

## **ROMANS 13:11-14** **GET UP AND GET DRESSED!**

Young people, how would you like this?

I remember attending a week-long camp during my teen years. We slept in bunk beds in cabins, and we did the sorts of things young people do.

But we would eventually fall asleep, and morning would eventually come. We would know this, because a large man would enter our cabin and sing:

Oh, what a beautiful morning, Oh, what a beautiful day!

We hated that man.

Young or old or in-between, for almost all of us, it's hard to get up in the morning. You may have a great day planned, but you still must force yourself through that awful moment when you realize sleep is over, and it's time to get up and get dressed.

Here at the end of Romans 13, Paul's inspired words flow from what he has just written, and toward what he is about to write.

Since the start of chapter 12, he has been answering the question, "If the gospel is true, how do we live?" We have learned of all the ways we are to offer ourselves to Jesus, in response to his mercy to us. Last week, Dale described how it is all summed up in love - our continuing debt to each other.

Now, before Paul directs our love in a particular way in chapter 14, he reminds us that we are to "do this" loving because of where we are in God's purposes in history. Paul writes of "the present time", and "the hour". Then he uses images of night and day. Paul knows that just as it is tough to rouse our bodies from sleep, it is tough to rouse our souls from sleep.

Yet we must. Paul now calls us away from the spiritual slumber, and he proclaims that it is time to get up and get dressed.

Paul writes, GET UP!

Let's learn about getting up, by asking and answering two questions.

First, WHAT TIME IS IT?

Right now, writes Paul, it's the season of darkness.

Paul writes that we must understand "the present time." The present time is a time of darkness, when evil prevails in human hearts. As we saw back in Romans 1, God's wrath is being revealed against all the godlessness, wickedness, and foolishness of people. We have "put on" deeds of darkness.

But what about Jesus? Yes, he has come to take away the sins of his people. He has lived and died and risen again, so that we may no longer be subject to God's condemning wrath.

As Paul well knew, Jesus has returned to heaven, and he has promised to return. Still, for now, we live in a season with much darkness.

But now will not be forever, because the season of darkness will someday give way to the season of light.

Paul writes, "The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

When we read that word "salvation", we think of Jesus dying for our sins. Or maybe we think of the day we go to heaven. But Paul is thinking about the return of Jesus, when the "Light of the World" will come back, finally and fully drive out this season of darkness, and bring an eternal season of light - where righteousness dwells.

Then, in between the season of darkness and the season of light, Paul reveals here that we are coming into the season of dawn.

He writes, "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here." It's that time in the early morning when the darkness is about to flee, but the light is still so dim. When the season of dawn arrives, you know the light is coming.

So what is Paul saying? He is not saying that he knows when Jesus will return. But he is saying that the next event of salvation history is Jesus' return, and that day could come at any time.

What time is it? It is the season of darkness, but the season of light is coming, and the season of dawn is upon us.

So now we must ask a second question. It is the question we ask many mornings, at camp or at home. DO I HAVE TO GET UP?

The man with the loud voice sang, "yes." The alarm clock screeches, "Yes." Your mother says, "Yes." God through Paul says, "Yes."

Verse 11: "The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber."

Your spirit cannot just stay in bed and doze the dawn away. You must get up and become engaged in a passionate pursuit of the glory of Jesus, each day of your life. Through Jesus, you will one day enter that season of light. Your soul will do this at death, and your soul and body will do this when Jesus comes back. You must get up.

Do you believe this? Like Paul, Peter pondered this. He wrote in his second letter, "...you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come. They will say, 'Where is this coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

The "last days" are the days between the first and second coming of Jesus, and they have been filled with scoffers who don't believe that this "season of light" is coming.

But, you say, "I'm not a scoffer! I'm a believer! I believe Jesus will come again!"

Maybe. But maybe you live as if he will not return. You presume that everything will go on, as it has since the beginning of creation. Your life will just go on. This world will just go on. Same old, same old.

We must know the reality of darkness and the promise of light. We must know that God has ordained a day for darkness to turn to light, and that God now calls his people to get up, and to live lives of spiritual wakefulness, for his glory.

But how do you know whether you are asleep or awake? Even with our bodies, we are not always sure!

I want to offer you a quick five-question quiz. You may even want to get a piece of paper and write down your responses. I want to give you five sets of words. You ponder which word in each set, best describes you.

Yet even before I begin with this, I will ask you to do this, as well. Even after you go from here today, consider which words in each set, best describe our congregation. These are words for each one of us, and for all of us.

Here is the first set of words: procrastination versus preparation.

Do you procrastinate about what will grow you spiritually? Maybe you always find time for other activities, but you often don't find time for the disciplines of public and private worship, prayer, and genuine fellowship.

