

# Living Wakeful Lives

📖 Romans 13:11-14

👤 Pastor Jeremy Thomas

📅 February 7, 2016

🌐 fgbible.org

📍 Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin Street

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

(830) 997-8834

Today we return to Romans 13. Romans 13:1-7 deals with the believer's responsibility to the governing authorities of his nation which can be summed up by one word: submission. Romans 13:8-10 deals with the subject of the believer's responsibility to fellow citizens of his nation which can be summed up by one word: love. Today we come to Romans 13:11-14 which deals with the believer's responsibility in view of the nearness of the Lord's coming which may be summed up by one word: wakefulness. Alva McClain said, "There are in these three sections of the outline, three words which sum up and describe the duties which are set forth in each section: verse 1—subjection; verse 8—love; verse 11—wakefulness.. The Christian's duty to the state is subjection. The Christian's duty to the citizens of the state is love. The Christians duty in view of the closeness of Christ's coming is in wakefulness."<sup>1</sup> So today's topic will be wakefulness. All Christians need to be awake spiritually but not all Christians are awake. Many are asleep and they need to wake up and smell the coffee. This is a theme repeated many times in the Acts and the Epistles. Since we are sons of light living in a dark world that can come to an end at any moment then we need to live as sons of light at every moment in readiness for Christ's return.

The verses can be outlined as follows; 13:11-12a is the doctrine of the present age, it tells us facts about the age in which we live and 13:12b-14 is the application of the doctrine of the present age, it tells us how to live in light of the facts. Doctrine always precedes application. We need to know first and then act on what we know. That is always Paul's sequence. The doctrine of the present age in 13:11-12 is stated this way, ***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. The night is almost gone, and the day is near.*** Basically the doctrine of the present age is that it can be over at-any-moment. There is no calendar countdown. There are no time indicators. The only thing that can be stated with certainty is that each day that passes is one day closer to the end.

In the NASB we read ***Do this, knowing the time.*** Note that the word ***Do*** is in italics indicating that it has been supplied by the translators since there is no verb in the original. It's possible that the verb is understood from the previous verses which tell us to love our fellow citizens. If so, Paul is saying love your fellow citizens, ***knowing the time.*** However, another option is that the original words *kai touto* should simply to be translated

as “And this” in the sense that Paul is giving additional but separate information that he will apply in 12b where he begins the application with the words “Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.” The second option seems more accurate contextually and true to the metaphors of light and dark that characterize this present age. In any case there is no question that Paul is giving us a “great incentive.” McClain says, “Paul comes last of all to the great incentive to do all these things.” The great incentive is **knowing the time** but for it to be an incentive we have to **know the time** in which we live, we have to understand this present age and how it is characterized. So do you understand the time in which we live? History can be divided into various ages. According to Romans 9-11 God had been dealing with Israel during the OT until the Messiah came. Then Israel rejected Him and God turned to dealing with Jews and Gentiles who come to faith in the Messiah and enter into a new entity known as the Church. So we have Israel and the Church and God’s dealings with Israel differ from His dealings with the Church. For example, one difference is that God puts Israel on calendar time. Israel had a sabbath day every week, a sabbath year every seventh year, a jubilee year after seven sabbath years, three annual feasts, a prophecy of seventy weeks or 490 years in Daniel. All this shows how God governed Israel on calendar time. But God does not deal with the Church on calendar time. We have nothing of this and we need to know this if we are to understand the time in which we as the Church live, otherwise we will be able to say, “Well, it is not close to the time yet and so we don’t need to get ready yet.” Well, that is what Paul is talking about here where he says **knowing the time**. We need to know the time in which we live. The word **knowing** is a perfect tense. The perfect tense means past completed action with results going into the present. Since Paul wrote this to the Church at Rome then this means that the Church at Rome had come to thoroughly know **the time** in which we live. We also need to thoroughly know the time or else we will be prone to fall asleep. Now this **time** is not the typical word for time which is *χρονος* and just generally means “time” but this word is *καιρος* and means “a critical season.” So we live in a critical season and so far we would translate it this way, “And this, knowing thoroughly the critical season...” How is this a critical season? Well, we will get to that.

He then says of this critical season **that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep**. A. T. Robertson says it might be translated, “it is high time for you to awaken from sleep.” This is the idea. It is a critical time in history and there are many Christians who are asleep and so it is high time they woke up.

