

IT'S TIME (PART 3)
ROMANS 13:11-14

In 1899 just months after being sworn in as governor of New York, **Theodore Roosevelt** gave a speech in Chicago which remained one of his most well-known and well-loved oratorical masterpieces. In it, he calls the technologically-growing, wealth-amassing Americans to be wary of the life of ease:

In speaking to you, men of the greatest city of the West, men of the state which gave to the country Lincoln and Grant, men who preeminently and distinctly embody all that is most American in the American character, I wish to preach not the doctrine of ignoble ease but the doctrine of the strenuous life; the life of toil and effort; of labor and strife; to preach that highest form of success which comes not to the man who desires mere easy peace but to the man who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil, and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph...

I preach to you, then, my countrymen, that our country calls not for the life of ease, but for the life of strenuous endeavor. The twentieth century looms before us big with the fate of many nations. If we stand idly by, if we seek merely swollen, slothful ease, and ignoble peace, if we shrink from the hard contests where men must win at hazard of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear, then the bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by and will win for themselves the domination of the world. Let us therefore boldly face the life of strife, resolute to do our duty well and manfully; resolute to uphold righteousness by deed and by word; resolute to be both honest and brave, to serve high ideals, yet to use practical methods. Above all, let us shrink from no strife, moral or physical, within or without the nation, provided we are certain that the strife is justified; for it is only through strife, through hard and dangerous endeavor, that we shall ultimately win the goal of true national greatness.



Not only are those words needed by our general public again, but they are words that are applicable in the life of the believer as well. As believers we cannot expect a life of ease; in fact, we should anticipate a life of labor — not just in serving one another, but in pursuing Christlikeness and fighting sin. Our sanctification is a gift of God's grace, but it is mediated through His Word and through our hard labors. It is interesting how frequently the Scriptures speak about the hardness of this labor (**1 Cor. 9:24-27**; 15:58; Eph. 6:10ff; Phil. 2:12; **Col. 1:29**; 1 Tim. 1:18; 4:7-8; 2 Tim. 3:10-12; **Heb. 11:32ff**; **12:3-4**; Js. 5:10-11; 1 Pt. 1:13).

But the hard work of sanctification should not be a deterrent to our pursuit of sanctification. That reality should invigorate our purpose and plan to pursue obedience. In Paul's word in Romans 13 —

IT IS TIME TO INTENTIONALLY ACT ON THE SALVATION WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN.

It is time to aggressively pursue sanctification. In these verses, **Paul calls us** to three actions and provides us one extended motivation for our actions. This morning we consider Paul's final calls to action.

1. It's Time to Do **SOMETHING** (v. 11a)

- In **12:1-2**, Paul made the transition from truth about our position in Christ to what living out the reality of our salvation in particular ways. He summarized what our sanctified lives should look like in vv. 1-2, and then gave multiple particular examples in chs. 12-13. All those things are part of **do this**.
- Paul is calling and exhorting us to sanctification. When we talk about sanctification, we are talking about the process of becoming increasingly like Christ; we have more conduct and character that God calls us to do and be. These verses are Paul's compelling call to take that seriously. Why?

2. **WHY** We Should Take Spiritual Action (vv. 11b-12a)

- We pursue sanctification because there is an accountability to God for believers according to what He has given us to serve Him — we should be cognizant of the immanency of His return and that should be a stimulant to faithfulness (1 Cor. 3:10, 15; 4:5; **2 Cor. 5:10**; Mt. 25:19ff; **2 Pt. 3:10-11**).
- We might sum up these verses: "Christ is coming soon; it is urgent to be sanctified and live out the reality of what He has done for us." When Christ comes He will set all things right for all eternity. Let's prepare for that coming.

3. It's Time to Put Off **SINFUL DEEDS** (vv. 12b, 13, 14b)

• The principle **STATED** (v. 12b)

- ✓ The verb **lay aside** is the idea "stop the sin." We don't continue to engage in the sinful practices that we did when we were unredeemed sinners. Christ died to liberate us from those deeds.
- ✓ Because we are believers in Christ, sin is now contrary to what we are; it is inconceivable that we would continue to cultivate desires and engage in sins that are opposed to what Jesus has saved us to be and do (e.g., **6:1-2**, **11-12**).
- ✓ What are we to lay aside? Put off **the deeds of darkness**, which indicates both where sin comes from (Mt. 6:23) and where sinners will ultimately go (Mt. 25:30).
- ✓ The believer in Christ is now able to put off, stop, and end this madness towards sin and evil. He is not obligated to sin but he is able to be renewed and act and live a renewed life. This is a reminder there is no "I can't" in the spiritual life.

