

## Romans

### I. Living Godly In The World & Church

A. Romans 13:11-14 . . . Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. [12] The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. [13] Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. [14] But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

1. In this section, Paul presents the urgency of practicing love and thus fulfill all God's laws.
  - a. And why this urgency?
  - b. Because the end is coming ever nearer, which means the time for living a love-controlled life is growing shorter and shorter.
2. Then Paul gives some very practical, though general ways we can practice love as we ought. And it is important for us to notice that these ways follow a process that is vital to becoming godly – a process that begins with putting off selfishness and sin and then fills that void by putting on love, righteousness, and the likeness of Jesus Christ.

#### B. Prayer

### II. Be all the more zealous knowing the end is near

A. Romans 13:11 . . . Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

1. Do this –
  - a. Do what? Do no wrong to your neighbor by ardently, fervently, seriously, and whole-heartedly practicing love according to love's standard, and thus fulfill the law.
  - b. Why? Because the time to live a godly life is growing ever shorter, which means we must take advantage of whatever time we have left if we are going to live as God saved us to live.
2. This idea of taking full advantage of the time we have left is not unique to Romans. In his letter to the Ephesian church, Paul wrote about giving focused attention – right now – to living according to

love's standard, because the amount of time left to do so is getting ever shorter. We read in –

- a. Ephesians 5:1-2 . . . Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; [2] and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.
  - b. Ephesians 5:15-17 . . . Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, [16] making the most of your time, because the days are evil. [17] So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.
  - c. And we know from 1 Thessalonians 4:3 that the will of God is for us to be sanctified, that is, to become holy in all our behavior just as God is holy.
  - d. Therefore, these first two words of Romans 13:11 call us to ardently, fervently, seriously, and whole-heartedly practice love according to love's standard because the amount of time left to do this is getting ever shorter – and we do not want to fall short of living and loving this way.
3. At this point, I want to take a few minutes and look at what the Bible says about the nearness of the end times.
- a. Ten times, including here in Romans 13, the Bible speaks of the nearness of the end times – when Christ returns, judges the nations and all mankind, separates the believers from the unbelievers, and establishes a new heavens and new earth on which those who belong to Him will live with Him for eternity.
  - b. Of these ten references to the nearness of the end times, seven of them exhort us to focus our attention on how we are living because the end is near.
    - (1) In other words, the emphasis in these seven references is not on the soon return of Christ, as if that alone is the important truth being conveyed.
    - (2) Rather, the emphasis is on having and maintaining a focused, intentional, and practical pursuit of holiness, because the end is near.
  - c. For example:
    - (1) 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 . . . But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; [30] and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though

they did not possess; [31] and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

- (2) James 5:7-9 . . . Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. [8] You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. [9] Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.
  - (3) 1 Peter 4:7 . . . The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.
  - (4) Revelation 1:3 . . . Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.
  - (5) Revelation 22:7 . . . And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.
  - (6) Revelation 22:12-13 . . . Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. [13] I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.
4. This focus of these end times verses raises some questions. Why use the growing nearness of the end times to exhort and motivate us to serious action in the pursuit of holy living? Why does Paul, here in Romans 13, use the ever decreasing amount of time left to urge us to zealously love our neighbor as ourselves and so fulfill the law? I believe there are two reasons for this emphasis.
- a. First, it is a reminder that we are citizens of another kingdom and servants of the King who rules it. Yes, we live in this world, but only for now. In reality, we are foreigners or travelers passing through this foreign land on our way to our homeland.
    - (1) As the song says, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue."
    - (2) In other words, we are not living for whatever temporary treasures, pleasures, riches, fame or power we might gain from this world. We are living for God and His eternal world.
    - (3) And we do not want to just start out living that way, we want to end living that way. And so as the time for Christ's return nears, we are wise to make sure we are living that way.

- b. Second, Paul emphasizes the decreasing amount of time left to live a love-controlled life to remind us that we are to enter the next life in as holy a condition as possible. Again, this is not a requirement unique to Romans, for we read in:
- (1) 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 . . . Now may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; [13] so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.
  - (2) 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 . . . Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [24] Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.
  - (3) 2 Peter 3:11-14 . . . Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, [12] looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! [13] But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. [14] Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.
  - (4) Ephesians 1:3-4 . . . Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, [4] just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.
- c. The point of all these scriptures is summed up in Hebrews 12:14, "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification (holiness of life) without which no one will see the Lord."
- (1) In other words, salvation is not intended to save us from the penalty of sin so we can one day have eternal life with God – as if how we live in between those two events is of little or no consequence to being given the gift of eternal life.
  - (2) Salvation is intended to save us from the penalty, the power, and the practice of sin so we will begin now, in this life, to live for God instead of ourselves (2 Corinthians 5:15).