Now the reason set forth at the end of verse 11 is, **for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed**. In other words, there is an aspect of **salvation** that we do not yet have but we are nearer to it all the time. And it is passages like this that remind us of the importance of understanding there are three tenses of salvation; one past, one present and one future, and being able to evaluate each context to discover which tense is in view and what aspect of salvation is in view. This helps a lot in understanding the passages that Arminians use to say we can lose our salvation. Denominations that are typically Arminian include Methodists, Free Will Baptists, Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, General Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Church of the Nazarene, The Wesleyan Church, The Salvation Army, Conservative Mennonites, Old Order Mennonites, Amish and Charismatics. They think you can lose your salvation because certain passages speaking of the present tense of

salvation from that aspect of salvation known as the power of sin are confused with that aspect of salvation known as the penalty of sin. They don't understand that you can be saved from the penalty of sin and eternally secure and then not be saved from the power of sin. We'll talk about this more in the tenses and aspects of salvation. The Bible teaches three tenses of salvation and three aspects of salvation. The past tense of salvation is along the lines of the aspect of salvation where we are saved from the penalty of sin. This past tense of salvation is expressed in such passages as Titus 3:5 where Paul says, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit..." Notice how "He saved us" is past tense. It is done. What did He save us from? He saved us from the penalty of sin which is eternal condemnation. Since we have been saved from the penalty of sin then we are eternally secure. This is a powerful truth to know. It is the truth that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. The present tense of salvation is along the lines of the aspect of salvation from the power of sin. This present tense of salvation is expressed in such passages as 1 Cor 1:18, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Notice how Paul says "to us who are being" saved. It is a present tense. It is a salvation that is in process for those who have already been saved from the penalty of sin. It is being saved from the power of sin in our lives as we live by faith. Being saved from the power of sin in our lives is an ever present need and this kind of salvation can be lost and is lost when we do not walk by the Spirit. That is why Paul says, "Walk by the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." As long as we are walking by the Spirit which is activated by faith we are being saved from the power of sin in our lives. Finally, there is the future tense of salvation. The future tense of salvation is along the lines of the aspect of salvation from the presence of sin. This tense of salvation is expressed in such passages as 1 Thess 5:9, "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him." Notice how Paul is talking about a future salvation, one we have not yet obtained but which we are destined to obtain and that it relates to our living together with Him. This is an aspect of our salvation that we do not yet have but will have. It is a future salvation from the presence of sin when we get a resurrection body. This is the tense and aspect of our salvation that Paul is teaching in Romans 13:11. He says **for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.** Clearly it is not an aspect of salvation that we already have but it is one that is nearer to us than when we first believed. This is our salvation from the presence of sin in the resurrection.

Since the Church is to be resurrected on the day of the rapture then the salvation in view here is the rapture. The rapture is the catching up of believers away from earth to Christ in the clouds. So the salvation here is referring to the rapture on the day when we are resurrected. On that day we will be saved from the presence of sin never to be tempted to sin or stumble into sin again. This usage of salvation referring to the rapture is not a unique usage of the word. Paul uses it elsewhere in this way. For example, in 1 Thess 5:9, which we cited and in 2 Thess 2:13. In any case, the rapture truly is a salvation since it is a rescue away from or deliverance from the presence of

sin because it is tied to our resurrection. On that day every believer in the Church age who has either died or is still alive will be resurrected.

Now what Paul is saying is it is high time believers wake up because this **salvation**, which is the rapture, **is nearer to us than when we believed**. This fascinating expression is really capturing two truths at the same time. One truth is the obvious one, that each day that we live is a day closer to this **salvation** (i.e. the rapture/resurrection). I am sure you have heard people talk about the signs of the times. They point out trends toward one world government, one world economy or one world religion and they say, "Boy, we are really getting close to the rapture." Yes, every moment we live we are closer to the rapture. That is a necessity of history. We certainly can't get farther from it. We are nearer to it now than we have ever been. That is one truth that is captured here. The second truth is not as obvious, but it is equally true. It is that this salvation, or rapture/resurrection, can come at-any-moment. When I say that I am speaking from the human point of view. God certainly knows when it will come and from His perspective it is not at-any-moment but at some definite moment. But since God has not revealed to us the time of the rapture we say that it is at-any-moment, or imminent. Imminent is the doctrinal word we use to capture the idea that, from as far as we can know, Christ can return for us at-any-moment. Paul himself, when he wrote 1 Thessalonians, was looking at the rapture as imminent because he included himself as one who might live to see the rapture. He didn't say that he would or know if he would but he held out that he could. And the reason he held out that he could is because he did not know the time of the rapture. This is the all-important characteristic of this age which makes it a critical season in which we live. There is nothing standing between Christ coming for us at the rapture to finalize our salvation by giving us resurrection bodies. This concept of nothing in between Christ coming for us has very practical ramifications.

