

The Urgency of All-Encompassing Love - Part 2

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Romans 13:8-14
Preached on: Sunday, November 25, 2012

We come again this morning to Paul's epistle to the Romans chapter 13 where, once again, we will examine the issue of the urgency of all encompassing love. In a few minutes we will look at verses eight through 14 focusing primarily on the end of verse 12 through 14.

Before I take you there, I wish to share a few thoughts with you that will hopefully prepare your heart for the Word we are about to receive. Over the course of this last week I had an opportunity to spend time around some people that were suffering in some significant ways. Two of them were young marines, battle scarred from Iraq and Afghanistan, suffering from post traumatic stress disorder, young men that I have loved since they were infants, young men that I remember holding in my arms.

And as I had a chance to interact with them and some others that were suffering not so much in emotional ways, but in physical ways, I was just reminded of the hope that we have in Christ, because apart from that we have no hope.

You know, we all experience heartache. We all experience suffering from time to time. Sometimes what we experience is brutal. Sometimes we experience just a malignant evil that causes us to quiver with fear. And sometimes it can drive us to about, to despair of the goodness of God. But with every trial we have a reminder that we are strangers in this fallen world, this world that has temporarily ruled by the prince of darkness. Every pain reminds us that we are under the sentence of death in this fallen world, that our hope is in God whose mercies are new every day. He has promised he will never leave us, never forsake us. He has promised us that one day he will deliver us from the very presence of sin and all of its consequences. But until that day, the Holy Spirit has been given to us as a down payment, as a guarantee that is full of all of the hope of our inheritance, that one day we will experience all that God has promised. He has poured the love of God in our hearts, Paul has told us, so that we can feel his presence, so we can experience God. Christianity has feeling to it. It is not all intellectual.

And that experience of the love of God is essential to our maturity. In fact, it is something for which we are to pray. And it is this experience, dear friends, of the love of God that gives us a taste of heaven. And that is what strengthens our hope in the midst of suffering. And for all who are suffering we must know that through it we have an opportunity to experience God in a very special way, especially as we learn more of what it means to live in fellowship with him, to live for his glory.

You know, even Jesus learned obedience from the things which he suffered, according to Hebrews 5:8. Would you not assume that we have much to learn from our sufferings? Of course.

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Having dealt with many who suffer over the years I have learned that most of the time I have no words. There is nothing I can really say that will bring comfort, nothing that you can really say. But what I can do is point them to the Father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our afflictions. Comfort is a supernatural thing. The apostle Paul experienced enormous suffering in his life and where did he turn? He turned to the God of all comfort. He said in Philippians 3:10 that the most valuable thing in his life was to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death. And today, beloved, we have an opportunity to know our glorious God a little bit more as we humble ourselves before his Word, as he reveals himself to us.

How did he comfort Job in the midst of all of his despair? What did he do? He revealed himself to Job. He intimidated Job with his glory chapter after chapter after chapter until finally Job even gloried in his sufferings.

Beloved, our only hope is in Christ. And it is only that hope that can assuage our sufferings and calm our fears. What a privilege it is to know him and to experienced the joy of his presence. And only God can bring this type of comfort and only his power can cause us to love him and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. What debtors we are to his grace.

Now I am not speaking on suffering today. But I am going to point you, once again, to the God who is the God of all comfort, that you might know him a little bit better, understand more of what he would have for you so that you can enjoy the fullness of his presence in your life come what may.

So notice the text here before us. We find ourselves again in verses eight through 14 of Romans 13. Let me read that whole section to you, just a few verses. And then we will focus in a few minutes, as I say, on the end of verse 12 through 14. Beginning with verse eight he says:

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.

And this do, 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. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us

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behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.¹

Here again in this passage of Scripture Paul emphasizes the obligation that we have to love one another in light of the end of the age. He fleshes out, shall we say, what it means to live submissively as living and holy sacrifices acceptable to God.

You may recall in our previous study we learned about the obligation of love, that this is an all embracing kind of love, a love for God and a love for all people. And this is true because of the infinite love that God has lavished upon us. We have a debt that we could never possibly pay, an obligation we could never fully meet. But because of the indwelling Spirit of God, this kind of love is the longing of the heart for every believer.

