

Romans (13:11-14)

About Time

Part 78 – August 13, 2006

DEVIL CAR



Most of you have seen me driving my '88 Taurus.

My real car is a '67 Camaro I've owned for 29 years. It's in the process of being restored; so, I've been driving the ol' Taurus. Problem is the car is corrupt!

But instead of facing up to it, I've adapted to it. When I go to start it each morning, I connect the battery (it drains if it's not disconnected). I turn the key over and over to get the starter to engage; unless I have to fiddle with the battery some more. I pull it up to the hose (I can't park it on the driveway pad 'cause it leaks oil). I hold up the hood with one hand (the spring's sprung) and fill the radiator with the other. I fill it from home to church, and from church home. The regulator overcharges the battery, so I fill that with water too ... I have little acid holes in most of my clothes.

I wipe the windshield with a towel because the defroster is disconnected (antifreeze was fogging up the windows). There's not even a fan, because the motor went out. If it's raining, I push in the wiper fuse to make 'em go, and pull it out to make 'em stop. The disconnected battery resets the radio; so I push "on", and "FM", then "tune" sixteen times. There's no clock, no air-conditioning, and no right blinker. Oil shoots onto the exhaust manifold as I drive to work, so people honk and tell me my car's on fire ... if only!

This didn't all happen at once. It snuck up on me. It accustomed me *gradually*; until it no longer served me ... I was serving it!

Amazing what we'll close our eyes to, allow into our lives, and live in bondage to!

OVERLAPPING AGES

For eleven chapters Paul unfolded what it means to have Jesus take away our guilt and condemnation. In chapters twelve and thirteen he describes how those who truly embrace Christ as Savior and Lord will live out their lives.

He's instructed us on: loving our Lord; loving our fellow believers; loving our neighbors; loving our enemies; and even loving our governing officials.

Now Paul gives us a final motivation for all of this loving, and a wake-up call; he wants us to open our eyes.

And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. - *Romans 13:11-14 NIV*

So, look at the motivation: And do this, understanding the present time (13:11a)



Q: Do *you* understand the “present time” Paul is talking about?
He gives us a definition:

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here (13:12a)

Q: So what time is it?

A: It’s morning; it’s not totally dark and it’s not completely light.

It’s a mixture of the two. We live in an *overlap* of darkness and light. We’re in-between the first and second coming of Christ.



The light has come (we’re redeemed and restored) but we still live in an age of darkness (we still struggle with sin, sorrow, and suffering).

- We live in the dusk, but we belong to the dawn!

And that means it’s time to open our eyes and wake up!

The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber (13:11b)

Ever woke up with a *great* idea - or laughing at a *hilarious* situation - but the wider awake you got, the less great and/or funny it was ... until it just didn’t make *any* sense at all?! I still remember waking up with a million dollar idea: little plastic banks with prickly burrs glued onto them. And I’d sell them in Los Angeles as “Burr-Banks”!

In 12:2 Paul urged us to renew our minds, because this world is asleep in the light - their logic is fuzzy. “It seems like such a great idea to live solely for your own pleasure!” This age we live in wants to lull us into its sleep, and the Christian can’t afford to hit the snooze button! “Just a little more time in the dark, Lord.”

The church must awaken. We’re called to shine the light of Christ in this dark and dying world. Too many churches start at 11:00 sharp and end at 12:00 dull!

ARMOR OF LIGHT

Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed (13:11b)

Every day we pitch our tent a day's march closer to home. We gotta get up and we gotta get dressed! Paul says:

Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on ... [put on what?] (13:12b)

Q: Ever woke up not sure what time it is ... or what day it is? On Sunday mornings I tend to dream that it's Monday morning!



Imagine waking up in a dirt trench or a Humvee, and realizing that you're a soldier, in Iraq, in the middle of a battlefield!

Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light (13:12b)

Q: Why does Paul tell us to put on "armor"?

A: For the true believer: To be awake is to be at war!

Too many Christians aren't even aware they're in a battle.



These terms: "Put aside" (the deeds of darkness) and "Put on" (the armor of light) suggest a decisive and complete act. Imagine a soldier lining up for inspection, or heading out onto the battlefield dressed like this. Every branch of the military has a specific uniform that replaces civilian clothing and identifies the soldier.

- The believer's uniform is the "armor of light".

But, what is the "armor of light" ... and are we wearing it? In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul defines the armor:

We do not belong to the night or to the darkness ... But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a *breastplate*, and the hope of salvation as a *helmet*. – 1 Thessalonians 5:5b-8 NIV condensed

So, the armor of light is: faith, hope, and love. And we wear them as a breastplate and a helmet, because the world aims its "sleeping pills" at our heart and our head.

And Paul doesn't hesitate to list them frankly:

1. "Orgies and drunkenness"
2. "Sexual immorality and debauchery"
3. "Dissension and jealousy"

Sin is sin however it's packages. And it's all like my Taurus; it begins by promising to serve you, but if you close your eyes, and ignore the problems, you'll end up serving it ... every time! And you won't be fully protected until you:

Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ (13:14a)

- Faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ – for *me!*
- Hope comes from receiving the promises of Christ – for *me!*
- Love comes from embracing the passion of Christ – for *me!*

This is how the “armor of light” will clothe us in Christ! And this is the light that *we* shine and share in this dark world: His words, His promises, and His love! And it must be authentic – it must be modeled. We can't sleepwalk through the battle in spiritual boxer shorts. And then Paul ends with this warning:

Do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature (13:14b)



If we're really going to clothe ourselves with Christ, we need to change our dirty “under-thoughts”. But, how?

Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. – *Galatians 5:16 NIV*

We must live by the Spirit (of truth); and there should be nothing covered, covert, or concealed about our lives. That's what Paul means by: “[living] as in the daytime”

We should live a life that is open, honest, and pleasing to God. Notice, it didn't say, “You won't *have* those desires”. It says you won't *gratify* those desires ... big difference!

You can't keep the birds from flying overhead, but you can sure stop 'em from building a nest in your hair. – *Martin Luther paraphrased*

There is no such thing as a harmless sinful fantasy, whatever we lust for or dabble with. The way we (choose to) think greatly effects the way we feel; and the way we feel definitely influences the way we act. Darkness doesn't happen all at once; it sneaks up on you *gradually*; until it no longer serves you, but you serve it!

Amazing what we'll close our eyes to, allow into our lives, and live in bondage to!

I bought a \$1,500 used car last week ... it was so simple. Why did I wait a whole year?! Now I can drive to *Bellingham!* What freedom! I can take passengers ... without shame; what a privilege! And I can park on the *pad!* What acceptance! And you know what I did with my old Taurus? What had to be done. **[Video: Taurus crushed]**

I killed it. I crushed it. I got rid of it in a way that I'll never be tempted to drive it again! So much for that burden ... what'cha gonna do with yours?