These practical ramifications are spelled out by Paul starting in the middle of verse 11 where he says **that it is already the hour for you to awaken from your sleep**. We said this means it is high time to wake up. Of utmost importance I remind you - this was written in AD57. It was high time that the believers in AD57 wake up. Why? Because as far as they knew Christ could come for them at-any-moment. Since He did not this is equally true of us today in 2016. We need to wake up because Christ could come for us at-any-moment. The verb **awaken** is a passive voice and means "be awakened." I would translate it "be jolted out of your sleep." Often I go into my daughter's room in the morning and I have to jolt her out of her sleep because she likes to sleep. That is what I am trying to do to you now; jolt you out of your sleep. Many of you don't want to be jolted out of your spiritual sleep. You are happy living as if Christ is not coming back anytime soon because that mindset justifies your living like the world and not caring about unbelievers. That is totally contrary to what Paul said. Paul said right **now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed**. Again, that is saying that the rapture can happen at-any-moment and then you will be with the Lord. It was nearer to those who had believed in AD57 and it is nearer to us who have believed in AD2016.

What are the practical ramifications? What should this do for our living in this critical season? We ought to be awake all the time, living with an expectancy of His arrival. That is what this is talking about. Constable says, "It is important that we follow God's will carefully because the final phase of our salvation will take place very soon (i.e., glorification, cf. 1 Pet. 1:9)."<sup>2</sup> "It is possible for us to go through our lives as believers lethargic and insensible, but such a condition is not wise in view of what lies ahead of us."<sup>3</sup> And what lies ahead of us? The any-moment return of Christ for us at the rapture. That is what makes this time a critical age in history. We literally live on the knife-edge of history and Jesus Christ is waiting on that edge to break in. Witmer says, "Paul was not referring to time in general but to the end-time and to the imminent return of the Lord Jesus."<sup>4</sup>

In verse 12 Paul uses a metaphor to describe this near the end aspect of the present age saying **The night is almost gone**. The present age is like **night** in that **night** often represents darkness and evil. So the present age is an evil age. But Paul says it is **almost gone**. The word **almost gone** is *προκοψεν* and means "to move forward, to advance, to be far gone." When you think of this analogy you are to think of the progress of nighttime. It gets dark at ~7pm, you go to bed at 10pm, you sleep till 6 am and it is then that we say **the night is almost gone**. This is how Paul looks at this present age. It is like 6am, it is still night but **the night is almost gone**. Think about this because when did Paul write this? Paul wrote this in AD57. In AD57 the present age was almost gone. Now, here we are in 2015 and it is still **almost gone**. Why did Paul speak this way? Why did he think of this present evil age as almost gone in AD57? Because he viewed this present age as ending at-any-moment. He did not know when it would end. The Church is not on calendar time. There are no days, weeks or months or years. It is always 6 am and the night is almost gone. In hindsight, knowing what we know now, we might say to Paul, "The night is not almost gone, Paul, if you could see where we are now the night has just begun for you, it is only 8 pm, you have a long time to go until it is almost gone at 6 am in the morning. You can go to sleep Paul. Christ is not coming back anytime soon." So when we think of it that way we see that the practical ramifications of not thinking that Christ could come back at any moment but that certain things have to happen before He comes back are that we can go to sleep. We do not have to be on the alert. There is no reason to wake up because it is only 12 pm and there is still much of the night ahead. No Paul says, that is not the way to view this present age. Every generation in this age is to view the present age as being night that is almost gone, 6 am with the light just around the corner. That is why it is always time to wake up and live conscious, God-pleasing lives right now.

He then adds, **and the day is near**. This is the other side of the night being **almost gone**. At 6 am **the day is near**. Again, the day was already dawning when Paul wrote this in AD57. If that is so it is certainly dawning in 2016 too. The Bible does not tell us when. It just says **the day is near**. Today we can look in hindsight and say to Paul in his day, the day was not near. But the Bible does not permit us to say that in foresight. The Bible intentionally leaves us with one picture; every generation is at the end of night and the day is dawning. That is why this is a critical season; we are not guaranteed one more second. Therefore, we should be jolted out of our slumber right now. Summing up then, 13:11-12a is the doctrine of the present age that Paul wants us to realize

and I hope it is a great incentive for you to be jolted out of sleep if you are asleep or if you are already awake you remain awake and do not hit the snooze button.

