

What Time Is It?

Romans 13:11-14

Introduction

In chapter 13 Paul has been writing about our obligations or responsibilities as citizens in Christ's Kingdom. Our duty to love our enemies, our duty to obey the government, our duty to fellow citizens in the payment of outstanding debts. Now Paul's attention turns to our duty in light of the soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is coming back! Time for all of us will soon run out!

We are Christ's servants. We desire to be found faithful in Him. Our salvation is about to take on its full and final manifestation. In this passage Paul exhorts the Romans to "wake-up" and "clean-up" and "grow-up".

When Jesus shows up—he expects us to greet him! Years ago we used to sing a song; “

When He returns in glory He will come to claim His flock
We must keep the faith and let the fire burn.

Maranatha Maranatha the master's coming home we must be filled with love to truly greet him.

We don't want to meet Jesus caked in layers of selfishness and sin; we do not want our garments stained with dirt and all manner of filthiness. We want to greet our Savior—in all simplicity and maturity and integrity. We grow up by making provision for the spirit and not the flesh. Our maturation comes through nutrition. If we feed the flesh we remain stunted, retarded, developmentally disabled. If we feed the spirit we grow, we mature, we become able-bodied Believers.

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A Time To Wake Up (v.11)
A Time For A New Wardrobe (v.12)
A Time To Walk Straight (v.13)
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A Time To Wake Up! (v.11)

Romans 13:11 (NKJV) 11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

Paul begins with an observation: 'knowing the time'. What time is it? How are we to understand the times and how then shall we live? The word Paul chooses for 'knowing' is 'eridotes'—*which speaks of certainty*; something we dare not overlook. When the ship is leaving harbor; when the train is leaving the station; when the plane leaves the airport—you must always consider the time of departure!

Two words translate 'time' in the Greek New Testament; 'chronos' and 'kairos'. English has borrowed words like chronology or chronometric dating; in the sense of duration of time, or the unfolding of time. The word *kairos*—*speaks of a limited time—a critical time—a season—a critical period*. Several linguists conclude the word means a limited time, a space of time or a quality of time. Ralph Earle points out the modern Greek word *kairos* means weather—but *kronos* or *chronos* means *time*. The New English Bible translates this passage; 'remember how

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critical the moment is'. Another translation (NLT); "another reason for right living is that you know how late it is; time is running out; wake up, for the coming of our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

What time is it? These are the 'last-times' 'the final moments'. The Bible refers broadly to these times as 'the last days' (Acts 2:17; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2). These may not be the last day chronologically but qualitatively. The last days began with Christ's appearance and will end 'in that day' or the day (v.12a) of his return. Jesus can come back at any moment. Paul is making a reference to the day we will meet Jesus face to face. Your meeting with Jesus is the most critical appointment you will ever make—or you will ever meet. This is the most important date of your existence as a human being.

Now wonder Paul says wake up out of sleep! You know the word 'wake up'. Get up, get ready, put the body in motion.

The Greek word for sleep is 'hupnos' (or hypnos).

We live in a fallen world. A fallen world sometimes produces a constant state of chronic frustration; fatigue, weariness, tiredness, exhaustion. Are you ever tired? Drained? Depleted? Some Christians suffer from a kind of spiritual chronic fatigue syndrome. Paul is speaking to Christians. Sleep here is not spiritual death but spiritual apathy, spiritual lethargy.

Are you paying attention to what is happening in this world? Are you watching? Do you awake every morning with the earnest expectation that today, maybe this day my beloved will come? Are you observing the times and signs of the times? Soft living can lead to soft loving or soft serving. We are to be alert!

Paul lists the incentive to avoid lethargy! Our incentive is the second coming of Christ. Time is running out to love our neighbor and our enemy. Time is running out to preach the gospel and reach the lost. Time is running out and we must work while it is still day. The night is coming when no man can work. My wife has a clock that strikes a song on the hour. I heard about a little boy—who noticed in his home their clock was broken. For some reason the clock chimed 16 times! The little boy ran into his mother's room and said, "Mommy, its later than its ever been before!" Out of the mouth of babes! In one sense it is later than it has ever been before! Jesus may come personally, bodily, physically in your life-time! He may not. But he will come for each of us personally, individually—and for some of us—sooner than you ever imagined. This time next year one or more of you may be gone—ripped from family—forever. Kent Hughes writes soberly; "Each ache, each pain, each grey hair, each new wrinkle, each funeral is a reminder that is later than it has ever been before. It's time to love our neighbors as ourselves" (R. Kent Hughes; Romans p. 253).

"For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed"

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Did you know that salvation is spoken of in the New Testament in three tenses; Past (2 Tim. 1:9) present (Acts 2:47; Rom. 8:24) and future (Acts 15:11 and here 13:11).