We also learned of the function of love, that it fulfills the law according to the end of verse eight. We cannot do this in our flesh, but according to the Spirit that works in and through us. For it is the Spirit, not the flesh which enables us to walk in obedience.

We also learned of the urgency of love in verse 11. Notice eh says:

“And this do, 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.”²

Referring to our glorification. We have got to wake up to greater obedience, greater service, greater love. This present age is rapidly coming to an end. The immanent return of Christ should motivate us to be vigilant, to be sober minded about the war that we must wage against the flesh, against Satan and his minions in this kingdom of darkness. So we have learned that there is no place for indolence in the Christian life, no place for laziness or apathy.

Now I want to expand upon this concept a little bit before we look at the rest of this text. I want to summarize some of the promises God has made for us as we live in this church age. Some of you were asking about it. It is important that you have a bit of the big picture here. We are now living in the age whereby God has made the Gentile Church the temporary custodians of divine truth until he returns and one day restores Israel to their original status of preeminence for which they were originally called.

As a footnote, while ethnic Israel has been temporarily set aside because of their rejection of the Messiah according to Romans 11 and many other passages, the normal reading of

¹ Romans 13:8-14.

² Romans 13:11.

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Scripture would make it clear that they will once again emerge as the object of divine attention.

While the nation of Israel has been set aside for this interim period, God created a mystical body of which we are a part, the bride of Christ, the New Testament Church. It is made up predominantly of Gentiles and we now live in this dispensation of redemptive history. But at the end of the Church age God has promised to remove his bridal Church from the earth and once again turn his attention toward his beloved enemy Israel and make them his friend, reconcile them unto himself. At any time, therefore, we await the return of our Lord to snatch us away in what is many times called the rapture of the Church where he comes and he takes his bridal church, where he receives us unto himself, takes us to that place that he has prepared for us. And where he is there we may be also. And when we are translated into heaven at the rapture, which could occur right now, something is going to happen. We are going to immediately, according to Romans 14:10, stand before the judgment seat of Christ. In other words, every believer will give an account of himself. The Lord will judge all of the choices that we have made, all of the motives of our heart and there we will receive our rewards.

For example, in Revelation in Revelation 22 verse 12 Jesus says:

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."³

Herein, beloved, is the urgency, the pressing need, the burning motivation for us to be serious about our sanctification, serious about our walk with Christ. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:10:

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."⁴

This is the seat of authority in heaven. In Greek it is the bema seat. It is the place where every saint will receive his rewards. Although according to Romans 14:12 each one of us will give an account of himself to God, this is not a place that we should fear, not a place where we need to be afraid, because Jude tells us that one day we are going to stand in the presence of his glory what? Blameless with great joy, not great fear. However, some of our works will not be very valuable. They will have been done poorly. They will have been done with the wrong motivation. They will be burned up according to 1 Corinthians 3:15 while others will have great eternal value and great reward as verse 14 goes on to say.

³ Revelation 22:12.

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:10.

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By the way, as a footnote, again, there will not be a giant screen in heaven displaying our whole life before God and all of the heavenly host. How embarrassing that would be. In Hebrews 8:12 we read:

"FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE."⁵

Aren't you thankful for that? Boy, I am. This will be the time when the faithful will hear from the Lord according to Matthew 25:21:

"Well done, good and faithful slave."⁶

Having said that, we have got to remember that we can forfeit reward. 1 Corinthians 3:15 says that we can suffer loss, because of our sin, because of our lack of love, because of our misplaced priorities, our selfish motives and serve in Christ. John spoke of this in 1 John 2:28. He said:

"And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming."⁷

I might also add that while there will be no superior or inferior saints in heaven according to Matthew 20 verses one through 16, some will enjoy more rewards of millennial and heavenly service than others. Scripture teaches that we will even, quote, judge the world and angels, according to 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 during the millennial kingdom as the Lord speaks of in, for example, Luke 19. But then at the end of Christ's millennial reign the universe is going to be uncreated. It is going to pass away with a roar, Peter tells us. Every trace of sin will be finally purged. It will be a new creation. There will be a new heaven. There will be a new earth in which we will enjoy ultimately the grandeur of heaven. And while our ultimate joy and satisfaction will be experienced in the one true God that loved us before the foundation of the world during that time, we can have a taste of it even now when we walk faithfully with him.