Or do you live as one who is preparing for the coming of the King? You are aware of the times you live in, and you know that the shaping of your soul could end even in the next heartbeat, and you want to be prepared for that moment when you will meet Jesus.

Here is the second set: mediocrity versus excellence.

Have you joined too many, and settled for mediocrity in your walk with Jesus? You can always compare, and you can always find someone who's not parenting as well as you, or controlling his anger as well as you, or giving time and talents to the church as well as you. We may say it only in our hearts, but we say it: "At least I'm not like..."

Or are you striving for excellence in your walk with Jesus? You know you will falter and fail, but you want to grow beyond average. You want Jesus to give you victory over depression, or anxiety, or lust. You want to truly serve the people around you to his glory. You want to stand out, not so you can pat yourself on the back, but so that you can hear the Savior say, "Well done..." on the day of the season of light.

Now the third set: casualness versus passion.

Are you casual about issues of sin and holiness in your life?

You are hurtling toward spiritual shipwreck with your late-night computer habits. "Well, I'll have to stop that sometime."

You are flirting with marital disaster, with your flirting with him or her. "Oh, it's innocent."

You are burning with materialism, because you must have that...whatever. "Sure. I can afford it."

You are destroying your loved ones, because of the fire that flames from your lips. "Yeah, I gotta work on that."

Or do you have a passion for sin and holiness? You will throw out that computer if you must. You will break off that relationship. You will seek a friend who will watch you watch your spending. You will seek much help, and new habits, with your words.

You will do this, because you have a passion for the day of light, when you will meet Jesus.

The fourth set: distraction versus action.

What might be distracting you from godliness? Maybe it is the sporting events that you must watch. Maybe it is the promotion that you must have. Maybe it is activities that are good, but not best. You are so busy with this and that, that when it is time to meet with God in worship, you are physically weary, or mentally worried, and not even half there.

God's means of grace are so abundant for you. No one will shoot you for possessing a Bible or praising God in worship. If your spirit is awake, you are anxious to hear God's truth, and act on it. God's truth and God's Spirit dwell richly in you, and you are a different person because of it all.

Then, a fifth set of words: contentment versus contending.

Are you okay with how you are? God calls us to be content with what we have, but we are never to be content with how we are.

Or are you contending? Are you fighting? Do you realize that you are in a spiritual war, and no soldier ever won a battle in a bunk? Do you know that when the light comes, it will expose you for who you are, before Jesus Christ?

Wake up from your slumber! Get up!

And GET DRESSED!

Have you ever seen a pajama party, or participated in a pajama day? Our kids have done it a few times at school.

It's funny - everyone is wearing pajamas. It's also strange, because we know it's not normal to wear pajamas when you are "out." On normal days, if you are going to be doing what you need to do, you need to take off your bed clothes, and put on clothes that are appropriate for what you are doing.

That's Paul's point, as he writes of our lives before Jesus. After we get up, we must get dressed. Again, let's ask and answer two questions.

First, WHAT MUST I THROW OFF? What clothes must I get rid of, as I get up and offer myself to my Lord?

Verse 12: "Let us put aside the deeds of darkness." The word that is translated "put aside" means to "throw off", or to "cast off". You are not just casually placing something down. You are hurling it away from you.

Then Paul writes in verse 13: "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy."

In the season of dawn, in preparation for the season of light, we throw off the deeds of darkness, such as these.

\* Let's start with the first four deeds of darkness: orgies, drunkenness, sexual immorality, and debauchery.

"Orgies and drunkenness" both relate to intoxication of some sort.

"Sexual immorality and debauchery" both relate to uncontrolled physical passions.

These first four deeds of darkness are deeds done with our bodies. As Paul has shown us in the book of Romans, the body itself is not evil, but when we do evil, we do it with our bodies.

\* Then think of the last two deeds of darkness: dissension and jealousy. Both words describe how I will fight for what I want, and I will oppose what you want. They both have to do with personal relationships.

Notice how Paul puts the "body" deeds and the "relationship" deeds in the same list of deeds of darkness. It is just as wrong for me to destroy you as I relate to you, as it is for me to destroy my body with booze or drugs. The bottom line is the same: they are all deeds of darkness.

This is not an exhaustive list of the deeds of darkness. It is more of a representative list, to remind us of how we are prone to live in the season of darkness. We use our bodies for evil, and we hurt each other in our personal relationships. These are deeds of darkness, and these are the sorts of sins that we must get up and throw off, as we offer ourselves to Jesus.

So I simply ask: are you? Are we?

It looks like it, doesn't it? We gather together, and we seem to be doing pretty well. We clean up nicely. We smile politely. We have a witty word or maybe a kind compliment for the people around us.

