

Sermon notes on - Does anybody really know what time it is? - Romans 13:11-14

Paul begins with an imperative (command): "Do this, knowing the time..."

- You and I only have a short time on this earth - even in the case of what we consider a 'long life'. As each day is passes; we will not be able to retrieve it.
- One day we will stand before God and give an account for our use of our short time on earth - that thought alone ought to be enough to motivate us!

We are living in the "last time" - that is, the time when so much of God's work of redemption has been completed.

- Christ has come; and His sacrifice for the sins of man has been made.
- His gospel has been taken all over the world. There are still specific places here and there where it hasn't yet reached; but for the most part, it has circled the globe.
- And now, nothing remains but the soon coming of our Lord. I believe these truly are the last days - the final stages of God's redemption program.

Everyday we live, the coming of Jesus is one day closer than the day before! How motivating this should be! I believe it was what motivated Paul to write the words of this morning's passage.

I'm afraid that we tend to treat the Lord of our life as a mere "addition" to the many other things in life that we consider important. And for some of us - when compared to other things - our Lord's call on our life is not really all that important to us at all!

In this passage, God has a message for us through His servant Paul. It is this:

- Stop being casual about your faith! Stop being lazy about it! Stop playing "church"! This isn't a fire-drill! This isn't a dress-rehearsal! This is the real thing!
- The past lies behind you; and eternity is set before you! The time is short!
- Jesus is standing at the very threshold of returning again! God has moved heaven and earth, as it were, to bring about your salvation; and now - it's time to get to work while God gives you the chance!
- Wake up! Get moving! Serve! Give! Sacrifice! Suffer, if need be!
- Live for Jesus with all your being, while God has given you this tiny window of opportunity!

In this passage I see Paul giving four answers to our question. **Does anybody really know what time it is?**

1. IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP. (v. 11)

Paul's not talking to unbelievers here. He says that our salvation is "nearer than when we first believed". In other words, Paul is talking to those of us who have already believed and are already Christians.

Our salvation has three aspects.

- First, it has a "past" aspect in that God saves us from the penalty of our sins through the Cross of Jesus.

- Second, it has a "present" aspect in that God is progressively 'saving' us now - helping us to leave our old sinful life-style behind and to live a new lifestyle that's conformed to the image of Jesus.
- Third, salvation has a "future" aspect in that God will one day glorify us by making us like Jesus Christ as He is in His heavenly glory.

The Apostle John had this future, glorious aspect of "salvation" in mind in 1 John 3:2-3.

Paul says it's "the hour for you to awaken from sleep" What do you think Paul means by "sleep"?

- He uses the Greek word from which we get the English word "hypnosis" - one that means "to be drowsy". Paul is talking about Christians who are in spiritual "La-La Land"; Christians who are in an apathetic spiritual "daze" and who are "nodding off".

What do Christians look like who are "asleep" in this way?

Perhaps such "spiritual slumber" shows itself in a slackening of the intensity of our faith.

Does anybody really know what time it is? Paul answers the question; Jesus is coming; it's time to wake up from our spiritual sleep. But **Does anybody really care?**

2. IT'S TIME TO GET DRESSED. (v. 12)

Paul is using several figures of speech in this verse. First notice his reference to "night" and "day". "Night" is a figure for this present age - the age that's coming to a close prior to the reign of Jesus Christ on earth. The reign of Jesus yet to come is called "day". (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

Our destiny is to dwell in the "day". We've been "qualified" to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light"; and have been "delivered" from "the power of darkness", and have been "conveyed" into "the kingdom" of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:12-13)

Paul - using more figures of speech - says that we're to lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. "Armor" suggests battle! (Ephesians 6:13-17)

3. IT'S TIME TO START WALKING (V. 13).

There are three "categories" of improper "walking" that Paul mentions in this verse.

- A first category is what we might call "the partying spirit". Behaving as "in the day" means we're not to be walking "in carousing and drunkenness". We're not to be given to "wild" behavior. We're not to allow our behavior to be influenced by drugs or alcohol. We're not to be "party animals" - like the lost people who try to fill the gnawing void in their soul with artificial, sinful "good times".
- A second category is "sensuality". Behaving "in the day" means not walking "in sexual promiscuity and sensuality" - that is, in sexual promiscuity and sensual pleasures. We're not to gratify physical lusts. We're not to sleep with people who are not our spouses. We're not to lust after the sensual images that are shown on television, or movies, or in magazines, or over the internet.

- Finally, a third category what we might call "selfish hostility". Behaving as "in the day" means not walking in "strife and jealousy". We're not to be back-biters. We're not to be gossipers. We're not to hold resentment or unforgiveness toward others. We're not to hold others in contempt.

These, you see, are behavior practices of our "old way of walking"; and we're not to walk that way anymore. (Ephesians 5:1-10)

4. IT'S TIME TO KEEP FOCUSED. (v. 14)

The great military genius Napoleon Bonaparte is quoted as saying that a man "becomes" his uniform. And here, we're commanded to "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27)

In Christ, you and I have a whole new identity. We have a new direction. We have a new purpose. We're wearing a whole new uniform.

And we are to be sure that we stay focused and behave like men and women of our uniform! We have already been "clothed" in Christ in a positional sense; and now, we are to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" in daily life - in a practical sense. We are to trust that Jesus Himself dwells within us, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit; and then, we are to go into this world in His power and under His control - trusting Him to live His life through us!

This must affect the choices we make in every-day life. It must make a change in our priorities. And so, Paul adds, ". . . and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."

We will not be completely free of its pull on us until the day that we shed these bodies and are glorified with Christ in that "future" aspect of salvation. We will struggle and fight with this principle of sin so long as we live on this earth. But we need to remember that it has been fundamentally "broken" by Christ. We no longer HAVE to obey it when it cries out to us. We no longer HAVE to "gratify" it. As Paul says, we no longer HAVE to "fulfill" its lusts.

Does anybody really know what time it is? Jesus is coming; It's time to get out the door and start walking in a manner that is consistent with people who have been awakened and have put their spiritual work clothes on! It's time to focus on Jesus Christ trusting Him to live His life through us!

But – **Does anybody really care?**