

### **Romans 13:11-14 (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.**

**12 The 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.**

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

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

I plan to cover the rest of the points from our text this morning. It will be a bit random but I think it will be helpful.

Also keep in mind that this sermon was prepared two Saturdays ago. So if it relates to any conversations we have had since then, it is not my fault. God must have planned it for you.

The first thing I wanted to emphasize is **the need we have to wake up**. Have you ever noticed how easy it is to gravitate to what is comfortable for us? In our marriages we develop patterns that **avoid conflict** or things that disrupt our comfortable lives. We do the same in our families. We do the same in our church relations. We may see things that **should** be talked about, but that would be **uncomfortable**. The same is true for our evangelistic opportunities. We have a tendency to become complacent. We pick the path of least resistance. In doing so, we develop habits and patterns that can easily turn into ruts. And the problem is, if those habits become comfortable for us we are very slow to break them. If the routines keep us happy, we tend to stick to them. Even when we know that there are better ways that we could be living our lives. There are better ways we could relate with one another. There are things that we could do that would get us closer in fellowship to Christ. There are things we could do to make us more useful to His kingdom.

I think our church needs this command to Wake Up as much as any church has needed it. We need to consider how we are living and compare it to how we **could** or **should** be living. We need to shake ourselves to a greater awareness of our status. We need to pay attention from a spiritual perspective to what is happening to **our lives** and to **those around us**. We need to look hard at our relationship to Christ and ask the question, what am I investing into it? If we treated a girlfriend or boyfriend or wife or husband with the disinterest we show Christ, would they break up with us or leave us? Do you get what I am saying? We need to wake up from our slumber and preoccupation, from our spiritual

malaise, and open our eyes and see our lives for what they are, our world for what it is, and the time for what it is. We need to first look at our relationship to Christ and then work our way out. Because ultimately it is our relationship with Christ that allows us to see everything else we need to see. It is the Holy Spirit who will **empower** this process for us to **see those things that need changed** and to direct us to the Word of God that will empower that change.

The second point this morning is to think about the fact that the words for “cast off” and “put on” in verse 12 are in the once for all tense in the Greek. We are to cast off the works of darkness once and for all. This is describing what repentance does. What this is implying is that some of those things we struggle with we need to quit playing games with. Paul is telling us here to get those things behind you. Wake up and see them for what they are. Then quit giving yourself permission to revert to them. Quit viewing them as an option. Quit allowing them to have any room in your mind. Repent of them. Turn your back on them, once and for all and walk the other way.

He is saying the same thing about what we put on. He is saying put on the armor of light once. Determine that this will be your path. This will be the new normal. Don't depend any longer on your old way of dealing with things. Really, has any **good** ever come about by those things we should **put off**? Look at your track record. Have they brought you any closer to Christ? Have they ever brought you any joy? Oh they might bring a thrill or an ego boost or a sense of wicked satisfaction, but they have never brought anything to the table that is good and lasting. So give it up and take up the armor of light.

Let's look at Ephesians to see what else Paul said about that armor, those weapons.

### **Ephesians 6:10-20 (ESV)**

#### **10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.**

Now the beauty of Paul is that he doesn't usually leave us to wonder how to do what he commands. He tells us how.

#### **11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.**

Do you want to stand against the schemes of the devil? If you are a believer you had better. Well this is how it is done. We use the resources that God has provided for us.

#### **12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.**

If you think you can live the Christian life with a **positive thinking mantra** and behavior modification tools, you are mistaken. The enemies we are taking on aren't fleshly. The problem cannot be overcome by simple self discipline and self effort. No, these enemies will not be overcome with fleshly resources. We must have spiritual ones.

**13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.**

Let me ask you. Has your life been like the guys on the surfboard at the ocean? They catch a good wave. They stand up. They feel the exhilaration of a good ride. And then they end up right back in the ocean bobbing up and down with the current? Is that your Christian life? You intend well for a bit. You do well for a bit. You get on your feet and ride that wave. But when the difficulties come that test your faith you say, "this is too hard". "My old way is easy." I am not going to fight this fight. I will just give in and do what I have always done. And you are right back in the ocean. People learn that they can depend on you for good talk but they cannot depend on you for good walk. You talk about a powerful faith but you don't have one yourself. And maybe you blame it on **just the kind of person you are** or the kind of **weaknesses** you have. But those are all ideas that need exposed by the light. Paul does not say here, take up the armor of God and if you are naturally a strong person you may be able to withstand in the evil day. No. again. This is not about you. This is about God. And His resources are effective.

So do you want to stop the up and down of the surf board rides? Then take up the whole armor of God. It is **that** and **that alone** that will have you standing at the end of the wave. You will find that you become more useful for the kingdom. You will find all the excuses you have used to excuse your **faithless actions** were useless. You no longer need those crutches. You will find yourself standing at the same place you used to fall. You will find that brothers and sisters who have learned **to not depend upon you** will **begin** to depend upon you. In fact you may find that you begin to lead those who you have influence over. Maybe this armor has been the missing part of your life up till now.

**14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,**

We are not going to go into great depth in this passage but I encourage you to read it and meditate on it this week.