Paul is making reference to the full and final day; the glorious day, when our salvation is fully realized. We were delivered from this present evil world, we are delivered from this present evil world and we will be delivered from this present evil world. We will be like Him in His presence (1 John 3:1-3).

“Viewed as to the past, it is salvation from the penalty of sin; viewed as to the present, it is salvation from the power of sin, and viewed as to the future, it is salvation from the very presence of sin. It is this last viewpoint that Paul has in mind here. Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. As someone has put it, “Every day we pitch our tent a day’s march nearer home” (Phillips; p.229).

Have you ever been motivated to get up early in order to not miss an important appointment? Jesus is coming soon. We are to live in the certain season of his soon return. We can no longer avoid the significance of the season. We can no longer avoid the signs in nature; the signs in society, the spiritual signs, the signs in world politics, the signs in technology, the signs in the middle east, the increased instability of our economy, increased violence, increased lawlessness, increased immorality, increased humanism, materialism, hedonism, depraved entertainment; calling good—evil—and calling evil good.

What is different about this generation? The invention, manufacture and deployment of global thermonuclear weapons; the establishment of an Israeli state; the occupation of Jerusalem, the global threat of Islam, the establishment of a European Union, the awakening of China, a global technology, a global communication; and the potential for the global extinction of all mankind.

Look at the events in this world. Examine heart. Remind yourself of the uncertainty of future existence. Do you see the signs of this generation? Jesus said in Luke 21:28 (NLT) “So when all these things begin to happen, stand straight and look up, for your salvation is near!” 1 John 2:18 (NLT) “Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the end of the world has come.”

You will face God. Either at Christ’s return or your death. Timing is running out. Prepare to meet thy God (Amos 4:12).

A Time For A New Wardrobe (v.12)

12The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

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What will you wear? We must put off the dirty deeds of darkness, and put on the pure armor of light. “Watching fights the enemy, praying fights the enemy” (John Phillips p. 230). Now is the time to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Time for a new wardrobe my friends. What are the works of darkness? These are the things we desire to do when no one is looking, under the cover of darkness. These are the things we keep secret. These are the things you do that are unacceptable to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit. These are things that cause harm, these are things which cause us shame, these are the things that we do and fear the consequences; these are things that tear us down instead of build us up.

In John’s gospel (3:19-20) “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (2) For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.”

When we join the armed service, we take off our civilian clothes and we put on our military wardrobe.

The verb tenses are decisive—we ‘cast-off’ (strip) once and for all the old life, and we put on a new life. We are saved. The Holy Spirit dwells within us. Jesus lives inside of us. We are to make a conscious, deliberate, and final decision through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to live differently. We want to be identified by our new set of clothes.

Years ago I interviewed a Salvation Army officer on my radio program. He told me how his uniform is a conversation starter. He had a son who attended Columbine High School. Once a month his young son would wear his Salvation Army Uniform to school.

The works of darkness are all our old sinful attitudes and habits as unbelievers. We are to put on the armor of light. We are to do battle against the rulers of this world’s darkness (see Ephesians 6:12-17; and see Phillips p. 231).

The armor of light is a metaphor for the armor of righteousness (2 Cor. 6:7) and the full armor listed in Ephesians 6. The armor is full of splendor and glory and brilliance; it cannot be penetrated by the works of darkness. **The armor of light provides spiritual protection and spiritual illumination—so that our enemies can be seen (observed) and sometimes avoided (see Moody Commentary; p.1767).**

There is the belt of truth, and the breastplate of righteousness. The sandals of the gospel. The shield of faith. The helmet of salvation. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. You have supernatural resources—not least of which is prayer.

A Time To Walk Straight (v.13)

13Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

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Paul exhorts all Christians to ‘walk’ right in broad-daylight. The Greek word for ‘walk’ is *peripateo* (*to walk around or walk in a circle*). Here Paul uses the term as a metaphor for the Christian life or Christian living. How are we to live our lives in Christ? We are to understand that much of our life is open to inspection by those around us. You might be thinking; “It doesn’t matter what other people think, I know my heart is right with God.” You are wrong. The life you live—the life other people see and the conclusions they draw about Christ and Christianity based on the way you live—matters deeply. Paul writes; “Let us walk properly.”

I heard of a sign posted by a dry cleaning establishment; “If your clothes aren’t becoming to you, they should be coming to us.” Or the Men’s Warehouse: “You’ll like the way you look.”

‘As in the day’—in broad daylight. Certain activities are unbecoming in broad daylight. In broad daylight there are no dark corners or black shadows to hide behavior or conceal circumstances. This is Paul’s way of saying live—your life—in full view of all to see. Are you living above reproach? Does the imminent return of Jesus have any effect on the way you are living right now? Paul says; ‘walk properly’—or walk honestly or honorably—in the sense of the kind of behavior that would draw respect.