So let this brief summary of what awaits us ignite the burning within our soul to present your body as a living and a holy sacrifice acceptable to God.

Now some will ask: Well, what is going to happen if we are taken into heaven? What is going to happen on earth?

⁵ Hebrews 8:12.

⁶ Matthew 25:21.

⁷ 1 John 2:28.

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Well, the rapture will be followed by Daniel's 70th week of judgments, seven years of pre kingdom judgment upon unbelieving Israel as God revealed to Daniel. It will be a time of unprecedented cataclysmic divine wrath, judgment upon all of the people of the nations of the world. And a vision the Lord allowed John to witness the reaction of men during that day in Revelation six verse 15. He says:

And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they *said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"⁸

At the end of this great tribulation that will kill the majority of the earth's population and utterly destroy all of the ecosystems on the face of the earth the lowly Jesus that the world has mocked and ridiculed for many years will suddenly appear in power and in great glory and he will physically return to this earth and restore the remnant of Israel unto himself and others that he has saved by his grace. He will renovate the earth. He will return it to its original state of the Garden of Eden and he will establish his millennial kingdom. But he will not return as the Lamb that opened not his mouth. He will return as the roaring lion of the tribe of Judah.

Beloved, this is the Lord that we serve. Never forget that. And according to Revelation 19 verse 15:

And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."⁹

Dear Christian, the world is marching inexorably towards a day of divine judgment and it is for this reason that we must be serious about submitting ourselves to the Spirit of God. We must tap in to his resources, especially to full our calling to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves which fulfills the law. When unbelievers see our love for God, when they see our love for one another and experience our love for them, what happens? Their hearts are softened to the truth of the gospel.

⁸ Revelation 6:15-17.

⁹ Revelation 19:15-16.

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So, beloved, this underscores the urgency of our love, the pressing need for us to make sanctification priority number one.

You might want to ask yourself: Would I want that Lord to come right now and find me living in the condition that I am currently in? I hope the answer would be yes. But for many it will be no. So examine yourself.

So we come now to the fourth division that I have given to this section and I call this the identification of love. Notice at the end of verse 12 he says:

Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.¹⁰

Here Paul uses some very vivid imagery regarding our spiritual attire. Shall we say our spiritual clothing? The garments that we choose to wear spiritually. He exhorts us to habitually discard the garments of sin that our flesh, by the way, loves to wear and, instead, put on the clothing of Christ. We are to look like him. We are to identify ourselves with, not our former unregenerate self ruled by all of its lusts, slaves to Satan, slaves to sin. We are no longer to be identified with the things of this world that are passing away, but be identified with Christ.

Now think about it. We know, according to Scripture that we have been united with Christ, united to him. We are hidden in him. So we are to, therefore, adorn ourselves spiritually in such a way as to be clearly identified by other people that we are like him. We belong to him. We follow him. We serve him. That is how we are to look. This is the identification of love.

Now before we examine the text a little more closely, I want you to think of the parallels between what we choose to wear physically with what we choose to wear spiritually.

Now each of us have wardrobes that we have purchased. Each of us have articles of clothing that we choose to wear on a given day. And, for the most part, we choose things that will help us be identified by others as belonging to a certain group that we deem important.

I have spent much of my life around the cowboy crowd, so when I see guys that dress with... they have got boots and wrangler jeans, never Levis, by the way. I will tell you

¹⁰ Romans 13:12-14.

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why if you want me to know, or if you want to know later. You wear Wranglers. Big belts, cowboy hats. You know, they identify with that. If you see people dressed in camouflage, whether it is military or the hunting camouflage, you know that they want to be identified with that group. If you see someone dressed in all black they ... and with all the black make up and all of the piercing and all that type of stuff, you know they want to be identified with the gothic satanic group in our culture. If you see, I don't know, the young men walking around with pants that four of us could fit in with their underwear, you know, showing and they have they have got a flat brimmed hat cocked in some ridiculous way, you know that they are wanting to be identified with the ghetto violent gang culture of our society. You see a woman walking around in skin tight clothing, stiletto heels, low cut dresses, those types of things, you know that she wants to be identified with the immoral, seductive, promiscuous crowd in our culture. And on and on it goes.

