

The Night is Far Spent, The Day is at Hand

Romans 13:11–14 ESV

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.

Introduction

Today is the first Sunday in Advent.

Advent is a season of preparation and expectation leading up to Christmas.

Because of this, many of the traditional readings used for the Sundays in Advent focus on the themes of the coming of the Kingdom and our proper response to the Kingdom's arrival.

It is similar to the theme that you find in many of Jesus' "Kingdom Parables".

The king is coming to establish his reign.

Will the servants be ready when he arrives?

This morning's sermon text comes from the end of Paul's letter to the Romans.

In these verses Paul emphasizes similar themes.

Throughout Romans, Paul has taught of the good news of the risen Son of David.

Here, at the end of Romans, Paul exhorts the Romans to live in the light of Jesus' kingdom.

In these verses Paul calls the Romans to know one thing and to do two things in light of that knowledge.

As such, I have divided this morning's sermon into three parts along those lines:

1. Know the Time
2. Cast off the works of Darkness
3. Put on the Armor of Light

Know the Time

Verse 11 begins with Paul reminding the Romans that they "know the time".

Throughout the passage Paul repeatedly employs the terminology of day and night and light and darkness to this end.

In verse 11 Paul tells the Romans that it is time for them to wake from sleep.

In verse 12 he writes "The night is far gone; the day is at hand."

Then, In verse 13 he calls the Romans to “walk properly as in the daytime.”

The Sun is Risen in Christ

The scriptures speak of the time before Christ as the night and the advent of Christ as the coming of the day.

We sang the “Benedictus” as our hymn of ascent this morning.

Those words come from the prophecy of Zechariah at the beginning of Luke’s Gospel after the birth of his son John the Baptizer.

Zechariah prophecies over John that he would be “the prophet of the Most High” and that he would go before the Lord to prepare his ways.

He then goes on to say that “because of the tender mercy of our God, the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

John the Baptist would be the one who prepares the way for Christ.

And when the Christ appears, he will be like the rising of the sun a world shrouded in darkness.

Zechariah’s words allude to a prophecy in [Malachi 4:2](#), where the Lord speaks through his prophet Malachi saying,

Malachi 4:2 ESV

² But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.

Malachi’s prophecy describes the advent messiah as the rising of the “sun of righteousness”.

Mind you, that’s “sun”, like the sun in the sky, and not “son” like a father’s son.

Likewise, in [Revelation 22:16](#), Jesus describes himself as, “the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

Jesus describes himself as the fulfillment of Balaam’s prophecy from [Numbers 24:17](#) when he prophesied:

Numbers 24:17 ESV

¹⁷ I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.

The star that rises from Jacob is the Morning Star, the star that herald’s in the new day.

The Moon

Something of great interest to note is that, before the coming of Christ, Israel’s calendar was governed by the moon.

And, as [Gen 1:16](#) states, God placed the moon in the heavens to rule the night.

The light of the moon waxes and wains and is completely dependent on the light of the sun.

The purpose of the moon is to reflect the light of the sun.

But now that the sun has risen, the light of the moon is no longer needed, and the whole world is illumined in the Sun's light.

Here in [Romans 13](#), Paul is telling the Romans what time it is.

It is the time of Christ, the Dayspring from on high, the sun of righteousness, and the morning star.

The day has dawned in Christ, and the Romans, and all Christians must live in the light of Christ.

Which is why Paul goes on to provide two commands that mirror each other:

First, Christians must cast off the works of darkness.

Second, Christians must put on the armor of light.

Cast Off the Works of Darkness

In verse 12 Paul states that, "The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness."

What Paul does here in these verses is something Paul does regularly throughout his letters.

It is what scholars often describe as the indicative and the imperative.

First, Paul states something that is true.

He indicates something.

Then, Paul tells Christians how to live in light of that truth.

He gives an imperative or a command.

Because it is no longer night, Christians should cast off the works of darkness.

In verse 13 Paul builds on this by calling the Romans to "**walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.**"

Paul presents three sets of activities that constitute the "works of darkness" that Christians should "cast off".

- i. Orgies and drunkenness
- ii. Sexual immorality and sensuality
- iii. And quarreling and jealousy

For the most part, these are the kinds of activities that occur at night and in the darkness.

Christians are to "cast off" these works because Christians are people of the daytime, the time of Christ.

