to put on the armor of light, he says in v. 14, “**Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.**” I think what Paul means by this is similar to what he means when he tells us to put on the armor of light in v. 12. It means we are to look to Jesus as our armor, as our shield, as the one who will protect us from our enemies of sin, death, and the devil.

In other words, Jesus is our ultimate protection. If we wrap ourselves in Jesus through faith in him, nothing will harm us. We can wage war against sin and know what we will be safe because nothing will have victory over us when we hide ourselves in him. Remember what Paul said back in Romans 8? He said,

*“In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Put on Christ by wearing the robe of his righteousness through faith and nothing can separate you from the love of God. You will conquer because he has conquered. His victory is your victory. His strength is your strength.

## **Conclusion**

So then, are you awake and ready to fight the good fight? My brothers and sisters here at Grace Fellowship Church, you know the time. Your salvation is nearer this morning than when you first believed. Christ is coming. You will see him soon, either by his return or by your death, but the night of living in sin is over for you. You don't need to wallow in the darkness of depravity any longer. The night is over; the day is now at hand.

So wake up! Don't let sin reign in your bodies any longer. Don't be sluggish and sleepy in your walk with Christ. Walk up and cast off the works of darkness that once characterized you. Christ is your liberator and he has liberated you from your enslavement to sin and given you power over Satan's temptations. Cast off sin and put on instead the armor of God, the armor of light and hope that is Christ Jesus, your Lord and Savior. He has given you all you need to win the battle against sin. So let's take up the spiritual armor he has given us to wear, put on the robe of righteousness that was purchased for us by the shed blood of Christ, and live for him knowing that our salvation is drawing ever closer.

Please join me now as I pray.