Now the point is fashion always makes a statement about who we are. I marvel at times when I am looking at television and I suddenly see these anorexic women walking in ways the I couldn't even begin to walk wearing bizarre clothing going down, I think it is called a fashion runway. And everybody is taking pictures and so forth. It is just another reminder that I am an alien in this world. I don't get that. But you see this type of thing and fashion is very big in every culture.

Once, again, our unredeemed flesh will always find itself being seduced by the things of the world. Our unredeemed flesh has a natural attraction even to clothing and hair styles and so forth that will give expression, many times, to our sinful lusts, the habits that we have within our heart.

Now let's notice a parallel concerning what we wear spiritually. Notice again in verse 12.

“Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”¹¹

Now the verbs lay aside, which could also be translated put off, and the very put on are often used of clothing even in the New Testament. But here Paul is using them metaphorically to speak of ridding ourselves completely and continually of the works of darkness that he will summarize in verse 13 and, instead, clothe ourselves with the armor of light that I will expand upon more in a moment.

So the picture here seems to be one of a soldier who has spent the previous night in drunkenness and debauchery and he now lies fast asleep amidst other bodies that participated in the past night's orgy, which was indicative of that culture. But now the light of dawn announces the urgency of battle. It is time to wake up. It is time to get up. It

¹¹ Romans 13:12.

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is time to sober up. It is time to wise up. Put on your armor lest you perish in the coming battle and you cannot go back and put on those vomit covered clothes of last night's decadence. That is the idea. Get the parallel?

What a picture of our life before Christ, one in which the apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians two we were dead in our trespasses and sins in which we formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. He says among them we, too, all formerly lived in the lust of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest.

Beloved, the malignancy of sin has darkened our understanding, primarily those that are unregenerate. And unregenerate man loves darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil. So he gropes in the darkness to find satisfaction. He wearies himself in vain pursuits. We must understand that man not only lives in darkness, but Scripture teaches that he is the very essence of darkness.

In Ephesian 5:8 he says:

“...you were formerly darkness.”¹²

An amazing thought. And he goes on in verse eight to add:

...but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.¹³

So here Paul exhorts us to lay aside. It literally means to forsake. Very simple, to forsake, to abandon, to renounce the deeds of darkness. In other words, stop trying to identify with sin and evil from which you have been delivered. Renounce those deeds of darkness in your life that you voluntarily choose to wear.

Now notice the brief summary of deeds of darkness that he gives. Here he paints just a graphic picture of the kinds of sins that enslave the lost. By the way, all of which constitute a failure in loving our neighbor as God would have us do. He says in verse 13:

“Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing.”¹⁴

¹² Ephesians 5:8.

¹³ Ephesians 5:9-10.

¹⁴ Romans 13:13.

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It translates the word κῶμος (ko'-mos). It could be translated revelry or a wild celebration. It was typically used in association with a military victory that inevitably would descend into intoxication, drunken brawls and sexual orgies. That is what carousing means.

So he is wanting us to put that off. Don't behave that way. He goes on with another example of a deed of darkness, drunkenness, which is just intentional and habitual intoxication. And he says not in sexual promiscuity. It is an interesting concept here, κοιτη (koy'-tay) in the original language. It is really literally means bed. It could be translated bedroom. But it was used to describe those who engage in excessive illicit sexual activities, those who jump from bed to bed with various partners. You have got to put that off. And he says not in sensuality from ἀσελγεία (as-elg'-i-a) in the original language. And it refers to extreme immorality, the demonstrations of total lack of restraint when man falls victim to being completely cut off from God.

Peter used the term in 2 Peter 2:7 to describe the sexual, uncontrolled sexual deviance of the sodomites, you will recall, in Genesis 19 that had just been blinded by God and yet they continued to grope in the darkness, to weary themselves in the darkness even in their blindness to try to break into Lot's house that they might satisfy their lusts. Unbelievable.

