

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor Emeritus

[Swift Creek Baptist Church.com](http://SwiftCreekBaptistChurch.com), 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834

Sunday, March 12, 2023

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

Intro. In my last message from vv. 8-10 we learned more about the Christian’s duty to love one another. In our text today we are given a good reason why we should love. Notice v.11, “And *do* this, knowing the time.....” Thus, Paul gives another reason why his 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,¹ and we need to love one another all the more. The church should be a refuge from the world’s hatred and conflict.

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 someday 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, perhaps very soon, and may our lives be transformed by this truth.

Now in light of the return of Christ that is drawing increasingly near, the first thing we need to do to be prepared for His coming is:

I. WAKE UP!

Paul says in v.11, “And [do] this, knowing the time, that now [it is] high time to awake out of sleep....” Do you hear the urgency in Paul’s words? Now what does Paul mean when he says “[it is] high time to awake out of sleep....”? 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. He’s using an analogy here. It’s as though he were sounding reveilly to raise the soldiers onto their feet in the morning. They need to wake up, cast off their night clothes, and put on what they need to be prepared for battle in the light of day.

So on the one hand, Paul is saying that too many Christians are asleep spiritually. “Sleep” here is the state of worldly carelessness and indifference to sin and the things of God. Too many

¹ In the prophecy of Mt. 24:12, Jesus said, “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”

Christians have gone to sleep like ole Samson in the lap of Delilah. They are too busy enjoying the things of the world. They are complacent and lazy in their Christian life and service.

Therefore, Paul is calling upon Christians to wake up. We need to wake up and realize the return of Christ is drawing near. We need to be watchful and alert. Spiritual dangers are increasing all around us. Don't be spiritually ignorant of the times in which we live. Wake up to the dangers. We are living in an increasingly dark and sinful world, when deception, temptations and sin will prevail. So Jesus said in Matthew 26:4, "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." Also be spiritually alert and perceptive through Bible reading.

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." How prophetic! 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 stay asleep, but what would happen if the church would only wake up to what time it is on God's cosmic clock.

Argumentation: Now Paul gives 3 reasons for this command to wake up:

A. Because It is *Time* to Wake Up – 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 have gotten older, I tend to 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, beginning with the fact that God promised that He would send a Messiah. He's done that. Isa. 53 and Psalm 22 predicted that He would die a terrible death as a sacrifice 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 and the prophets predicted the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon *all* of God's people. He did that on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The prophets predicted that the Jews would be restored to their land. He's did that in 1948. In fact, by 2006, for the first time in 1900 years, there were once again more Jews living in Israel than in any other place on Earth.² 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. In 2 Thess. 2:11 Paul predicts that there will be mass deception in the last days. We have witnessed an example of that during the pandemic. Governments, social media, big business, and the news media all lined up to support narratives which are becoming increasingly clear were not true. 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, working for Him, and living holy lives when He comes.

So knowing the time, we should also wake up:

² Washingtonpost.com, by Charles Krauthammer, Friday, May 5, 2006.

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 not talking about our salvation from sin but talking about our final, completed salvation, including our glorification, which will take place at the return of Christ. If that was nearer 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, is used by Paul and others as an end times designation, such as “the Day of the Lord” or “the Day of Christ.”³ 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.

Besides, just the anticipation and 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 with eager anticipation 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 spiritual and 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.⁴ This evil age is making progress to completion. I never thought I would live to see such moral and spiritual darkness in our country as we are witnessing today.

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. In 2 Tim. 3:1-5 Paul describes the last days. Read that text and see how much prophecy is being fulfilled. For example, Paul says, “...in the last days... men shall be without natural affection...” (KJV). Natural affection (*astorgos*) 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. Then 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. He will harness a form of payment that is fully under government control. The current movement toward digital currently will make that possible! 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 has adopted a common currency and now has achieved political union. 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 has created a world economic system. Have you heard of the World Bank? Have you heard of the International Monetary Fund? Keep your eye on the World Economic Forum. 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! When the night is over, our opportunity for service in this life will be over. The Lord Jesus said in Jn. 9:4, “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

³ If the analogy applies, the coming of Christ is not at the beginning of the night of tribulation, but at the dawn of the new day of the kingdom age.

⁴ 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 and making progress by cutting their way through new territory.

“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.⁵

Also, we ought to heed all the more the commands 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 that I just mentioned. We also need to maintain an attitude of looking and 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.

In light of the time in which we are living, what else should we do? Well, understanding the times in which we are living should affect our conduct. So notice secondly that we should not only wake up, but also:

II. TAKE OFF WHAT IS ASSOCIATED WITH DARKNESS!

Verse 12 says, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” Again, 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.⁶ To be specific, Paul lists some sins that are common among people who are still living in moral darkness. God is light (1 Jn. 1:6), and though we are men and women of light, we sometimes clothe ourselves with darkness, which is a contradiction. Christian, in light of the soon return of Christ, 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. Worldly Partying – Paul says in v.13 that we are to walk “not in revelry and drunkenness.” “Revelry” (*kamos*) originally referred to a nighttime festive procession in honor of Bacchus, the god of wine, that often ended with sexual immorality. The word degenerated to indicate carousing in general. So the word refers to feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night. Bad things tend to happen in the darkness of night. Practically, this means that no Christian should attend a function where such lustful passions are aroused. No Christian should ever get drunk and lose control of their moral senses, as stated in Eph. 5:18. By the way, there is also no place for Christians getting high on drugs either.