Now we come to the application in 13:12b. What does it look like to wake up? When I wake up in the morning one of the things first things I do is put off the clothes I wore at night and put on the clothes for the new day. That is a very simple but accurate picture of what you are to do spiritually. Paul says **Therefore, let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.** Rather than wearing clothes when you are asleep as a Christian you are wearing the **deeds of darkness.** Paul says you need to **lay aside** those **deeds of darkness.** I don't think I really need to tell you what the **deeds of darkness are** but if you don't some of them are listed in verse 13; this is just a short list, many things could be added to this, they are all what you do at night; "carousing and drunkenness and sexual promiscuity and sensuality and strife and jealousy." People don't do these at 8 am in the morning because they are too hungover to wake up at 8 am in the morning. Besides, they wouldn't do them then anyway because everyone would see their shameful deeds. So people do these things at night because it is dark and they think others cannot see what they are doing. But the fact that they don't wake up until the next afternoon is a dead giveaway.

If you are a believer doing **deeds of darkness** you need to **lay** those **deeds...aside.** The verb **lay aside** is from *αποτιθημι* and means "to cast aside or put away." It is a word for taking off clothing. It is the word used when Stephen was stoned and the men who stoned him took off their robes and *cast them* at the feet of a young man named Saul. That is what you need to do with your **deeds of darkness** if you are a Christian who is asleep. You need to cast off those deeds like you might cast off your night clothes in the morning.

Now here is an interesting thing. Turn to Gal 3:27. This is more of the clothing metaphor. Notice what Paul says here. "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Now this obviously refers to all believers. All believers have been baptized by the Spirit into Christ and have through that event been clothed with Christ. So we are all clothed with Christ. That is a positional truth. By position we mean it is your standing before God. It is once for all. You are clothed with Christ. So what Paul is doing in Romans 13:11 is saying that a believer who is clothed with Christ positionally can put on deeds of darkness over that clothing. And then that believer doesn't look like a Christian does he? He is a Christian but he does not look like a Christian. Someone may be wearing a tuxedo because it is their wedding day but if they put on some work clothes over the tuxedo can you tell that they are wearing a tuxedo? No. But it doesn't change the fact that they are. In the same way, a person can be a believer, clothed in Christ positionally, but if he is doing deeds of darkness you can't tell he's clothed in Christ because his experience is not consistent with his position in Christ. So all Paul is saying then is since you are clothed in Christ you should lay deeds of darkness aside that cover the fact you are clothed in Christ.

What then are you to put on? Verse 14 says **put on the Lord Jesus Christ** and verse 12 says **put on the armor of light.** Both use the exact same verb. So these are really two ways of talking about the same thing. It may sound

strange that Paul says **put on the Lord Jesus Christ** when he said in Galatians 3:27 with the exact same verb again that we have clothed ourselves with Jesus Christ. But the resolution is that in Gal 3:27 he is talking about our being clothed with Christ positionally whereas here he is talking about being clothed with Christ experientially. All believers are clothed with Christ positionally but not all believers are clothed with Christ experientially. What does it mean to be clothed with Christ experientially? If we need to take off the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light, then it seems to follow that putting on Christ experientially is putting on the deeds of light. What Paul is wanting is our deeds in our experience to line up with our position of being clothed with Christ. Constable seems to agree when he says, "In one sense every believer puts on Jesus Christ when he or she trusts Him as Savior (Gal. 3:27). However, in another sense we put Him on when we dedicate ourselves to Him as our lord (12:1)."

The specific expression **armor of light** sounds like it is related to the armor of God. There are several passages that discuss the armor of God. Eph 6:11-15 is the most extensive but you also find it in 2 Cor 6:7, 10:4 and 1 Thess 5:8. These five passage all seem to indicate that putting on the armor of God is essential to defending against the evil one and doing good deeds as we live by faith in the word of God. Through this we extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one and accomplish good. Here the specific expression **armor of light** seems to refer to the protection provided from evil when we are walking in the light and doing good deeds. There is a very real sense in which walking in the light serves as a bulwark against walking in darkness. It's when we are not walking in the light that we turn to walking in the darkness. Paul said in Gal 5:16, "But I say to you, walk by the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." It's either one or the other and walking in the light excludes and serves as a bulwark against walking in the darkness. Therefore, what Paul wants us to put on is the protection that walking in the light provides from walking in the darkness. Walking in the light is like putting on a protective layer of clothing.