But we will quickly look at this.

**The belt of truth.** Lies tangle. Truth sets us free. The first thing in doing battle with spiritual forces is to replace the lies you believe with the truth of God's word. Do not allow your perceptions to carry any authority in your thinking. Your seamer is broken and it needs to be infused with the truth of God's word.

**Then the breastplate of righteousness.** This is the practical righteousness of a life lived in obedience to God. Just like we protect our children best when our children are most obedient to us, so does faithful obedient living protect our vital spiritual organs. There is great protection if we will simply do what God says. It is not complicated.

**15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.**

As Christians, we absolutely must **understand the gospel.** We have got to understand that we are not saved by our efforts. We are not saved by our goodness. Our salvation is wholly based on the work of Christ. And as such we can protect ourselves from all of those lies that the devil will throw against us. He will say "You are not good enough to be a Christian." And we can confidently respond, "of course I am not good enough. But my salvation is not based on my efforts. They are based on Christ."

A proper understanding of true salvation is critical to our standing in Christ.

**16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;**

**The shield of faith.** The devil is going to shoot lies at us continually. Some will be designed to undermine our faith. Some will be designed to get us to give in to some sin or weakness. Some will be designed to create division in the body of Christ. You can count on this. This is a certainty. You are a target.

So how do you respond? Quote God to the devil. If that is how Christ responded, surely that is how we too should respond. We use the shield of faith. We tell the devil that we believe God over anything we feel or perceive. We believe God is true and everyone else is a liar. We believe and trust God and our faith will protect us like a shield.

Notice too that these darts are flaming. What do you think will happen if you do not do business immediately with those ideas? They will grow. Their destruction will spread. It will become harder and harder to take away their effect. It makes much more sense to **respond immediately** by faith and quench those little fires.

**17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,**

**Helmet of salvation-** This helmet is probably to protect us from discouragement and doubt. We may easily doubt our salvation. But again, we need to have a firm understanding of our salvation and have confidence based on good doctrine and evidence of a changed life. And we may doubt our future salvation, but as long as we keep in mind **the end that God has for us** we will be encouraged to continue standing.

**Sword of the Spirit-** the word of God

Notice that the sword of the Spirit is not some mystical perception. It is the written Word of God. This sword defends us from damage by the enemy and it is used in defeating the Devil's kingdom and winning people into the kingdom of God.

Simply put, you cannot live the Christian life in the way it was meant to be lived if you are not relying on God's word. Any easy application here is- how much do you read? Compare it to the hours that you entertain yourself. How do you measure up?

Paul goes on:

**18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,**

The last piece of armor we have is **prayer**. We are to be in continual communication with God. We are to be casting our cares and anxieties upon Him as well as praying for those things that **we know are God's will** and waiting expectantly to seeing those things happen.

This was a very brief look at what it means to put on the armor of God.

Another point I wanted to bring out involves the sins of **revelry and drunkenness**. I was in a class a couple of weeks ago talking about frivolous lawsuits. A point came up about how most of the **warnings on products** came as a result of a lawsuit. So when you read a warning that tells you what only an idiot wouldn't know, that warning is probably a result of someone suing the company. Like the guy that put his motor home on cruise control and went to make himself a cup of coffee. He thought cruise control was auto pilot. He sued the company and won. Now part of the instructions in motor homes is the fact that cruise control is not auto pilot.

Well think about this command about revelry and drunkenness this morning. Christians are told here that they should be putting off this activity of going out with their friends, getting drunk, and going down the street creating a real ruckus. Do you realize that Paul must have been addressing a bunch of people **for whom**

**this was necessary?** Do you realize some in Rome must have still thought this kind of behavior **to be allowed?** Think about the implications. Christians come in all kinds. They have all kinds of backgrounds. They have all kinds of histories. And they have all kinds of assumptions. We can never think that just because a person comes to Christ that they should immediately understand some of the most rudimentary principles of behavior. No. They are like babies and they must **learn** these things. So while we must instruct them to not do things like get drunk and stumble down the street, we don't need to be shocked that there are some who might **need** this instruction. In fact, if we are doing our job, if we are really reaching the unreached, we will need to do more and more of this kind of thing. There is a sense in which I wish we had more of this problem. When we have that kind of problem it means that people are coming into the kingdom from all walks of life. It would mean we are reaching people who may not be at all like us. It would mean we would be reaching people who understand their need for a Savior.

The last two points I would like to make are based on verse 14.

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

Look at this phrase- **make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**

Provision means forethought, provident care, to make provision for a thing.

I will be going to Ocean City with my mom in a while. Before I go I will gather up all my fishing stuff and make sure it is good order. I am making provisions to go fishing. I am preparing for an event ahead of time in order to be sure that I will have what I need to do that thing.

That is what we are told **NOT TO DO** regarding sin. We are not to cater to our fleshly instincts or behaviors. Now this word "flesh" does not mean what our bodies might need. No. This is the other definition of flesh. It is the life lived apart from God and the sinful urges that accompany that old life.

Now look at this and consider it.

