

LIVE IN THE LIGHT

When an actor or actress accepts a role in a movie, he/she must often go through a number of physical appearance changes by the use of various forms of make up as well as the clothes they wear. They must become a different person in order to properly portray the role of the person they're representing. If you talk to an actor about their various roles, many will admit they come to feel like the person they're portraying in the play or movie over the course of that production.

Last week we spent a lot of time discussing what Paul represents in Romans 13:14 as "*putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.*" And before we clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, we first have to take off our old clothes of worldliness and sinfulness. It's a marvelous concept and it not only applies to non-Christians who become Christians (believers), but also to those who are already Christians. The bottom line is that when we clothe ourselves, as in a robe, with Jesus Christ **we have the potential power to be as perfect** as He is. Just as the actor or actress has the ability to become a new person when he/she puts on make up and a costume, you and I have the ability to become a new person when we are clothed with Jesus Christ. The only difference is with Christ it is real, we're not playing a game. When we are clothed with Jesus Christ we are given the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us in all we do, if we only merely submit ourselves to Him in every aspect of our life. It is as if we have a filter around us to regulate everything that comes at us from the outside world as well as to filter everything that goes forth from us.

If we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in every aspect of our lives, He will provide that guidance. If we attempt to do anything on our own, without asking for that help, we are bound to fail and to sin. Some people think that provides for a pretty boring and dull existence, but the truth is that it provides love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control that is not available to a non-believer.

If some Hollywood producer came along and asked you if you would like to play the role of Jesus in a movie, would you be able to represent Jesus as He was because you have wrapped Him around you and allowed Him to penetrate your heart? That should be our goal because we as believers have been given the responsibility, and the role in this world, to represent who Jesus was and is through our actions, behaviors, and even our thoughts. You might want to think about the possibility of being offered an Oscar by God when you get to Heaven, because your behavior in this life has been based on your willingness to love God and others. For that is what will determine your rewards. And remember those rewards won't be given to people who run around doing things they think will please God. The rewards will only be for those who first admit they are sinners in need of a Savior and accept Jesus Christ as that Savior. Then they attempt to follow those two consolidated commandments that Jesus brought in the New Testament:

Love God and love everyone else. In that way you will be able to keep all of God's laws.

We discussed this at length a few weeks ago. Also, by doing so, you will be living within

God's will, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and doing the things that God wants you to do, not the things that you think will bring you reward. With that said, let's conclude our study in Romans 13 by continuing to examine the richness of the text Paul provides us in Romans 13:11-14. And I believe it would be a good time also to review the whole chapter so that we'll have a complete overall view of what Paul is teaching in Romans 13. So lets read Romans 13, beginning at verse 1 (ESV):

1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,

4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

6 For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

9 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: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.

14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

We'll pick up here again on the idea of what it means to put on the Lord Jesus Christ because it's the key idea not only to this passage, but to Christian living as well. Christians are to be like Christ.

When we come to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior we are covered, so to speak, with the garment of Jesus from the top of our head to the bottom of our feet. So when God looks at us, He sees Jesus in all His perfection, the one who never sinned. Therefore, God does not see our sin. Jesus then is our ticket into a sinless Heaven at which time we will be given new bodies that will also be without sin. We will then be just like Christ.

Now Paul's command to put on Jesus Christ also applies to those Christians who have already been saved. How can that be? If you've already covered yourself with Jesus and you're saved, what else is there to do? Well, it's one thing to be saved and it's another thing to act like it. Once we're saved we can't just put on our pajamas, climb up on the roof and wait for Jesus to return.

Once we're saved it's time to start acting like people who are saved. Thus we need to continue covering ourselves with Jesus through His Word in the Bible and through prayer and meditation. That's what it means to put on Jesus and continue to keep that covering on. That's what a Christian should do. A Christian should keep covering Himself with Jesus so that they can become more and more like Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3:18:

18 And all of us have had that veil removed so that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more.

This says that by looking at Jesus' glory we can be transformed into that same glory by the Holy Spirit. The more we let the Holy Spirit work in us, the more we become like Christ. The more space the Holy Spirit has in our hearts and minds, the more we reflect the glory of Jesus through our attitude and actions. Paul is calling us to live pure lives just as Jesus lived His life.

Paul calls for basically the same thing in Titus 2:11-14:

11 For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people.

12 And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God,

13 while we look forward to that wonderful event when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed.

14 He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing what is right.

We're to live our lives with the same kind of discipline that Jesus did. Don't put on a

robe of unrighteousness and allow the world to control your lives. Put on the robe of Jesus Christ and allow Him to control your life so that you can be joyous and free. For a Christian there is no place for ungodliness. Thomas Manton, a great English Puritan writer of the seventeenth century, made a statement I hope you'll not forget. He said that:

“Every corruption has a voice.”