- The principle applied to particular SINS (v. 13)

- ✓ In this verse, Paul addresses sins that are particularly “nighttime sins;” he is building on the idea that it is time to put off the deeds of night and darkness (v. 12). In this list he addresses physical appetites, sexual lusts, and interpersonal conflict. This is not an exhaustive list of sins to put off; in other lists he will address other particular sins (e.g., Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rom. 1:29-31).
- ✓ His point in this verse is two-fold:
 - Pay attention to the variety of sins that might tempt you. Be watchful of every temptation.
 - He is exhorting us to put on eternal living while living in temporal bodies: **Let us behave properly as in the day** — that is let us live as if the day of Christ’s return has already come. We know how we will act then; let us act that way now. It’s akin to what he says in **2 Cor. 5:9**. Don’t do anything now you won’t do in eternity, in God’s presence (you are already in His presence).

- The principle SUMMARIZED (v. 14b)

- ✓ **Make no provision for the flesh** implies that we are prone to making allowances for sin. We don’t take our responsibility to fight against sin seriously. We get lazy. We make excuses. We don’t have a plan to fight against sin. So we give in to temptation and knowingly engage in rebellious sin.
- ✓ Have a plan for the fight, and fight against particular sins. Don’t say, “I need to stop sinning.” Say, “I am particularly inclined to...(lust, materialism/spending, pleasing man, seeking praise, gluttony, anxiousness, anger, defensiveness, vindictiveness) and I will fight against that temptation by...”
- ✓ Understand that those particular sins are also coming from particular desires and beliefs (**Js. 1:14-15** — desire precedes sin) — we do what we do because we want what we want...and we believe what we believe. So identify what you do as well as the motive (“what am I wanting from this sin?”). And don’t make any provision (allowance) for either the sin or the motive. Don’t feed either.

4. It’s Time to Put on CHRIST’S ARMOR (v. 12c, 14a)

- It is necessary to put off every kind of sinful desire and activity. But the more we think about putting it off, the more difficult it can become — “Don’t eat that piece of chocolate cake; don’t finish the last piece of bacon; don’t accept the offer of ice cream; don’t order the hamburger with fries...” can actually lead us to desiring and coveting the sin we are trying to put off all the more (and every other kind of temptation works the same way as those temptations to gluttony). So what do we do?

- The principle STATED (v. 12c)

- ✓ It’s not enough to take off our dirty yard working clothes before we go to the dinner party; we need a shower and our tuxedo or finest attire. And the same is true spiritually; we don’t need to just stop sinning, but we also need to start doing the righteous (God-intended) corresponding act to the sin.
- ✓ We need a righteous replacement for our sins; we need to put on the righteous desire and activity that leads us to Christ and that corresponds to the corrupting sin that leads us away from Christ.

- ✓ So Paul says, **Put on the armor of light** (v. 12c) —instead of doing things that correspond to living in the evil darkness, we put on the actions and attitudes that correspond to the righteous light of Christ and His heavenly kingdom. It's similar to **behave properly as in the day** (v. 13a).
- ✓ As with the word “put off,” when he says **put on** he is talking about being purposeful and he means that this is now something we *can* do; when we did not believe in Christ, we could not obey and please God, but now that we are in Christ we can please Him — so do that!
- ✓ One simple question I ask is, “Did Christ die to liberate me *to do this*, or to liberate me *from this*?”
- ✓ Here he also uses the word **armor** — he uses that term elsewhere (**1 Thess. 5:8**; **Is. 59:17**; Eph. 6:13-17). Rather than focus on what the pieces of armor are, let us just notice that he is using warfare imagery. It's a battle. It's a fight. It's hard work. He uses similar imagery in his final letter (**2 Tim. 2:4-6**). Too often, we lose the fight against sin because we are unwilling to “go into training” and do the hard things to fight — we want to be Olympic athletes who train by watching movies and eating buckets of popcorn. Friends, the life of obedience is a fight to which we have been called by God (**1 Tim. 1:18**; 6:12; **2 Tim. 4:7**). The quest to be godly is a fight and it always will be. Anytime we don't think it's a fight and we stop preparing for the fight, we will give in to the flesh.
- ✓ “Christians cannot afford to remain in the unprotected condition of scantily clothed sleepers at a time when the situation calls for ‘armor.’” [Fitzmyer] Get in the fight and grab your armor...

- The principle applied to one PARTICULAR desire (v. 14a)

- ✓ The particular armor we are to put on is — **the Lord Jesus Christ** (v. 14).
 - Notice the three-fold title and name of Jesus —
 - ... **Lord** = put on His mastery of you (submission to Him),
 - ... **Jesus** = His attributes as the sinless, incarnate Jesus, who fought sin by the Spirit (Lk. 4:1, 14)
 - ... **Christ** = His attributes as the exalted God and Messiah and has wed us as His bride...
 - ... This is the fulness of all that Christ is as the eternal God-Man — there is no greater contrast between what He is and the vices we are commanded to put off in v. 13.
 - To “put on” Jesus is not some mystical process, but has at least two components to it:
 - ... First, it means to appropriate His righteousness as our own: we stop claiming our “righteousness” as that which puts us in right standing with God, but we claim Christ's righteousness as our own, which it is (**5:18-19**)! It is to claim Christ as our full identity:

No condemnation now I dread;
 Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
 Alive in Him, my living Head,
 And clothed in righteousness divine,
 Bold I approach the eternal throne,
 And claim the crown, through Christ my own. [Charles Wesley]

... Secondly, it infers that we are to practice those actions and cultivate those desires which *emulate* Jesus Christ. “Be like Jesus, your Lord.” We imitate the One with whom we are identified. So, to put on Christ means we have been identified with Jesus Christ (6:3), so we live the way He lived (6:4) — we are following His example.