But what is the truth? The deeds of darkness are most often done in darkness. We do not parade them. We hide them. But they are there.

A friend in Minnesota was in law enforcement, and I remember him telling me once that if you are out at 2 in the morning, most of the people out there with you, shouldn't be out there. Of course, there are exceptions, but most people who are out when no one can see, are out there because they're doing what they don't want anyone to see.

What deeds are yours, when no one can see?

Men, what about your computers? I speak for Dale when I say that we wonder, and we worry, and we wish for you to bring darkness into the light - so that you may throw off that darkness.

Everyone, what about your bodies? Do you think about "how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature", and do you act on what you think? What are you putting into your body? What are you doing, with your body?

Everyone, what about your relationships? Maybe the only people who can see, are the people who see you in your home. What would they say, if they told the truth? What dissension or jealousy or other rot, rots away the life of your family and your soul?

What must you throw off? Will you seek help to throw it off? Or will you sit there and hope against hope, that your darkness will never see the light of day?

But it will. "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here." With the season of light, comes light, and deeds of darkness will be exposed.

I plead with you. Ask for the help of God's people, and the help of God's grace, to throw it off.

Do this too, if you have the courage. Pray for each other, and for this body, that deeds of darkness will be exposed to the forgiving and redeeming light of Jesus Christ.

What must I put off? Deeds of darkness.

WHAT MUST I PUT ON?

Verse 12: "Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."

Then Paul writes: "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with..."

With what? What do we expect Paul to write here? He writes it in other places, so it wouldn't be wrong. We expect him to write something like, "Clothe yourselves with soberness, and purity, and love."

But he does not write that. He does not simply tell us to put on a list of personal virtues. He calls us to put on a Person.

"Rather, clothe yourselves with Jesus Christ..."

Should we be surprised? Isn't this the thread that has run all through this book of Romans? We have died with Jesus. We have been raised with Jesus to a new life. It is Jesus, through his Holy Spirit, working in us, who will make us into the people God has called us to be.

Do we understand this yet? Do I? Do you?

The call of the gospel is not:

\* Just be good. That is simple morality, and simple morality does not make us good enough for God. It simply makes us think we're better than others.

\* Just try harder. That is simple drudgery, and simple drudgery merely wears us out, and quenches our passion for the God we are called to love.

The call of the gospel is this: become what you are, and become what you will be. You are one with Jesus, and you will be one with Jesus, so yes, throw off those deeds of darkness, and clothe yourselves with him.

Let him cover you. Let his blood cover your sins, which keep you from God. Let his power drive out darkness and pour in light, so that you might indeed do what is well-pleasing in the sight of the God you love.

"Rather, clothe yourselves with Jesus Christ." But how? The start of this, and the heart of this, is captured in these two ideas:

We center our passion on Jesus. We love him first. We love him most. We love him best. Following Jesus is far more than following a set of rules. Following Jesus is a relationship with a Redeemer.

We relate to him. We worship him. We learn of him. We meditate on him. We pray to him. We are quiet before him. As we relate to him, the power of our affection for him, drives out the power of other affections.

Near the end of his life, the emperor Napoleon was exiled to an island, and he reflected on his life, and the life of Jesus. He is said to have said these words:

"Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years, Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others difficult to satisfy..."

"He asks for the human heart; He will have it entirely to Himself.

"He demands it unconditionally; and forthwith His demand is granted. Wonderful!...All who sincerely believe in him, experience that remarkable, supernatural love toward Him."

We center our passion on Jesus. We do not just believe in him. We love him, and our souls are clothed more and more, with him.

Yet we also clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ, when we cry for grace to Jesus' Spirit.

Napoleon also wrote, "This phenomenon is unaccountable; it is altogether beyond the scope of man's creative powers."

How can it be, that we should be clothed with Jesus Christ? How we are prone to drift back into morality or drudgery! But while we do prepare, while we do strive for excellence, while we must have an active passion for Jesus as we contend for growth, we strive for all this with a desperate dependence on God's Spirit to do in us, what we could never do in ourselves.

We are as the woman in the gospels, who desperately clung to Jesus, 'til he should heal her and make her whole.

We sing, "Gracious Spirit, dwell with me...Truthful Spirit, dwell with me...Mighty Spirit, dwell with me...Holy Spirit...dwell with me..."

...and we mean it! We cry for it on Sunday morning, and we cry for it on Tuesday afternoon, and we cry for it on Thursday evening...and we cry for it in the darkness of the night, as the dawn begins to break, that we may throw off the deeds of darkness, and put on the armor of light - the clothing of this Person named Jesus Christ.

"The night is nearly over; the day is almost here...The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber"...to "clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ." With a passion for him, crying to him, get up and get dressed.