What Time Is It?
Romans 13:11-14

Introduction

Paul has been writing about our duty—our duty to love our enemies, our duty to obey the government, our duty to our fellow citizens about paying debt. Now Paul’s attention turns to our duty in light of the near approach of the Lord’s second coming. Jesus is coming back. Time—for all of us—will one day run out!

We are Christ’s servants. We desire to be found faithful in Him. Our salvation is about to take on its full and final manifestation. In this section of scripture Paul says, “wake-up” and “clean-up” and “grow-up”.

When Jesus shows up—he expects us to greet him! We don’t want to meet Christ covered with dirt, full of filthy stains. We grow up by making provision for the spirit and not the flesh. Our maturation comes from our nutrition. If we feed the flesh, we remain stunted, retarded, developmentally disabled. If we feed the spirit we grow, we mature, we become able-bodied Christians.

A Time To Wake Up! (v.11)
A Time For A New Wardrobe (v.12)
A Time To Walk Straight (v.13)
A Time To Wear Jesus (v.14)

A Time To Wake Up! (v.11)

Romans 13:11 (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.

Paul begins with an observation. “knowing the time”. What time is it? How are we to understand the times, and then live? The word Paul uses for ‘knowing’ is ‘eridotes’—which speaks of certainty, something you dare not overlook. When you have to catch a plane, you better know what airline you are flying, you better know the departure time—precisely.

Two words are translated “time” in the New Testament. The first is ‘chronos’. Words like chronology, or chronometric dating, come from this word. This word means time, in the sense of duration of time, or the unfolding of time. The second word is kairos which is a limited time, a season, a critical period. Several linguists suggest the word means a limited or defined or quality of time. Ralph Earle points out the modern Greek word kairos means weather, while chronos means time. The New English Bible translates the passage, “Remember how critical the moment is”.

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11 Another reason for right living is that you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for the coming of our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

What time is it? These are ‘the last times’. What does that mean? The Bible calls these, “the last days” (Acts 2:17, 2 Tim.3:1; Heb.1:2). These are not necessarily the last days chronologically, but qualitatively. The last days began with Christ’s appearance and will end ‘in that day’ or the day (v.12a) of His return. Jesus can come back at any moment. Paul is making reference to the day we will meet Jesus face to face. Your meeting with Jesus is the most critical appointment, the most important date of your existence as a human being.

It is time “to awake out of sleep”!
The word ‘awake’ means get-up, get-up put the body in motion. Move, act!

The Greek word for sleep is hupnos (or hypnos).

We live in a fallen world. A fallen world sometimes produces constant frustration or fatigue. Are you ever tired? We hear a lot about chronic fatigue syndrome. Some people have a constant weakness. Paul is speaking to Christians. Sleep here is not spiritual death, but spiritual lethargy. Are you paying attention to what’s going on in the world? Are you watching? Do you awake every morning with the earnest expectation that today, maybe this day, ‘my beloved’ will come? Are you observing the signs of the times? Soft living can sometimes lead to spiritual lethargy. We are to be alert!

Paul lists the incentive to avoid lethargy. Our great incentive is the soon return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Time is running out to love our neighbor, to love our enemy, to give the gospel, to preach Christ. Time is running out, we must work, while it is still day. The night is coming when no man can work. My wife has a clock that strikes a song on the hour. I heard about a little boy, in their home, their clock was broken. For some reason the chimes sounded sixteen times. The little boy ran into his mother’s room and said, “Mommy, it’s later than it’s ever been before!” Out of the mouth of babes comes wisdom. In one sense, it is later than it has ever been before! Jesus may come—physically and personally in our life-time. He may not. But he will come for each of personally—in death—for some of us—that time is sooner than you may imagine. This time next year—one of you may be gone—forever. Kent Hughes writes soberly—“Each ache, each pain, each gray hair, each new wrinkle, each funeral is a reminder that it is later than it has ever been before. It’s time to love our neighbors as ourselves”(R.Kent Hughes p.253).

“for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed”.
Did you know salvation is spoken of in the New Testament in three tenses? Past (2 Tim.1:9); present (Acts 2:47; Rom. 8:24); and future (Acts 15: 11; Rom.13:11).
Here Paul uses the future tense. He is making reference to the full and final day, the glorious day, when our salvation is fully realized. We will be delivered from this present evil world, we will be like “HIM” perfected in His presence!