- Do you remember 8:29? We have been saved to live so that He is the firstborn — the pre-eminent and most important Person anywhere and at any time. That’s Paul’s intent.
- We see an illustration of this in Phil. 3:12-16 (esp. v. 16) — we are identified with Christ, so we pursue with vigor the life Christ has designed for us (12) and the kind of life we have in Glory (14), so that our lives measure up to the standard of our position in Christ (v. 16).
- “...we are consciously to embrace Christ in such a way that his character is manifested in all that we do and say.” [Moo] We want Him and we want to do things that emulate Him.
 - ... So instead of deceiving and lying, we speak truth in gracious ways (Eph. 4:25)
 - ... Instead of anger and conflict, we are reconcilers (Eph. 4:26)
 - ... Instead of stealing, we work and give (Eph. 4:28)
 - ... Instead of using words to harm and destroy, we speak to encourage and edify (4:29)
 - ... Instead of pursuing immorality and impurity, we love our wives and husbands (Col. 3:5)
 - ... Instead of complaining about others we patiently forgive others (Col. 3:13)
- ✓ Sin will always entice us when we have not savored Christ. When we don’t run to Christ, enjoy Christ and delight in Christ, sinful desires and activities will inevitably captivate and control us.
- ✓ The way out of sin is to abide (live) in Christ — to enjoy Him and also the gifts He gives us in the way He intends us to enjoy them.

A mind that is set on the things above spends an awful lot of time thinking about things on the earth. Family, neighbors, church, job, earthly responsibilities—the person governed by heavenly things intentionally and deliberately considers and engages them. The heavenly mind-set is profoundly earthy, but it is fundamentally oriented by the glory of Christ. So then, in Colossians 3 and 4, Paul is teaching us that we must not orient our lives by earthly things. This is idolatry and produces all manner of sinfulness. Instead, we must orient our lives by the things above, by Christ, by the hope of glory. But once we’ve oriented our lives by Christ, then we spend considerable time and attention on living in the world and engaging with the things of earth. We set our minds on things above, and then we live integrated, earthly lives. We aim to love God supremely and fully, and then we love our neighbors as ourselves, as an expression of our highest love. As a result, our lives are suffused with gratitude, with music, with truth, and all of it governed by affections that are set on Christ, who is seated at God’s right hand above. [Rigney, *The Things of Earth*, 102.]

- To pursue Christ doesn’t mean don’t enjoy technology — it means to enjoy it as an expression of intelligence and creativity and ingenuity that reveals the nature of God.

- To pursue Christ doesn't mean don't enjoy steak or chipotle peppers or hot fudge on a bowl of Blue Bell — it means to enjoy it with gratitude as a good gift that He has given us to point us to the One who loves to give graciously and generously.
- To pursue Christ doesn't mean I can't enjoy going for a walk with Raye Jeanne or smile when I hear her voice on the phone or look forward to an evening watching a movie with her — it means I love her and delight in her *because* I delight in Christ.
- So, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and to pursue Him above all else means to enjoy every good gift He has given us the way He has intended us to enjoy them (not ultimately) as an expression of our delight in Him. In that way, a Christian should have more joy in the things of this world — baseball games, sex, good books and movies, sunsets, red convertible 1963 Corvettes — than anyone else. We enjoy those things because we know the One who has given them to us.
- ✓ Sin will lose its grip on our hearts when we cling to Christ and His purposes for our lives. Put off sin and fight against the flesh by cultivating your passion for Christ and Christ's ways.
- ✓ We love and practice sin because we don't love and practice Christlikeness. The expulsive power of a new affection for Christ will diminish your affection for sin.
- ✓ It's time to get fight the fight of faith and fight against sin by fighting for Christ.

Sanctification Summarized:

- **Don't do something UNGODLY** — put off the sinful inclinations (desires) and activities in your life
 - ✓ You no longer are identified with Adam; you are not bound by sin or obligated to sin. You can stop.
 - ✓ So develop a warlike mentality against sin and aggressively work to stop.
- **Do something GODLY** — put on the godly inclinations (desires) and activities of a Christ-satisfied life.
 - ✓ Replace sinful actions with their corresponding righteous replacements.
 - ✓ Enjoy everything you have in life as an expression of your satisfaction in Christ.
- **Think something CHRISTLIKE** — renew your mind by thinking a new (Christ-honoring) way
 - ✓ Putting off sin and putting on righteousness means we need to think in new ways. We can't keep thinking the way the world thinks.
 - ✓ To be sanctified begins with thinking God's thoughts — which come from His Word (12:1-2).

CONCLUSION: As those who have been saved by God and are being sanctified by Christ, we have an opportunity to demonstrate that we are His by coming to the communion table...

BENEDICTION: **Romans 8:35-39**