

ISH
Redefining ISH
Romans 13:11-14

What do people SEE when they see YOU? Do they still see the SAME you that they have always seen, or do they see the you that is being TRANSFORMED? For the last seven weeks, we have spent our time examining the ways in which our lives can be much more than ISH. Our Christian lives were never meant to be mediocre, average, “same-old, same-old” lives. We were CREATED to be DIFFERENT. We were saved to stand out; both from the “crowd,” and from what we WERE *before we knew Christ!*

Honestly, I’m not sure what some of you are looking for in your Christian life. I think that many of you are either satisfied with your current state of “ISHyness,” or that you simply DO NOT KNOW how to move from where you are to where you need to be. I hope and pray that you are in the last category. I have nothing to offer those who are satisfied with “ChristianISH” COMPLACENCY. But I LOVE to offer help and encouragement to those who are passionate about GROWING in their walk with Christ. That is what our FINAL MESSAGE in this series is about. **Today, I want to REDEFINE ISH. I want to give it a totally new meaning that will inspire and encourage you to live the kind of life that Christ made possible for us. Would you like to redefine ISH with me today? I hope so!**

In the first message in this series, we saw that the Apostle Paul challenged us to DEDICATE our BODIES to God as a living sacrifice. In light of his great mercies to us, this is nothing more than our “reasonable service!” In Romans 12-13, Paul then wrote about how we should live as dedicated servants. I believe that our FOCAL PASSAGE today brings us back to that concept using a beautiful word picture. **Romans 13:14 AMP**

14 But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for [nor even think about gratifying] the flesh in regard to its improper desires.

Paul encourages us to “clothe ourselves in Christ” as we would put on a beautiful outer garment! He is telling us to clothe ourselves in the purity and richness of his PRESENCE. That is quite a thought. Every time I see a bride dressed in a beautiful wedding gown, I think of this principle. Now, I have been at weddings when I heard people whispering in the background, “Why is SHE wearing WHITE?” We all know what they mean! **But the beauty of the wedding ceremony is the fact that the white wedding dress is a symbol of the COVENANT that makes the bride pure. The groom has CHOSEN her, and his love for her and their mutual covenant proclaims her pure. This is one reason why Ephesians compares our salvation to Christ and his purified Church. Even though we were broken sinners when Christ found us, he has made us perfect and holy in his sight.** And now we have the ABILITY to LIVE out of the purity that he has produced within us. We can literally be enveloped in the righteous presence of Christ. But we must CHOOSE to do so!

In this passage, Paul is instructing those who are ALREADY SAVED to “[put on the Lord Jesus Christ.](#)” This is not instruction about finding salvation; it is instruction about making our PRACTICE MATCH our POSITION. If you are already saved, then you need to practice the presence of God in such a way that your outward life REFLECTS his inner work of transformation. He has already made you a “new creation” in Christ, and now he wants you to MODEL that DESIGNER FASHION in your everyday life! As Paul said in Romans 12:1-2, you ARE saved, so you should begin to THINK saved, so that you will learn to ACT saved. Let me simplify it: **Christ IN you should always result in Christ ON you!** [You cannot spend time with Christ in his Word and in prayer and in constant fellowship without becoming like him!](#) [The more you connect intimately with Christ, the more you will ACT LIKE CHRIST.](#)

This is what I mean when I say that it is time for us to REDEFINE ISH. **From now on, when you see or hear the term ISH, I want you to think this: I SEE HIM.** When you look at yourself in the mirror, I want you to be so active in following Christ that you cannot help but say, “I SEE HIM.” When others see you at the office or in the duck blind or at the school, I want them to see such a change in you because of Christ that they have to admit: I SEE HIM! I even want the demons to admit this as well (this is why they said, [“Jesus I know and Paul I know . . .”](#)) Wouldn’t that be an AWESOME, life-changing experience?

Some of you may now be asking the question: **So, how do I clothe myself in the presence of Christ?** How do I redefine ISH so that everyone around me sees Christ in me. It all sounds so MYSTICAL. Well, I want to make it as clear and practical as I possibly can. The following three phrases demonstrate the ACTIVE PARTICIPATION with the Holy Spirit that is REQUIRED of anyone who would redefine ISH. Ready?

WAKE UP!