Folks, we have an epidemic of this problem of drinking parties in high school and on the college campuses today. We have a real problem with drunken parties even among middle school students. Thousands of college students have begun going to the beach on spring break, where they engage in riotous, drunken behavior, some of which is even put on TV, and certainly on social media! And too many of our Christian teenagers, who name the name of Christ, are being sucked

⁵ 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.”

⁶ See also Ephesians 4:22, 25; Colossians 3:8, 12.

into these parties, and sinning against the Savior. No small number of Baptist churches which have removed “Baptist” from their name have become tolerant toward the consumption of alcohol. Predictably, even some ministers who have embraced such tolerance have developed drinking problems.

How would you like for Jesus to come again and find you at one of those drunken 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” (*koite*) 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 and shameless behavior that *normally* would shock public decency. Most people seek to conceal their evil deeds and try to sin in secret. But such a person does not care who sees him and even publicly exhibits shameful behavior, including adultery, homosexuality, transsexual behavior, and other sexual sins. Surely there has been an increase in these sins as we move closer to the return of Christ. We Christians had better wake up to what is happening around us, or we will get sucked into the shameless, 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.

Traditional Baptist are not as likely to engage in drunken parties and immorality. So as I’ve been preaching about those sins, you may have been thinking, “Preach it, brother!” Yet too many Baptists certainly need to put off the sins he talks about next, including:

C. Quarreling – Paul says in v.13 that we are not to live, “in strife and envy.” Strife often results from unholy competition, such as when there was strife among the disciples as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Luke 22:24). 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. Verbal battles, partisan political battles, family abuse, ethnic conflict and even violent assaults are all too common among nonbelievers. These problems are fueled by the fact that there is so much envy, strife, and violence on TV, the movies, social media and video games.

Yet strife and jealousy are too common among Christians, as in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 3:3). This is opposite to the love described in vv. 8-10. We need to love each other, be content with what we have rather than jealous, and be happy for the joy and success of others (12:15a). 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. The contemporary church needs a “wake-up call” about these activities.

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 a word (*pronoia*) that means "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 an unexpected temptation in a moment of weakness. It's much worse to actually make plans to sin against your Savior. So proactively avoid temptation. Don't view certain material that you know beforehand will incite sexual lust or other temptations. Don't plan to go to a place where you know up front that you will face temptation. Jesus taught us to pray, "lead us not into temptation," and we should certainly not knowingly lead *ourselves* into temptation. Set parental controls on your TV to block certain content that you know will be tempting.

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

III. PUT ON YOUR DAY CLOTHES & EQUIPMENT

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 lingerie or 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*) could actually be translated "equipment," (see 6:13), which would include both "weapons" and armor.⁷ So we should put on:

A. Weapons of Light - 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 light, and darkness retreats. In Phil. 2:15b Paul says that Christians are "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as light in the world." So what kind of light do we need to put on? Light represents two things in Scripture: truth and righteousness. So first of all, we need to 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. People today are even denying the basic truth of Gen. 1:27 that God created two genders: male and female. So more than ever, we need to give out the truth of God's Word. Don't let this evil world silence our voice! Truth fights the deception of the last days.

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?

⁷ Paul either has in mind the weapons which are light (genitive of apposition) or weapons which are characterized by light (descriptive genitive), probably the latter.

Likewise, in v.13 Paul says, “Let us walk properly....” “Properly” (*euschemonos*) means decently, becomingly, in a seemly manner. It is the opposite of the word translated “lust,” which refers to unbridled, shameless behavior.⁸

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 instrument or armor of light known as:

3. Love – Again, Paul says in v.11, “And [do] this, knowing the time,....” Do what? Paul just spoke in vv.8-10 about our responsibility to love other. Furthermore, Paul wrote in 12:21, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Overcome hatred with love. 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.”⁹

4. Prayer - When Paul exhorted Christians to put on the whole armor of God in Ephesians 6, he concluded by saying in v.18, “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”

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

B. Lord Jesus Christ – He says in v.14, “But¹⁰ 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 (cf. Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:24). Let people see Jesus in you. Display your true identity in Christ. Don’t let there be a gap between who we are and how we live. This also refers to clothing the soul in the moral disposition and habits of Christ. We ought to live Christlike lives. Ask yourself in each situation, What Would Jesus Do?¹¹

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 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 a while. He shook his hand and left. For many days after that the father would

⁸ 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.

⁹ See Eph. 6:13-17 for more detail on the Christian armor.

¹⁰ This translates *alla*, which is the strongest adversative in Greek.

¹¹ 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.

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!”¹²

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 spiritually 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. As we sink further into the darkness of the last days, you may not have another opportunity to be saved.

Christian, are you living for the Lord. Are you spiritually awake or 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: William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957); 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); Douglas J. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary: Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000); 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* [Ver. 5:80] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2021); Dr. Adrian Rogers (notes from his sermon on this text); Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s New Testament Insights on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010); 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).

ABOUT THESE SERMON NOTES

© Dr. Stephen Felker. These notes may be used and even shared for personal study or ministry, but not for commercial purposes. The author credits the sources listed above and footnotes for much of the content. The “live” recording of this sermon will be more completely in the author’s own words. To obtain an audio or video recording of this message, go to www.sermonaudio.com/pastorFelker. Dr. Felker’s email address is S+Felker&2@aol.com (remove signs).

¹² Jerry Vines, *Family Fellowship: An Expository Experience in 1 John* (Dallas: Crescendo Publications, 1976), 158-159.