These first three sins basically describe the sinless or I should say the shameless intoxication and shameless sexual immorality that is just indicative of our culture today. It was indicative of the culture in Paul's day and these same is true today. In fact, sexual orgies and drunkenness are now pandemic on our college campuses.

And then Paul adds two more deeds of darkness. These two destroy families. They destroy relationships. They will split a church wide open, that of strife and jealousy. You find the terms used together in many places in Scripture. And Paul would use them, for example, to describe the immature babes in Christ in the Church of Corinth that were bickering and fighting amongst themselves, ripping the church apart. 1 Corinthians three verse three he said:

“...for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?”¹⁵

Referring to unregenerate men.

Now what is strife? It is basically the inward attitude and outward expression of pride. It is the opposite of humility and love. It refers to just a demanding spirit that must have its own way regardless of the cost. It is the person that basically comes across it is my way

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 3:3.

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or the highway. It describes a person that insists upon having the preeminence, a person that will do everything they possibly can to prevail over others.

To add a little bit, you might understand it as a person who likes to be large and in charge. That is strife. Sometimes we see them in the church. They like to be the keepers of the gate, so to speak. They see themselves of being in charge of every one, making sure that everybody does things their way. Kind of like Diotrephes. Remember him in 3 John nine who loves to be first among them and does not accept what we say. So that is strife. You have got to put that away.

By the way, we are all prone to this. So don't be pointing at your neighbor or elbowing somebody next to you. We are all prone to this type of thing.

And also we are to put away jealousy. It translates the Greek word ζηλος (dzay'-los). We get our word zeal or zealous from that. A term, by the way, that does not necessarily have to be negative. We are to have a zeal, for example, for God. But in this context it carries the connotation of having a strong feeling of envy or resentment towards another person.

For example in Acts 13:45 in that context there was a vast assembly of people that came to hear Paul preach the Word of God. And there we read that when the Jews saw the crowds they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul and were blaspheming.

So, beloved, these are some examples of the deeds of darkness we are to lay aside. They include all attitudes and actions consistent with the kingdom of darkness from which we have been miraculously delivered.

It is fascinating to me that whenever I am serious about coming before the Spirit of God and helping and asking him to help me see those things in my life that I need to get rid of, he is more than walking to give me a very detailed list. It doesn't take long to see that list. And the more you walk ion the Spirit, the more you bring your life in humble submission to him the more detailed and longer that list seems to be and the more you glory in his grace. But we are to discard those things.

Can I put it this way? Those clothes stink. They have got vomit on them. Why would you want to wear those things in your life? Paul used the same figure of laying aside in other passages and putting on as well. He said in Ephesians 4:22:

...that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self,

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which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.¹⁶

In that text he goes on to offer a list of the kinds of things we should look for to lay aside. He uses falsehood. Lay that aside. He tells us we are to speak the truth. Lay aside self serving resentful anger that gives the devil an opportunity. Lay aside stealing. He says, “Stop stealing.” He goes on to talk about how you need to go to work and provide for you and for your family through honorable means, not this entitlement nonsense. That is nothing more than thievery. Renounce unwholesome words that proceed out of your mouth, referring to vulgar, obscene types of words. Instead, speak words that will edify, that give grace to those who hear.

In verse 30 he says:

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.”¹⁷

Grieve literally means to give him sorrow, especially in that context with respect to sins of the tongue that betray the wickedness of our heart. He has in verse 31:

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.¹⁸

It is a testimony to the deceptive power of remaining sin that we ever choose to wear these filthy garments that once caused the wrath of God to abide upon us, those things for which Christ suffered and died on our behalf.

Scripture regards idolatry as the worst of sins. In fact, the first three of the 10 Commandments warn against the wickedness of false worship. All of us need to guard ourselves against idolatry, idols within the heart, those things that dominate and drive our lives, those things that we value more than our relationship with God, the things that we worship, those things that occupy our minds, day in and day out, those things that eat up all of our time, that eat up all of our money, things for which we will sacrifice virtually anything to have and to hold. Those things that we exalt more than God himself, those things that we desire more than him.