They are "Christ People" and the advent of Christ has shed light on the world of darkness.

And all those who walk in the works of darkness will be exposed by the light of Christ.

So they must "cast off those works".

To understand what Paul is writing about here it is important to have a little understanding about the Greco-Roman world that he was writing in.

Various Greco-Roman authors describe the debauchery of certain parties in the Greco-Roman world and the details are shocking.

When Paul writes of “orgies and drunkenness” and “sexual immorality and sensuality” you must understand that these were things that would, as one pastor puts it, “make a frat party look tame”.

That same pastor described it as, “Spring Break in Las Vegas with Caligula as the M.C.”

If you know anything about the Roman Emperor Caligula then you’ll understand what that means.

But what is especially interesting about this fact is that Paul still believes it necessary to warn the Roman Christians against such extreme works of darkness.

When you hear these works of darkness described, you may be tempted to think that it would be unnecessary for Christians to be warned against such things.

But the Apostle Paul thinks otherwise.

For Paul, the fact that the Romans are Christians does not make him think they don’t need to be warned.

This means that you too must be warned.

We live in a world of similar sexual immorality and sensuality.

We live in a culture that has been entirely pornographed.

And it would be foolish for any preacher to say to himself,

“My church is filled with Christians, surely they wouldn’t be tempted by such debauchery.”

But Paul knew what we must also come to know.

Even Christians can be tempted toward the works of darkness.

Satan and all his works, the vain pomp and false glory of the world with all its covetous desires, and the sinful inclinations of the flesh, all work to draw you into such works of darkness.

But you must hear what Paul tells the Romans.

Cast them off! For the night is far gone and the day is at hand. It’s time to walk properly as in the daytime.

And this brings us to our final section which is to put on the armor of light.

Put on the Armor of Light

Paul’s negative command is to cast off the works of darkness but his positive command is to “Put on the armor of light”.

The word translated “armor” here is literally “weapons” and gets translated as “weapons” elsewhere in the New Testament.

Christians are to cast off the works of darkness and put on the weapons of light.

For Paul, the life of the Christian is a battle.

Christians are in a battle and they need to wield weapons against their enemies and dawn armor to defend against the attacks of their enemies.

In [2 Corinthians 6](#) Paul speaks of his own ministry as a battle that he wages with “the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left.”

In [1 Corinthians 10](#) Paul states that the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

And in [Eph 6](#) Paul calls the Ephesians to take up the whole armor of God in order to stand in the evil day.

As Christians, putting off the works of darkness means fighting against them because they aren't easily put off.

But in order to fight against them you must put on the weapons of light.

And, as you find throughout the New Testament, the weapons of light are nothing other than the adornment of virtue and righteousness.

We fight darkness by putting on light.

We fight evil by walking in righteousness.

And, as we find throughout the New Testament, putting on light, walking in righteousness and virtue, is done by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ (as Paul states in verse 14).

The way we walk properly as in the daytime of Christ's advent.

The way we put off the works of darkness, and make no provisions for the flesh.

And the way we dawn the armor of light...

is all done by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.

To put on Christ is the way of the Christian life and the end of the Christian life.

And it is for this reason, that putting on Christ, and being found in Christ, is perhaps the most prevalent theme in the apostles' writings.

In my studies this week I came across a truly beautiful quotation on putting on Christ from Saint John Chrysostom's homily on [Romans 13](#).

I'd like to conclude with Chrysostom's words on verse 14 where Paul calls us to “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ”.

Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 1.11: Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans (Catholic Edition) Homily XXIV

In saying, “Put on Christ,” Paul bids us be girt about with [Christ] upon every side. As in another place he says, “But if Christ be in you.” ([Rom. 8:10](#).) And again, “That Christ may dwell in the inner man.” ([Eph. 3:16, 17](#)) For He would have our soul to be a dwelling for Himself, and Himself to be laid round about us as a garment, that He may be unto us all things both from within and from without. For He is our fulness; for He is “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all” ([Eph. 1:23](#))...

For what is there that He is not minded to be to us, when He makes us cleave and fit on to Him in every way?...Be persuaded then, and rousing thee from sleep, put Him on, and when thou hast done so, give thy flesh up to His bridle.

This Advent, we confess that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Dayspring from on High, has dawned on our darkness that we might live in his light.

Let us put on Christ this morning and walk in the daytime.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!