That is a statement that penetrates right to the core of what Paul is saying in these verses. The voices of corruption call loudly within us, don't they? They also call loudly outside of us and they try to pull us into evil. We all have these voices calling within us because ungodliness has a voice and that voice cries out against the will of God. Now, of course, I'm speaking metaphorically, so don't run out and tell everyone you know, along with the Chicago Tribune and Fox News that Ron Teed says everybody hears demons calling to them audibly from within their minds. But I believe you know what I'm referring to, that pull we feel to satisfy what John writes about in 1 John 2:15-17:

15 Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you.

16 For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world.

17 And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves. BUT IF YOU DO THE WILL OF GOD, YOU WILL LIVE FOREVER.

But saving grace has a voice as well and that voice teaches us to deny ungodliness and to deny worldly lusts. Therein lies the battle that rages within us. In Titus 2:12, Paul told us that we are to live with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God. We have to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly lusts that are contrary to the Word of God. Going back to Romans 13:11-14, we see again that the second coming of Christ is the motivation for the believer's obedience. Paul gets right down to it and says:

“Wake up! Cast off unrighteousness and put on the righteousness of Jesus Christ because He's coming back and He could come back when you least expect it; maybe even today. And if He doesn't come back today, you may die today and that will be the end for you. So stop wasting time. Do what you can in His service because whether He comes back or you die that will be the end of your time to accomplish God's will for your life.”¹

Some of you may be thinking that a thousand years or two thousand years is a long time to wait, and Jesus hasn't come back yet. Don't forget, however what Peter said in 2 Peter 3:8:

¹ Paraphrase (Ron Teed)..

8 But you must not forget, dear friends, that a day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day.

And look what James wrote in James 4:14:

14 How do you know what will happen tomorrow? For your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone.

There's a brevity to decades of a lifetime and even centuries of history when compared to an endless eternity. This age is soon coming to an end, and the dawning of Christ's kingdom is breaking through the darkness. So it is time for you to wake up. You can't be sleeping when humankind's day is coming to an end and God's day is so very near.

Having been a student of Bible prophesies for some time and especially those relating to the end times and the second coming of Christ, I can tell you that there are enough events taking place in this world that have the potential for satisfying Bible prophesy that the end could be coming soon. It would not surprise me if Jesus returned within the life time of some of us in this room. It's time to wake up, put on Jesus Christ, and carry the message of the Gospel to as many people as possible. If you want some added motivation to do this, look with me at 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9:

7 And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted and also for us when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven. He will come with his mighty angels,

8 in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus.

9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power.

Paul says it's going to be terrible for all those who don't know Jesus as Savior when He finally does come. This should not only be a great motivation for believers to take the message to those who are in such danger, but think what a great motivation it should be for those who are not yet saved.

The Bible says that anyone who doesn't know Jesus when they die or on the day He returns will spend eternity in the torment of Hell.

If you're a non-believer here today and that kind of statement makes you fighting mad, we'll be glad to give you passage after passage in Scripture that confirms what we're telling you the Bible says. Even though it makes you mad, maybe it will get you to thinking, "*What if it's true? What if the Bible isn't just a story book like I've always believed? What if unbelievers do go to Hell?*" Then perhaps you'll at least say to God something like:

“If I've been wrong God, I'm open to your truth. I certainly don't want to spend eternity in torment. The few years I've

had on this earth are bad enough. I'm willing to come to this church and listen to what your Bible has to say, to ask questions, and pray. Please help me to see the truth."

Village Church has a website. That website is equipped to receive your questions and we promise to get back to you with an answer to those questions within a reasonable time. Why not give it a try. I'm 100% certain you won't be disappointed.

If you would like even more motivation you might want to turn to 2 Corinthians 5:10:

10 For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in our bodies.

The time will come when we stand before Jesus, and although believers are not going to be condemned for their sin, Christ already bore our condemnation, we are going to be judged on whether what we've done is good or useless. When we stand before Christ we want to be commended for being faithful to the One that we say we love. If we know He's coming it should change the way we behave. I can remember when my dad would be away for a couple of days on business and I would take some liberties that I normally wouldn't take. But when mom would say dad is coming home tomorrow, I would really change my behavior. The knowledge of his return had an impact on my behavior. So it should be with the coming return of Jesus. He's going to come and evaluate our service to Him.

Colossians 3:8-10 says:

8 But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language.

9 Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds.

10 In its place you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you.

Get rid of that stuff. Throw it off. It has no place in your life. So wake up, realize what time it is. We're living in a time in history when the next event on the Messianic calendar is the coming of Jesus Christ. We don't know when it will be. It will happen at an unexpected moment when we think it will least happen. He will come as a thief in the night as Peter says, which means that He's not going to announce it, it's going to be a surprise.