Some love their family and their children more than they love God. Some love peer approval, smart phones, video games, their Facebook page, big screen TVs. Some have

¹⁶ Ephesians 4:22-24.

¹⁷ Ephesians 4:30.

¹⁸ Ephesians 4:31-32.

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an idol of a beautiful body. We can turn our cars and trucks into idols. Some worship college and professional sports teams. Some worship the success of their children playing sports more than anything else in life. Some worship celebrities or fashion or food or romantic relationships. On and on it can go.

Beloved, the point that we see here in Paul's words to us in Romans 13 is that:

“The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”¹⁹

It is time to reprioritize your life. Get serious about living for the one who gave himself for you and who is coming again to receive you unto himself.

Now I want you to understand that the biblical process for change is really two fold. We must not only put off or lay aside, but we must also put on the new. It is not good enough to just renounce sin, to just tear down the idols in our heart that dishonor God, but we must also erect new ones that give him glory. It is a two fold process.

Many Christians fail in their battle of indwelling sin because they try to merely put off. How many times have you said to yourself: I will never do that again? And you go the Lord and say, “Lord, please forgive me. I will never do that again,” until the cycle repeats itself. Sin, repentance, sin, repentance. What is going on there? Why isn't there any victory?

Typically it is because you have only done part of the equation. You have tried to put off, but you haven't put on. We must by the power of the Spirit replace what we have renounced with that which is pure and holy.

Many of you men and frankly an increasing number of women battle against pornography and lustful imaginations, sins, by the way that will gradually worsen until they will eventually destroy you. Be sure you know that. And it is not good enough to merely lay aside your pornographic materials, to get rid of those things so to speak. You must also put on, as Paul says here, the armor of light. Later on he will expand this in Ephesians 6:13 speaking of the full armor of God which is essentially the truth of who you are in Christ and how you need to serve him in order that, according to Ephesians 6:13 you will be able to resist in the evil day and having done everything to, I love this, stand firm. This includes starving your flesh of the poisons that it loves to thrive upon.

Beloved, think of your flesh as maggots. Do you ever notice how maggots love to feed upon road kill? It is how our flesh is. It thrives upon the decaying bodies of sin. And the

¹⁹ Romans 13:12.

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way you get rid of that is you deprive the maggots of your flesh, if you will, by not giving it any food to feed upon.

By the way, that is what Paul meant in Romans 8:13 when he said that we should be putting to death the deeds of the body, a phrase the King James translates mortify the deeds of the body.

Beloved, let me put it to you as plainly as I know. Whenever you have areas of sin in your life that you can see and you know it is bringing you to ruin, you have got to kill it. You have to violently kill it. You have to hate it with a holy hatred even as God commanded Saul to totally annihilate the wicked Amalekites by putting to death every man, woman, child, infant, ox, sheep, camel and donkey. That is how we have to destroy indwelling sin.

Dear Christian, sin cannot be domesticated. It can only be exterminated. So you have got to starve your mind of sin's deceptive lies, of all of the filth that it loves. And then fill it with truth. Lay off the one, put on the other.

Paul describes this in so many places, Philippians 4:8. He says:

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.²⁰

You see, to merely remove the old garments of sin is to be left naked and vulnerable to the next temptation. You have to replace the old with the new. You have got to put on the new garments of Christ, the armor of light.

By the way, I might add that this will require a period of rehabilitation. Some sins die hard. You have to fight them for a long time and you have to begin to replace new thinking, the old thinking with the new thinking, with new Christ like habits that replace the habits of the flesh. You have to discipline yourself for the sake of godliness.

And, my friend, if this is truly the passion of your heart, the Spirit of God is going to come alongside. He is going to empower you and you will see a decrease in the desire for certain sins and also a decrease in the frequency of them.

Peter says in 1 Peter 2:1:

²⁰ Philippians 4:8-9.