“Viewed as to the past, it is salvation from the penalty of sin; viewed as to the present, it is salvation from the power of sin, and viewed as to the future, it is salvation from the very presence of sin. It is this last viewpoint that Paul has in mind here. Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. As someone has put it, “Every day we pitch our tent a day’s march nearer home” (Phillips p.229).

Have you ever had to get up early for an important date? I had to get up at five in the morning to make my flight to Colorado last Friday. I went to bed at one in the morning.

Jesus is coming soon. We are to live in the certain season of Christ’s return. We can no longer avoid the significance of the season. The Saints in every age have looked with expectancy of Jesus’ soon return in their lifetime.

Is it wrong to believe we are the final generation?

What is different in this generation? The invention, the manufacture and the deployment of nuclear weapons and other weapons, establishment of an Israeli state. The occupation of Jerusalem, the global threat of Islam, the establishment of a European union, the awakening of China. Global technology, instant global communications, the potential for the extinction of humanity.

Look at the events in this world. Examine your heart. Remind yourself of the uncertainty of existence. You could go at any moment. Check out the signs. Inspect your body. Do you see the signs of age? Observe the time.

Luke 21:28 (NLT)
28 So when all these things begin to happen, stand straight and look up, for your salvation is near!

1 John 2:18 (NLT)
18 Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the end of the world has come.

Make no mistake about it. You will face God, either at the coming of Jesus Christ or at your death. Time is running out. Prepare to meet thy God (Amos 4:12).

A Time For A New Wardrobe (v.12)

Romans 13:12 (NKJV)
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.
We must put off the dirty deeds of darkness, and put on the pure armor of light. “Watching sights the enemy, praying fights the enemy” (John Phillips p.230).

Now is the time to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Time for a new wardrobe my friend.

What are the works of darkness? These are the things we desire to do when no one is looking, under the cover of darkness. These are the things we want kept secret. These are the things you do which are unacceptable to the Holy Spirit. These are the things we do which cause harm, which we are ashamed of, which we fear the consequences, which we know do great harm.

John 3:19-20 (NKJV)
19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.
20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

When we join the service, we take off our civilian clothes and put on our military wardrobe.

The verb tenses are decisive—we ‘cast off’ once and for all the old life, and we put on a new life.

We are saved. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Jesus lives inside of us. We are to make a conscious, deliberate, and final decision, through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, to live life differently. We want to be identified by our new set of clothes.

Last week I interviewed a Salvation Army officer on my show. He told me how his uniform is a conversation starter. He has a son who attends Columbine High School. Once a month the young man wears his uniform to school.

The works of darkness are all our old attitudes and habits as unbelievers. We are to put on our armour of light. We are to do battle against the rulers of this world’s darkness” (Eph.6:12-17) (Phillips p.231).

The armor of light is a metaphor of the armor of righteousness (2 Cor.6:7) and the full armor of Ephesians 6. This armor is full of splendor and glory and brilliance, that it cannot be penetrated by the works of darkness. There is the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness. The sandals of the gospel. The shield of faith. The helmet of salvation. The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Your supernatural resources include prayer.
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A Time To Walk Straight (v.13)

Romans 13:13 (NKJV)
13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

Paul exhorts the Christians to ‘walk’ right in broad-daylight!

The Greek word for ‘walk’ is peripateo which means to walk, or literally to walk around. Here it is a metaphor for living. How are you to live your life in Christ?

Your walk is the external behavior other people see! You might be thinking, “It doesn’t matter what other people think, I know my heart is right with God”. You are wrong. It does matter what other see—and the conclusions they draw about Christ and Christianity based on the way you live!

“Let us walk properly”. A dry-cleaning establishment advertised its services, “If your clothes aren’t becoming to you, they should be coming to us!” Or the Men’s Warehouse, “You’ll like the way you look”.

“As in the day”—do you like the way you look? When the full strength of broad-daylight shining on you, when there are no dark shadows to hide or cover your circumstances, can you stand in broad-daylight and have your life in full view for all to see? Are you living beyond reproach?

Does the soon appearing of Jesus Christ have any effect on the way you are living right now?
The word properly can also be translated ‘honestly’ in the sense of honorable, respectable.

Now Paul spells out the wrong way to walk. You may be wondering, “Why does Paul spell out the negative?” When I became a Christian, there were certain things, certain sins, that I knew I had to turn away from ---forever. Sins like smoking marijuana. Sins like practicing witchcraft, etc. Paul is saying to the Romans, you need to stop these things immediately and never do them again. Things like rioting (komois)-the Roman party—girls gone wild, guys gone goofy. Sins like drunkenness, wantonness, strife, envy.