Returning to Romans 13, Paul goes on to say now that you're awake and you realize it's almost morning get rid of your night clothes. The idea here is of a soldier and the soldier has been wearing party clothes and participating in a wild orgy all through the night, and he's finally fallen asleep at dawn and he's still clothed in the clothes of his wild night. The commander says, 'Wake up, it's almost dawn, get off the night clothes that you've

been wearing and get on your armor." That's what verse 12 says, get ready for a day of battle. When the day comes you don't want to be found in the clothes of your wild orgy, you want to be looking respectable as the soldier that you are. The world may be having a wild party and somewhere along the way you may have decided to put on the garments with them and do what they've been doing, but it's time for you to get that stuff off because Jesus is coming, and when He gets here you want to be sure that you appear as the soldier that you should be.

The Lord here is talking about purity, first urgency and then purity. Cast off the works of darkness, and darkness is always a metaphor for sin and evil. We're to put those things off. Do you want to be found that way when the Lord comes? Do you want to be found dressed in the dark garments that the world wears, doing the things that the world does, or do you want to be found as one who belongs to Christ? Listen to Job 24. Listen to Job describing evil, Job 24 :13-17:

13 "Wicked people rebel against the light. They refuse to acknowledge its ways. They will not stay in its paths.

14 The murderer rises in the early dawn to kill the poor and needy; at night he is a thief.

15 The adulterer waits for the twilight, for he says, 'No one will see me then.' He masks his face so no one will know him.

16 They break into houses at night and sleep in the daytime. They are not acquainted with the light.

17 The black night is their morning. They ally themselves with the terrors of the darkness.

Those who commit sin do so in the dark hoping they won't be discovered. So they do their thievery in the night, they do their adultery in the night, they do their murder in the night, they do their rebellion in the night. The world is a world of darkness. The world is wearing the garments of evil, either engaging in the wild parties or sleeping it off, but the dawn is coming, and it is high time for Christians to be sure in the coming dawn that they are not caught in wearing the garments of the world. We cannot be found that way and we must throw off the works of darkness.

What are those works? First of all Paul mentions as an illustration the kind of things we are not to have in our lives, the word *reveling* or *orgies*, which means carousing or wild partying through the night, drinking, dancing, music. Late night drinking with sex and music were the common occurrence in the time of the apostle Paul. So what he says is this is a part of the darkness, this is not a part of the Christian's experience. We have no place in a drunken party, we have no place in a brawling barroom. We have no place in carousing around the streets late at night up to no good. That is typical of the sin of darkness. We see it again in Galatians 5:19-21:

19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure,

20 idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group,

21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

No Christian is to engage in that kind of activity. It is a typical scene of the darkness. We are to have no part in those things at all. To revelry Paul adds the word drunkenness, which is of course a parallel idea because wild parties usually include drinking and drunkenness. This verse refers to a drinking bout. Who can guzzle the most? This is an intentional drunkenness, not inadvertent, but trying to consume as much as possible. This goes on in our society all the time. But we who come to Jesus Christ and live in the light of His second coming, and put on the armor of light and throw off the garments of darkness, say good-bye to all wild parties and drunkenness for good. Instead we become intoxicated with the thing God advocates: the Holy Spirit and ministry (Ephesians 5:18 and 1 Corinthians 16:15 KJV)

Then Paul adds two more categories in verse 13, immorality or lewdness and lust or shamelessness. Immorality refers to the bed that the drunkard finds himself in. It is the bed of fornication, the bed of adultery. Shamelessness or lust means to be without shame. It means to indulge yourself in sin without any remorse. It is the parading of senseless, shameless vice, with no restraint. It is unbridled sexual perversion and evil that knows no shame. It's indulging in porn on the internet. I can understand how people can stumble into sin. People can be drawn and attracted into sin when they are weak, but it's harder to understand how people can indulge themselves in those sins and carry no sense of shame about it, almost parading it down the main street of town as if it's something to be proud about. There is no thought of decency. There is no thought of honor. There is an abandonment to shamelessness. That too is part of the sins of the darkness. People who have become so enslaved to evil desire that they no longer feel any shame.

Then he adds two others, strife and envying. The word strife means to fight. It's the spirit of antagonistic competitiveness. It's the spirit that says "*I'm going to get what I want even if I have to step on your neck to do it.*" It comes basically out of a heart's desire for power and prominence and a desire to possess everything no matter what anyone else will have to forfeit in the process. It's a spirit that's intolerant of anyone else's success or possessions. A spirit that would steal everything from everybody if it could get away with it. It knows no humility. It's the spirit that says "*I want it all for me and I want it right now and I don't care what I have to do to get it.*" This is so characteristic of fallen human beings.