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Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.²¹

I might add that I have yet to see a Christian who battles with some kind of life dominating sin who longs for the pure milk of the Word. I don't see that. The two don't go hand in hand. They might say they do, but they don't really do. They read the Word out of obligation. They kind of rub it like a genie, hoping that something good is going to come out of the bottle. But it is not a matter of life and death to them like this kind of milk would be for a new born infant. They hear it preached. They nod their head, say a few amens and then they return to their sin like a dog returns to its vomit.

James said in chapter one verse 21:

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.²²

Likewise Paul said Colossians three and verse five:

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.²³

So, again, notice Paul's admonition in verse 12.

“Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”²⁴

Once again, we see the contrast of darkness and light mentioned in the first part of verse 12 where he says the night is almost gone, the day is at hand. Remember night speaks of darkness, of Satan's kingdom that many men love because their deeds are evil in this age

²¹ 1 Peter 2:1-2.

²² James 1:21-22.

²³ Colossians 3:5-10.

²⁴ Romans 13:12.

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of spiritual blindness and rebellion. It is almost gone. It is ready to be drawn to a close. And he says of the day it is at hand, referring to the dawning, as it were, of Christ's glorious appearing.

But now here at the end of verse 12 he is telling us to lay aside these deeds of darkness, these thing that you once did in blindness and rebellion, and put on the armor of light.

Briefly, this would be expanded in Ephesians chapter six. Remember that great section beginning in verse 10, I believe it is, where it talks about the armor that we are to wear? In Ephesians six verse 10 it says:

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.²⁵

And what is one of the major schemes of the devil? What did he do in the garden? He distorted the Word of God and tempted us to do that which we think we needed because God wasn't enough so we wanted more. That is the same type of thing he does to this day. He distorts the Word of God.

So Paul goes on to say you need to gird your loins with truth. You need to put on the breastplate of righteous living. You need to have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. By the way, that means you need to know that you are at peace with God, that the war is over. Now he is on your side. Bottom line, you need to understand your eternal security in the Lord. You have got to understand soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. You have got to know this. Then you need to take out the shield of faith, wear the helmet of salvation, take up the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. And on and on it goes.

This is so exciting. As we wear the armor of light, what happens? Our character becomes more like the character of our blessed Savior. We are identifying with him. We begin to look more like him.

So verse 13, Paul says:

“Let us behave properly as in the day.”²⁶

I love this concept. This is a precious truth. And with this we will begin to close this morning. Think about it. We are people of the day. So we need to conduct ourselves in

²⁵ Ephesians 6:10-11.

²⁶ Romans 13:13.

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ways that is fitting for the light of day. Be exposed to everyone, especially exposed to the day of the Lord's appearing.

1 Thessalonians five and verse five Paul says:

...for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 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.²⁷

And what is the key? Behave properly as in the day. What is the key to this? He gives it to us finally in verse 14.

“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”²⁸

Put on Christ, dear friends. Identify with him, the one in whom you have been hidden, display publicly the intimate fellowship that you enjoyed privately in your secret devotion to him. Display the new self. Display in our conduct the new heart and the new mind that you have been given now that you have been created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. And what does this require? Well, it says:

“...make no provision for the flesh.”²⁹

The term provision simply means to perceive in advance, to plan ahead of time for the purpose of pursuing something. And, of course, the flesh is your unredeemed humanness that has such a strong proclivity to sin. Make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lust. Said simply, stop planning ahead so as to satisfy the desires of your sinful nature. That is not hard to understand, but it is real hard to do apart from the power of the Spirit from which we must flee. And, instead, what we need to do is rather than wearing these garments of darkness, I would encourage you to literally study the sins your flesh longs after. What are they? Study them. List them. And then rob your flesh of every opportunity to feed upon those sins. And the result will be that you will find in Christ a satisfaction that is far superior to anything that this world, that sin and temptation could ever offer. Oh, child of God, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. May he become the all-consuming passion of your life that you might understand and live consistently with the urgency of all encompassing love.

²⁷ 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8.

²⁸ Romans 13:14.

²⁹ Ibid.

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Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these amazing truths that are so relevant to where we live. Lord, may we not merely hear these things, but may we humble our lives in such a way as to do them, to live them out, to live in light of your soon return. Thank you, Spirit of God, for the power of your Word, for the power that works in us we plead for more of it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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