Romans 13:11 NLT

11This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

Did you know that God wants to do something great through you during your short stay on earth? Some of you have an amazing window open in your life right now where God could accomplish remarkable things through you, but you do not even see it because you are ASLEEP! Oh, that you would wake up! [Sleep is defined in the dictionary as being a “state in which the body is not active and the mind is unconscious.”](#) That about sums it up. It is not that you CANNOT wake up; it is that you WILL NOT wake up. Every morning my wife wakes up sometime around 4:30. Crazy, right? Anyway, I don’t necessarily like waking up that early. But I have reluctantly learned to do so in the past 32 years. It has helped me to make better use of my day. I get up and walk 2 miles after drinking coffee with Lisa. We talk about the day and what needs to be done. I often go right into my office to study after an early breakfast. But sometimes I simply lie there in a half-dream state of consciousness. Sometimes I would rather DREAM than DO.

I want to remind you that, not only is your time on earth SHORT, your time BELONGS to God! When you gave your life to Christ, and when you dedicated your body to God as a living sacrifice, you punched into God's time clock. And his time clock is not a stopwatch; it is a SEASON. When Paul wrote, "our time is running out," he was referring to a defined season that has LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES. God allowed you to live WHERE you live and WHEN you live for a reason! He placed you there so that he could use you for his purposes. So, let me ask you a question. **What opportunities or seasons are you seizing for God's glory in your life right now? Can you see where God is using you to bring others closer to him in ANY way at this time in your life? If not, then why not?** No one else can seize the seasons that God has created for you! Furthermore, if you are going to wake up and make the most of the opportunities that are before you, then you are going to have to make some key ADJUSTMENTS in your life. **You cannot stay the same and seize the season.** Maybe you need to adjust your FINANCES in some way so that you can position yourself for greater impact through GIVING. Maybe you need to adjust your SCHEDULE so that you can position yourself for greater impact through SERVING. Only you know.

If we are going to redefine ISH in our lives, then we will not only have to WAKE UP, we also need to: **STRIP DOWN!**

What are you doing with the dark behavior of your old life? **Romans 13:12a NLT**

12 The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes . . .

What SINS are you SHEDDING in your life now that you belong to Christ? If you have truly given your life to him, then there is NO WAY that you can still have the same attitude toward sin that you had before you knew him! **You cannot be clothed with Christ and constantly covered up with sin at the same time.** **The Holy Spirit is grieved and your relationship with Christ is violated when you practice sin!** You and I must learn to HATE SIN and shuck it like you would throw away old clothes that smell like sweat and urine and vomit. That old life was KILLING you, but now you have the power to live free of that old death and bondage. Paul calls your old behavior "dark deeds." The word that he uses actually means "works of darkness." **The darkness is constantly trying to work you up and wear you down!** Those old works not only destroy you; they also destroy everyone around you.

Now, I realize that every one of us struggles with sin. I believe that every believer struggles with some "besetting sin." This is that sin that just will not stop bugging you no matter how much you grow in your faith. You may not be actively participating in it, but it is always trying to gnaw at your mind and your body. I found that my besetting sins tend to be sins of pleasure rather than sins of power or position. There was a time when I was bound up in pornography. By God's grace, I have found freedom from that sin. But I also realize that over time and to some degree, I traded PORN for PORK! What I mean is that I moved from sexual sins to

sins of the belly. I love to eat. There is nothing wrong with that, but it is wrong when I LIVE TO EAT. That has been my current battle when it comes to shedding sins. Of course, those are not the only battles that I have been fighting, but you get the idea. Paul is simply saying that we have to STRIP OFF those old sins that used to rule us. This is why he wrote a few verses later: **Romans 13:13 NLT**

13 Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy.

Paul addresses other works of darkness in his other letters. Here is how he says it in **Colossians 3:7-9 NLT**

7 You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. 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 sinful nature and all its wicked deeds.