So verses 11 and 12 are saying that since this present evil age is almost over and Christ is returning at any moment at the rapture then we who are clothed in Christ positionally should cast off any deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

6:13 actually helps interpret because it seems to explain that putting **on the armor of light** is defined as **behaving properly as in the day**. This is a definition that fits my conclusion that the **armor of light** is the protection that deeds of light provide. The word translated **behave** is *περιπατεω* and should actually be translated "walk." It is how we are walking. This also fits the ideas of Paul elsewhere where he said walk by the Spirit. So all of this is related to how we should live our lives. We should walk properly, becomingly **as in the day**. The **day** time is when most people behave properly. It has always been an appropriate metaphor.

By contrast Paul now lists some of the deeds of darkness which we are not to walk in. There are three pairs of words here that go together. First, **not in carousing and drunkenness**.<sup>5</sup> Second, **not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality**.<sup>6</sup> Third, **not in strife and jealous**.<sup>7</sup> It's not really necessary to go through all these word studies. I

did but the bottom line is this is a vice list and if Paul were writing this today he'd say, "It's not befitting a Christian to get drunk, sleep around, look at pornography, argue with people and be jealous of their successes." Many other things could be added to the list!

In 13:14 Paul gives us the secret to living the Christian life in two expressions. First, **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**. Again, the word **put on** is the exact same word used in verse 12 for **put on the armor of light**. They basically refer to the same thing. The difference is that the expression **armor of light** highlights the protection that good deeds provide for us and the expression **the Lord Jesus Christ** highlights the One who gives us the protection and does the good deeds through us. Because we can still clothe ourselves in deeds of darkness we need to daily **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**. The second thing Paul says is part of the secret to living the Christian life is **make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lust**. All Christians still have **the flesh** or sinful disposition and therefore it's lusts or desires. However, we are not legally obligated to obey our flesh and its desires. It has no legal right over us anymore. However, we may still give in to its mastery. Paul says here that we should not do that. The word he uses is **make no provision**. The word is *προνοια* from "before to know" and means don't think or plan out ahead a way to meet the flesh's needs. When I sin and you sin it is usually because we have thought out in advance how we are going to do it. Paul says you should not think out plans to satisfy your lusts. Witmer says, "For a Christian to plan out specific ways to gratify his sinful nature is wrong and out of bounds."<sup>8</sup> As a bulwark against planning to gratify the sinful nature we should do the protective deeds that the Lord Jesus Christ does through us as we wake from our sleep and realize the critical season in which we live where the Lord Jesus Christ could return at-any-moment.

In conclusion, in 13:11 the doctrine is knowing the critical season in which we live. It is always the time for us to be jolted from our slumber as Christians; for now, our future salvation at the rapture/resurrection is nearer to us than when we first believed. In 13:12, the darkness of this evil age is almost gone, it is the final hour and the day is dawning. Therefore, practical application, we should take off the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of good deeds which protect us from falling into temptation to the deeds of darkness. We must be vigilant in this. In 13:13 we are to walk becomingly as in the day time and not in sexual excess and drunkenness and fantasy characterized by strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ who is the one who provides the protection and is the author of the good deeds done through us as we live by faith. And make no plans ahead of time how to gratify the flesh in regard to its lusts. This is out of bounds for the Christian.

---

<sup>1</sup> Alva J. McClain, *Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace*, p 219.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ro 13:11.

<sup>3</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ro 13:11.

---

<sup>4</sup> John A. Witmer, "Romans," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 491.

<sup>5</sup> The word **carousing** means "excessive feasting," and **drunkenness** means "excessive drinking" and so the pair means do not gorge yourself in a drunken revelry.

<sup>6</sup> The word translated **sexual promiscuity** is *κοιτη* and means generally "a bed." In the plural what Paul is saying is don't make your bed with multiple people. This condemns fornication, sex outside of marriage and adultery, sex outside of the marriage bed. The other word in the pair is **sensuality** and it's the word *ασελγεια* and refers to lacking self-constraint so that you are driven by excess, usually sexual excess. Such a pair would also certainly condemn pornography.

<sup>7</sup> Strife is "rivalry" and "discord," "contention" with others. **Jealousy** is the negative side of this word and means "intense negative feelings over another's achievements or success."

<sup>8</sup> John A. Witmer, "Romans," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 492.