Now Paul spells out ‘the wrong way’. You might be thinking; “Why does Paul spell it out?” Why bring up the negative? When I became a Christian there were certain things that I knew were harmful, not helpful, things I needed to turn from—forever. Like using harmful drugs; like practicing ritual magic or witchcraft, or lying or stealing. Paul is saying to the Romans, you need to stop these things immediately and never do them again! Things like revelry (rioting or partying); the Roman party (*komois*)—guy’s gone goofy—girl’s gone wild—drunkenness, orgies.

People in Paul’s day had parties, orgies, drunkenness! Does that surprise you? “All I want to do is have a little fun; the guy said to me outta nowhere”—‘all I want to do is have some fun—I’ve got a feelin’ I’m not the only one’. The song has been sung for centuries! People say, “I just want to have a good time!” And Christian—God is calling you to the best time—in order to pursue love—God’s love—you must set aside the harmful pursuit of personal pleasures.

The Roman Party means the kind of party where all the wrong activities take place. “Not in lewdness”—or debauchery, or sexual immorality or prostitution. The Greek work *coite* or *koite*—*means bed—but the first century meaning was unlawful sexual contact—or inappropriate sexual contact or illicit relations*. In a nut shell—sexual contact outside of marriage.

Lust or ‘wantonness’ or sensuality or vice or licentiousness—is one of the ugliest words in the Greek language. It describes a person—not just given to immorality—but a person incapable of shame! Years ago a law suit was filed on behalf of a 17 year old who exposed her breasts on a Video called ‘Girls Gone Wild’. Apparently the laws about indecent exposure or underage pornography were challenged. The judge ruled the teen had the right to expose herself! We are living in a culture—where more and more people are incapable of shame. Christians promote

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modesty and decency! In our culture we are bombarded by pictures and pamphlets and songs and music and behavior that condemn modesty and decency!

“Envy” or *zelos*—*has the good meaning of zeal and the bad meaning of jealousy*. Here the word envy means a person who cannot stand the thought of someone passing them up, or a person who is bitter towards the success of another. One of the most tragic things in the Christian Church is the person who thinks God has given them the special role of keeping people in their proper place! Such an attitude is inconsistent with love.

A Time To Wear Jesus (v.14)

14But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

We might say, “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

We clothe ourselves in Jesus. What does that mean? What does clothing do? It touches us, protects us, warms us, covers us; hides us. The believer takes Jesus wherever he or she may go. Put on the Lord Jesus. Make no provision for the flesh. Cut off the supplies to the flesh.

The flesh receives instruction and energy from our sinful thinking and selfish desires.

Ray Stedman offers this illustration:

When I get up in the morning I put on my clothes, intending to be part of me all day, to go where I go and do what I do. They cover me and make me presentable to others. That is the purpose of clothes. In the same way, the apostle is saying to us, “Put on Jesus Christ when you get up in the morning. Make him a part of your life that day. Intend that he go with you everywhere you go, and that he act through you, in everything you do. Call upon His resources. Live your life in CHRIST (emphasis in the original; quoted in R. Kent Hughes; Romans; p.254).

We are wrapped in Jesus. He is our label. We cut off the supplies to the flesh. We remove the places where the flesh can store and mount a campaign against the spirit. We wait for Jesus. While we wait we remain pure and victorious. We allow God’s Holy Spirit to bring forth fruit in our lives. We remain sensitive to those things that will bring shame to the gospel, to Christ and the coming of our Lord.

Conclusion

What time is it? It is time to wake up. Henri J. M. Nouwen wrote; “I often think: “A life is like a day; it goes by so fast. If I am so careless with my days, how can I be careful with my life?” I know that somehow I have not fully come to believe that urgent things can wait while I attend to what is truly important. It finally boils down to a question of deep and strong conviction. Once I

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am truly convinced that preparing the heart is more important than preparing the Christmas tree I will be a lot less frustrated at the end of the day.”

Prepare my heart.

What time is it? Time for a new wardrobe.

There are seven things the believer is told to put on in the Bible.

We are to put on and be empowered (endusethed, clothed) with the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49).

We are to put on and be clothed with immortality (1 Cor.15:53-54; 2 Cor. 5:3).

We are to put on and be clothed with Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:14; Gal.3:27).

We are to put on and be clothed with the New Man (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

We are to put on and be clothed with the nature of God (Col. 3:10).

We are to put on and be clothed with the armor of light and of God (Rom.13:14; Eph. 6:11).

We are to put on and be clothed with love (Col 3:14).

What time is it? It is time to walk straight (v.13) and time to wear Jesus.