Finally Paul addresses the sin of envying. If you live for number one you will certainly envy anything anyone else possesses. All of these according to Paul are passions of the darkness. There is no place in the life of a believer for any of these things and if you see anything in your life remotely related to those things, throw it off. They are garments of the night and no Christian should be found wearing them when the dawn breaks and the

Savior arrives. Throw them off! That's Paul's call to us. Paul wrote this to Titus, in Titus 3:1-8:

- 1 Remind your people to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good.*
- 2 They must not speak evil of anyone, and they must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone.*
- 3 Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled by others and became slaves to many wicked desires and evil pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy. We hated others, and they hated us.*
- 4 But then God our Savior showed us his kindness and love.*
- 5 He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit.*
- 6 He generously poured out the Spirit upon us because of what Jesus Christ our Savior did.*
- 7 He declared us not guilty because of his great kindness. And now we know that we will inherit eternal life.*
- 8 These things I have told you are all true. I want you to insist on them so that everyone who trusts in God will be careful to do good deeds all the time. These things are good and beneficial for everyone.*

There are Christians, far too many I'm afraid, that indulge themselves in the sins we've been talking about. Maybe they stay on the fringes of the wild parties and the drunkenness. Maybe they're just on the edges of immorality and shamelessness and envy, but they're still wearing the garments of the night. So Paul says, "You better put them off. *The morning is almost here and you don't want to be found wearing those garments when Jesus arrives.*" So Paul's final point in this chapter is to "*Put On the Lord Jesus Christ.*" If we're Christians we should have the integrity to wear the garment of a Christian. There's no integrity in someone who says, "*I am a Christian. I have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ, but over that righteousness I choose to wear the garments of the darkness.*" I'm amazed and appalled at the life styles of many people who claim to be Christians. Too often, you cannot distinguish a Christian from a non-Christian by looking at their behavior.

The imagery is a call to the Christian soldier saying wake up and throw off the garments of the world and put on the armor of light. The dawn is coming and you want to be found in proper attire doing your proper duty when your Commander arrives.

Light in verse 12 represents holiness. Light is the symbol of purity. Light is the symbol of being sinless. In 2 Peter 3:10-14, Peter writes:

- 10 But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and everything in them will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be exposed to judgment.*

11 Since everything around us is going to melt away, what holy, godly lives you should be living!

12 You should look forward to that day and hurry it along—the day when God will set the heavens on fire and the elements will melt away in the flames.

13 But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world where everyone is right with God.

14 And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to live a pure and blameless life. And be at peace with God.

Show us a Christian who is wearing the garments of darkness and we'll show you a Christian who isn't living in the constant hope of the coming of Jesus Christ. The two are incompatible. You can't be saying that you're waiting for Jesus to come, you can't say with John, "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus," (Revelation 22:20) when you're clothing yourselves in the garments of darkness. The idea here is to see putting on Jesus as we would see putting on armor, and that we're involved in a battle. I know there are many Christians who don't understand the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged. The imagery is of a Christian putting on armor so that he/she can fight in a battle (Ephesians 6:10-18). This is a battle we are engaged in, and putting on armor is the same thing as putting on Jesus Christ. Verse 13 of Romans 13, reemphasizes that we are to walk as citizens of the day. This is integrity.

Now examine your own life in the light of these things. Do you look at your own life and feel a sense of urgency? If not, it's time for you to wake up. It's time for us to start directing our emphasis on living to the reality of the coming return of Jesus Christ. So many of us waste so much time. We need to live with a sense of urgency. When Jesus comes we want to be found blameless. We want to hear Him say, "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*" Let's close by reading a couple of more passages that are key to what we've been discussing. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10:

1 I really don't need to write to you about how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters.

2 For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.

3 When people are saying, "All is well; everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall upon them as suddenly as a woman's birth pains begin when her child is about to be born. And there will be no escape.

4 But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief.

5 For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night.

6 So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be sober.

7 Night is the time for sleep and the time when people get drunk.

8 But let us who live in the light think clearly, protected by the body armor

of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.

9 For God decided to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us.

10 He died for us so that we can live with him forever, whether we are dead or alive at the time of his return.

In 1 John 3, there are two verses we must consider before we close, 1 John 3:2-3:

2 Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, and we can't even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when he comes we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.

When Jesus comes, we'll instantly be like Him.

3 And all who believe this will keep themselves pure, just as Christ is pure.

John is saying that if you live your life in light of the second coming, that will purify your heart, your attitude, and your actions..

Let us take that thought with us as we leave here today.