

## “The Night is Far Gone, the Day is Near”

Romans 13:8-14

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Romans 13:8-14

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Prayer.

One of the great challenges  
Of the Christian life  
Is balancing  
This world with the next.  
On the one side  
Is a life singly devoted to Christ.  
While I admire that,  
I’m also a realist enough  
That we all cannot lead  
The monastic, cloistered life.  
At the other end of the spectrum  
Are those wholly living in the world.  
In our regional, cultural experience  
This is one generally who  
Works hard, studies hard, and parties hard.  
The goal appears to be money, status,  
Intoxication, sex, and good things.  
We are lucky to get them to church  
On Christmas Eve, let alone Easter.

But, life has a way of happening.  
The one variable here is time.  
With time and experience

Comes the recognition  
That circumstances happen:  
People fall in love,  
Career goals and employment change,  
Pregnancy and birth takes place,  
Disease, suffering, and death comes  
And often shows no favorites.  
Circumstances have a way of leading  
Those who live life in the extreme  
Closer and closer to Christ.  
Some come to Christ  
Relatively quickly –  
In a Damascus Road type of conversion.  
Others take their time;  
Are more gradual.  
A very few are so self absorbed  
That they ever think beyond  
Their selfishness consumption  
And they never arrive.  
  
So, how does one know when to wake up?  
How are we to know  
When to turn over a new leaf;  
To boldly change course,  
Take responsibility

For the spiritual  
Health, wellness, and development  
Of our soul?

Having children does it for some.  
Perhaps it is fear of going to hell  
Or fear of not adequately preparing  
Their son or daughter  
For growth  
That brings many people  
With their child  
To the baptismal font.

A near death experience will do it for others.  
A brush with cancer,  
A traumatic hospitalization,  
The death of a loved one,  
Or personally visiting the bright light  
Only to be turned back ...  
Any of these things might cause  
One to wake up,  
Smell the coffee,  
And decide to drill deeper into the life of  
faith.

Unfortunately,  
A delusional belief,  
Often based on an incorrect Biblical  
interpretation  
Can lead one to postpone  
A walk with Jesus  
Until it is entirely too late.  
“If the thief on the cross could wait  
right up until the end,  
why can't I wait right up until  
I'm in the ICU bed  
And my family is ready to pull the plug?”  
“I mean,  
Hey! Let's suck as much enjoyment  
out of this life as we can.”  
Or,  
“Pastor Todd said just the other week  
in his sermon from Romans  
that everyone goes to heaven.  
So why should I care?”

Or,  
“Good people go to heaven,  
and I've been good all my life,  
so, why shouldn't I expect  
to be compensated by God  
with a more lenient sentence?”

Believe me, I've heard it all.

Here is a hint:  
Don't justify your behavior with your pastor.  
Justify your behavior with your God.

“Wake Up!”  
the apostle Paul is screaming at us today.  
“Wake Up!  
'For salvation is nearer to us now  
than when we became believers.'”  
There does come a time  
When the outer door  
Will close off the darkness;  
Where there will be weeping  
And gnashing of teeth.  
There will come a time  
When the Savior  
Will serve his duty first as judge.

And Paul tells us  
We are closer to that day  
Than we are to the first day  
We were introduced to Jesus.  
“The night is far gone, the day is near.”

So,  
What are you going to do about it?  
Are you going to take it seriously  
And recommit your life  
To Christ  
At this Communion Table?  
Or,  
Are you going to take a pass,  
Roll the dice and risk it all,  
That there is still  
A lot of time to play?

Take the advice of Paul  
When he says,  
“Let us then lay aside  
the works of darkness  
and put on the armor of light.”

Let us,  
This day,  
End our selfish attitudes  
And sinful desires.  
Let us,  
This day,  
Commit ourselves,  
To living as Christ’s disciples,  
Doing his will,  
According to his ways.

Learning his ways  
Leads to knowing his will  
Which inspires us to do his will.  
Do this  
Sooner  
Rather than  
Later.  
Amen.