- (3) Or as Paul says it in Romans 6 and 12, salvation's intention is sanctification in this life with the result being eternal life. This is why God expects us to respond to salvation by presenting our bodies to Him as a living and holy sacrifice, and why He expects us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.
    - (4) Or as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, God's intention is for us to become new creatures in Christ Jesus in this life and to live with Him forever in the next.
  - 5. Paul concludes this "Do this, knowing the time" section with these words: "it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed."
    - a. The simple idea expressed in the first part of this statement is that it is already time to get up and get going.
      - (1) So don't keep hitting the snooze alarm, get out of bed.
      - (2) And don't get up just to lounge around in your bathrobe, get dressed, and get serious about the work that needs to be done.
    - b. The second part of this statement affirms the reason for getting busy, and that reason is: "The available time is growing shorter, so we must make the most of the time that is left."
- B. Romans 13:12-13 . . . The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. [13] Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.
- 1. The night is almost gone, and the day is near.
    - a. This is just another way of saying what has already been said about getting busy.
    - b. Paul states this same truth in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-10 . . . But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; [5] for you are all sons of light and sons of day (you can see enough to know what time it is). We are not of night nor of darkness; [6] so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. [7] For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. [8] But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. [9] For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (note the link between living godly

now and eternal salvation in the future), [10] who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

2. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.
    - a. The principle stated here explains the process of becoming godly in this life so that we enter the next in a godly condition. And though this principle is challenging to implement, it is easy to understand. And the principle is this: we must begin by putting off sin, and then put on righteousness in place of the sin we put off.
    - b. This order of action in the pursuit of godliness, or the practice of love, is important because we cannot put righteousness on where sin is alive, desired, and practiced. To grow in godliness and to love as we ought to love, we must remove the sin which stands in the way of godliness and loving as we ought.
  3. Here again, this truth is not unique to Romans. It is affirmed in Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:8-12.
    - a. In Ephesians 4:22-24, we are told to lay aside the old self, to be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and put on the new self.
    - b. In Colossians 3:5-12, we are told to put to death immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed. Then we are told to put aside anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech, and lying. Finally, we are told to put on the new self – which includes such things as a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.
  4. The point here is that getting up and getting busy, or making the most of the time that is left, must follow a pattern or conform to a principle if our activity is to produce measurable and God-pleasing growth in godliness, love, and Christ-likeness.
    - a. Now I want to remind you that this process of putting off and putting on is not accomplished in a moment or a day or a month or even a year.
    - b. This is a work that requires time – so much time that for most of us it takes years – which is why perseverance is so vital to progress, and vigilance is so vital to staying on the narrow path until we meet our Lord, face-to-face.
- C. Returning to Romans 13:12, we read, “put on the armor of light.” Then in vs 14 we read, “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. What I hope you can see from these two statements is that we must assume a defensive posture preparing for and becoming Christ-like.
  2. In other words, even though we have begun the process of putting off the old nature and putting on the new, we are still vulnerable to the ways of the old nature. We are still vulnerable to the fears that drive distrust of God, to low and unworthy views of God, to sinful desires, to selfish thinking, to thoughtless, unkind, and even mean speaking, to seeking the approval of those around us more than the approval of God, to seeking comfort or pleasure in ungodly places or in ungodly ways, to giving love according to how we are being loved, and to other such evils as these.
  3. Therefore, we must defend ourselves against the attacks of the world – which seeks to conform us to its ways; and against the attacks of the devil – who wants to pull us back into his ways; and against the attacks of our old nature – which still longs for and loves what it ought to hate. This is why we need the “armor of light” even as we pursue putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- D. Now, I want to warn you that you cannot gain ground in the pursuit of godliness without going to war and persevering in that war. And you cannot keep the ground you have gained without continuing to fight. Why?
1. Because the devil and his co-workers will not give up trying to win you back until they are cast into the Lake of Fire.
  2. The world will not stop trying to conform you to its ways until it is brought to an end by the return of Christ.
  3. And your flesh, though dead in one way, is hardly dead in another way. If it is not kept in a subdued or comatose state, it can revive and return to its old sinning ways far easier than you can imagine – unless you have already experienced its resurgence.

### III. Conclusion

- A. Paul concludes this section with these words, “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts” (Romans 13:14).
- B. Because of the time, we will end here for today, but my intention is to pick this back up in the future and take a careful look at these words.
- C. And to encourage you to prepare for our study of vs 14, I will read 2 Timothy 2:22 . . . Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.