People in Paul’s day—had parties, orgies, drunkenness. “All I want to do is have some fun, I have a feeling, I’m not the only one”. The song has been sung for thousands of years. I just want to have a good time. Christian—God is calling you to the best time—and in order to pursue love—you must set aside the harmful pursuit of personal pleasures.

“Not in revelry”—the word revelry here means party—but it came to mean a kind of party where all kinds of wrong activities take place.
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“not in lewdness” or debauchery, or sexual immorality, or prostitution. The Greek word here koite—which means bed—but came to mean ‘inappropriate sexual relations’ or illicit relations. This means sex—before marriage.

“lust” or wantonness—or sensuality—or vice or licentiousness. This is one of the ugliest words in the Greek language. It describes a person—not just given to immorality—but a person who seems incapable of shame! There was a recent law suit about a 17 and a half year old girl who exposed her breasts on a video called “Girls Gone Wild”. Apparently the laws about indecent exposure or underage pornography were challenged. The judge ruled the teen had the right to expose herself! We must watch the way we dress, films and pictures, dances and parties, books and pamphlets, songs and music, talk and jokes, touch and behavior.

“envy” zelos—has the good meaning of zeal and the bad meaning jealousy. Here the word envy means a person who cannot stand the thought of someone passing them up, or a person who is bitter towards the success of another. One of the most tragic things in the Christian church is the person who thinks God has given them the job of keeping people in their place! Such an attitude is inconsistent with a heart of love!

Do you want to love people like Christ loves them? Then there are certain things that must go in your life! The evil that Paul takes about in these verses, self-indulgent parties, sexual immorality, lust, envy are the exact reasons there is to little love in the Christian church.

A Time To Wear Jesus (v.14)

Romans 13:14 (NKJV)
14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

We might say, Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

Clothe yourself in Jesus. What does that mean? What does clothing do? It touches us, protects us, warms us, covers us, hides us.

Jesus is coming soon. Live like heaven is a real place. Paul gives practical exhortations. Now Paul says, “Look and see what has been provided for you, and look and see what is prohibited to you. Put on the Lord Jesus, make no provision for the flesh!

What does it mean to put on Jesus? In a sense—we clothe ourselves in all that Jesus is and all that Jesus provides.
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We put on Jesus—when we are saved. But we must also put Jesus on to serve—in this world.

Galatians 3:27 (NLT)  
27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have been made like him.

Ray Stedman gives this illustration;

When I get up in the morning I put on my clothes, intending them to be part of me all day, to go where I go and do what I do. They cover me and make me presentable to others. That is the purpose of clothes. In the same way, the apostle is saying to us, “Put on Jesus Christ when you get up in the morning. Make him a part of your life that day. Intend that he go with you everywhere you go, and that he act through you in everything you do. Call upon His resources. Live your life IN CHRIST”(emphasis his, quoted in R. Kent Hughes Commentary p.254).

We are wrapped up in Jesus! He is our label. That means we watch what Jesus is comfortable watching. We listen to those things Jesus is comfortable listening to, we talk and touch and eat and drink and think about those things that Jesus is comfortable with.

Ephesians 4:24 (NKJV)  
24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

We make ‘no provision’ for the flesh. We cut off our supplies to the flesh. We remove storage for our flesh. We are waiting for Jesus to return. While we wait—we must remain pure and victorious. We must allow the Holy Spirit to bring God’s word to bear on our very lives. We must remain sensitive to those things which will shame us at the coming of the Lord.

**Conclusion**

I often think: "A life is like a day; it goes by so fast. If I am so careless with my days, how can I be careful with my life?" I know that somehow I have not fully come to believe that urgent things can wait while I attend to what is truly important. It finally boils down to a question of deep and strong conviction. Once I am truly convinced that preparing the heart is more important than preparing the Christmas tree I will be a lot less frustrated at the end of a day.


There are seven things the believer is told to put on in the Bible.
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We are to put on and be empowered (enduseste, clothed) with the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49).

We are to put on and be clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom.13:14; Gal.3:27)

We are to put on and be clothed with immortality (1 Cor. 15:53-54; 2Cor.5:3).

We are to put on and be clothed with the new man (Eph.4:24; Col.3:10).

We are to put on and be clothed with the nature of God (Col.3:12)

We are to put on and be clothed with the armor of light and of God (Rom.13:14; Eph. 6:11)

We are to put and be clothed with love (Col.3:14).