None of these are any worse than the others, but they are all sins that we have to strip off of our dedicated bodies! You might struggle more with sins of the tongue than sins of the belly (or whatever else), but Paul is instructing us to take off any of those old dark deeds that are still clinging to our bodies. Just like you take off socks and pants and your shirt, you need to actively partner with the Holy Spirit as he identifies what sins are clinging to you, and then strip them off by his power. Paul also gives us one very practical way to accomplish this: **Romans 13:14 NLT**

14 Instead, clothe your self with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.

Once again, Paul is telling us how to bring our minds under the control of the Spirit. Do you remember how you used to plan your party weekends? You spent all week thinking, "I can't wait till Friday," because you made plans to sleep with your girlfriend or get drunk with your buddies. In addition to this, all of us have to fight our tendency to fantasize about sin. Sometimes we do not even know we are doing it. We may watch something on television or listen to something in a song and then begin to think about how nice it would be to do that thing. Watch out! You must not allow your mind to rehearse and plan sin for you. That is a deadly trap. It is also what godless people do. King David said it this way: **Psalms 36:3-4 NIV**

3 The words of their mouths are wicked and deceitful; they fail to act wisely or do good. 4 Even on their beds they plot evil; they commit themselves to a sinful course and do not reject what is wrong.

Do you wait till your wife goes to sleep at night and then sneak off to your computer to plan evil? Are you sneaking off with the credit card and spending money that

your spouse does not know about? Is your mind constantly engaged in finding ways to get away with sin in the course of your daily life? Child of God, you must not make any room in your mind for sinful plans. Make NO provision for the dark desires of your sinful flesh. This is the only way to throw off the dark deeds of the flesh like old clothing. **Pay attention: Are you spending your mind, or renewing it?**

If we are going to redefine ISH in our lives, then we are going to have to WAKE UP and seize the seasons God is giving us, STRIP OFF our old dark deeds, and then:

SUIT UP!

The Christian life is a life of ACTIVE HOLINESS, and we are not just living out our days, we are FIGHTING in a WAR. Throughout the New Testament, God makes it clear that we are fighting a very angry enemy in a very hostile world. In his wisdom, God has provided ARMOR for us that will protect us in this war. But we have to put that armor on. Let's look at all of Romans 13:12 now: **Romans 13:12-13a NLT**

12 The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living. 13 Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see.

Have you been putting on the shining armor of right living for all to see? Clothing your self in Christ requires you to take on his character and behavior in your own life for your protection. Paul describes this armor in **Ephesians 6:13-17 NLT**

13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. 14 Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. 15 For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. 16 In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Let's just examine one or two pieces of armor and ask some key questions. The shield of faith is one of the most important pieces of armor that a child of God can wear, but it means much more than just that you believe in God. It also means that you actively believe IN GOD for some thing. **What are you believing God for in your life right now? This will affect how you pray, how you study God's word and look for promises about that issue or person, and how you talk about that need to others.** Faith is ACTIVE. Now, think about this: How are you wearing your Gospel shoes? Are you prepared to share the Gospel of Peace with others around you? If not, then you need to begin to study God's Word and allow a pastor/teacher to help you learn how to share your faith, and then DO IT! This is practical.

You can approach each part of the armor that Paul mentions in this way. **Where are you vulnerable and weak in your walk right now?** That is where you need to SUIT UP. It might be in the area of the belt of truth (refusing to hide in the dark) [[Story of my friend from Zambia who came clean about porn](#)], or the sword (knowing and using the Word of God). Whatever it is, you must choose to FOCUS on that weak spot and then put on the armor that is lacking. This is how you become like Christ, and it does not just magically happen. Yes, God does give you the DESIRE to become more like Jesus, but you and I ACTIVELY take on his character by fixing our minds on Christ and then choosing to yield to the Holy Spirit as he speaks to us and shows us where we are NAKED. I don't want to enter a battle naked! Do you?

I am choosing to redefine ISH in my life. I do not want to live a mediocre Christian life. **I believe that a mediocre Christian life is a mockery of the cross. When people look at a Christian, then it will either create CONFUSION or CONVICTION.** There is no in-between state. People will look at you and say, "I'm not sure WHAT I see," or they will look at you in astonishment and say, "I SEE HIM!" I do not want to create confusion in the hearts of outsiders or grief in the heart of my Savior. I want to WAKE UP, STRIP DOWN, and SUIT UP as a follower of Jesus! Since Paul was the one that God used to speak these truths so clearly to us, let me use his words from another letter to put an exclamation point to this series by seeing how he lived it out. [2 Corinthians 6:3-10 NLT](#)

[3 We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry. 4 In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God. We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind. 5 We have been beaten, been put in prison, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food. 6 We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love. 7 We faithfully preach the truth. God's power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left hand for defense. 8 We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. 9 We are ignored, even though we are well known. We live close to death, but we are still alive. We have been beaten, but we have not been killed. 10 Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything.](#)

Let's pray.