What this means is that we, as believers, should not **arrange conditions ahead of time** that actually accommodate our sin. We should have no preparations to participate in sin. We should do nothing or allow nothing that will make it easy for us to sin in the future. In fact, **to make no provision** carries with it the idea that we should **remove any opportunity** to participate in sin if we are able. We should remove any provision for the flesh as well as create no new ones.

I am not going to beat around the bush here this morning.

Is there a sin that you have a tendency to keep coming back to? Is there something that you believe to be wrong but you keep doing it anyway? How do you **provide** for that sin? What is needed to **carry out** that sin? And what can you do to **expose it to the light**? What can you do to **remove provisions** for that fleshly behavior?

I am convinced that confessing a sin that we keep doing is more of a game than it is true repentance. If we really want to turn our back on that sin, we have got to remove **the provision** for it if that is possible. If we refuse to remove the provision for a sin, we are actually committed to **continuing on** in that sin. And we stand as guilty **now** of doing that sin as when we are **actually committing it**. Basically if you keep **the provision** for that sin you are committed to **doing** that sin, no matter what mental gymnastics you might be playing inside your head. Today is the day to remove the provision.

Ask yourself this. What can I do to expose my sin? What can I do to remove access to my sin? What provision can I remove that will no longer allow me to commit that sin?

Let me use a very apt example.

I think that for most men, internet pornography is a temptation. Yet this is an issue that has tools available that will remove, or at least restrict, that access. This provision for the flesh can be removed, or at least restricted and tracked and exposed. There are applications like SafeEyes or other screening tools that will not allow you on certain sites. If this is a sin that easily besets you, and keeps besetting you, but you will not apply means of limiting that provision, what you are really saying is **you want to commit that sin**. You want to have **provision** for that sin. And essentially what you are saying is you are committed to it. So there is no use playing mental games with this. You might as well just quit pretending to God. Until you are willing to expose that sin and remove your access to it, just understand you are living in rebellion to God. You are loving sin more than you love God. Let that sink in and if you are a believer you will not be able to **persist** in that attitude. It will drive you to your knees and you will accept anything you can do to remove that access.

Pornography is just one example. What sin easily besets you? What can you do to expose that sin? What can you do that would remove provision for that sin? Most sin is done in private. Who do you trust enough to help you be accountable? How can you remove the secretive nature of your sin?

These are the kinds of applications that apply if you think about what the provision for flesh means. Some might see these as worldly methods, but I believe any tool that will help you stop committing a known sin is worth using. Maybe you need someone's help. Maybe you can use a technology trick. Whatever you can do to take away the provision is appropriate. Show your commitment and obedience to Christ this week. Commit right now to do whatever it takes to remove any provision to sinning that you have. That is often the first step in gaining the victory that will bring you great joy.

And the last point

Put on Christ

First- this means we should follow Christ's example.

Peter gave a list of instructions to his readers and he followed it with this

**1 Peter 2:21-23 (NKJV)**

**21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:**

**22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";**

**23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;**

We are told to do what we should do, what we were called to, because Christ did for us what He did so we should follow His steps. When we put on Christ we are putting on the kinds of things that He did. We begin to look like Him. Our behavior changes. Our thinking changes. Because our identity changes. But what we are called to is more than just following His example.

Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ means living upon Christ.

**John 6:53 (NKJV)**

**53 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.**

Now the religious rulers misunderstood Christ, but we can understand Him.

Basically Christ is our sustenance. He is how we survive. He is how we live. We have no other life besides Him. We recognize the importance that Christ played in our spiritual existence. Apart from Him we would have no life at all. So we take communion understanding that Christ is the source of life. We only live because of Him. And we take from Him everything we need for living.

Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ also means we rely upon Him. We **put Him on** in a way that we put on a cloak we need to protect us. We know how weak we are. We know how needy we are. We need strength. We need ability. We need



power. And we turn to Him to get what we need. He is the vine. We are the branch.

We know that we cannot walk through this life in our own strength. We cannot face the enemy clothed only in our fleshly garb. We would be toast. We need help. At that point the scriptures begin to make much more sense. We begin to cling to them for survival. We begin to put off self and put on Christ. We begin to take on the same mind as Christ. We begin to look at the world through His eyes. We begin to care about what He cares about. We begin to look like He looks. We begin to resemble Christ.

But more than that, we depend upon Him to hide us. We hide ourselves in Him. His righteousness becomes our cloak. We no longer think we are suitable in ourselves. We know we must have Him to cover us.

I would like to close by reading parts of three hymns.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me  
Let me hide myself in thee  
Let the water and the blood  
From your wounded side which flowed  
Be of sin the double cure  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.  
Augustus Toplady

O Lamb of God, still keep me  
Close to Thy wounded side  
Tis only there in safety  
And peace I can abide

What foes and snares surround me  
What fears and sins within  
The grace that sought and found me  
Alone can keep me clean.  
James George Deck

Jesus, Lover of my soul  
Let me to thy bosom fly  
While the nearer waters roll  
While the tempest still is nigh

Hide me, O my Savior hide  
Till the storm of life is past  
Safe into the haven guide  
O receive my soul at last  
Charles Wesley.