

Rev. Lex DeLong / General Adult

Romans Road to Recovery / Romans 13:11–14

Because God's absolute morality dictates our Christian ethics, the urgency of Christ's return demands that our daily behavior cast off the flesh and put on the functional righteousness of Jesus right now, not tomorrow.

Notes

7/19/2026 — Romans 13:11-14

Title: "The Spiritual Alarm Clock"

Subtitle: Trading the Vulnerability of the Flesh for the Armor of Light

Main Idea: Knowing that the return of Christ draws nearer with every passing day, believers must cast off sinful habits and wrap themselves in the functional righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Companion Scripture: Ephesians 5:14-18

Text: Romans 13:11-14

Subtitle: Trading the Vulnerability of the Flesh for the Armor of Light

Main Idea: Because God's absolute morality dictates our Christian ethics, the urgency of Christ's return demands that our daily behavior cast off the flesh and put on the functional righteousness of Jesus.

Pt. 1, 1st sermon of 2.

INTRODUCTION

It is a profound joy to have Susan Hossack with us this morning. When you listen to her report on her work with Bibles International—teaching at the Bible Institute in France, dedicating years to translation in Chad, and now overseeing the final checks on the DENDI Bible—we are not just hearing a travel log or list of personal accomplishments, we are hearing the heartbeat of urgency. Susan and her team are working tirelessly to hand people the divine blueprint of God's Word. "But why is this so important," you might ask? Because they know what time it is. They know the night is passing, and the day is at hand. Her ministry is a global manifestation of the very urgency the Apostle Paul is calling each of us to adopt individually this morning, here in Romans 13:11-14.

Susan is handing out the blueprint because she knows that, *"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."* Rom. 10:17 She understands that this divine design is a matter of life and death, because whenever we ignore the Master Architect and build using our own shortcuts, the results are catastrophic.

In 1981, the Hyatt Regency hotel in Kansas City suffered the deadliest structural collapse in American history when two of its suspended walkways crashed to the lobby

floor. When investigators sifted through the rubble, they didn't find a sudden earthquake or a freak act of nature. They found a shortcut.

The original engineers understood the physics of load-bearing walls. They had drafted a flawless, safe blueprint. But during construction, the steel fabricators decided the original blueprint specs were too difficult to build. So, they made a change. They altered the placement of the tie-rods to make the job easier. They made a provision for their own convenience. The building stood for a while, looking magnificent, but because the builders ignored the blueprint and compromised the physics, the structure was doomed. Just two days ago marked the 45th anniversary of what happened next.

On July 17, 1981, under the weight of a crowded dance, those altered tie-rods snapped. The walkways collapsed into the crowded lobby, killing 114 people and injuring over 200 more. A hidden provision made for convenience ended in absolute devastation.

In Romans chapter 13, the Apostle Paul is looking at the believers in Rome, and he is issuing a dire warning against spiritual shortcuts. He is telling them, "You know the physics of God's holiness. You have the blueprint of Jesus Christ. But you are secretly taking shortcuts. You are making provision for your flesh." And he warns them that the time for sloppy craftsmanship is over, because the Master Builder is arriving to inspect the house.

Listen to the urgency of Paul's warning in verses 11 and 12:

[READ] Romans 13:11-12: *"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. 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."*

Listen carefully to the main idea of our text this morning:

Because God's absolute morality dictates our Christian ethics, the urgency of Christ's return demands that our daily behavior cast off the flesh and put on the functional righteousness of Jesus.

With your patience, I would like us all to see this progression unfold in **four unique stages of construction**, beginning first with the foundation of the house.

The first unique stage of construction in our spiritual lives is...

I. MORALITY: We Cannot Negotiate the Physics of God's Holiness

- This is the Foundation of our spiritual lives: God's standard of holiness is absolute and unchanging; it is the spiritual physics of the universe that dictates our reality.*

- Because God is the architect of this universe, we must recognize that society does not get a vote on the building code.

Note with me that...

A. God's character, nature, and purpose - not cultural consensus - determines the reality of God's absolute law. (Romans 13:8-10 & 1 Peter 1:15-16)

- Paul roots the foundation of his argument for verses 11-14 or Rom. 13 in the previous verses, Romans 13:8-10. This foundation is not in Roman law, but in the divine command to love.
- Love is the fulfillment of the law because God is love—the law is merely a reflection of His unchanging nature.
- Peter reminds us

1 Peter 1:15–16 *"15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"*

Holiness is not an invention of the church; it is the atmosphere of of the eternal nature of God and the everlasting dwelling place of His people.

Since holiness is eternal and everlasting just like the physics of the building of that Hyatt Regency Hotel, then holiness is an absolute law that God intends His creation to exist within, and...

B. Absolute laws cannot be broken without inevitable consequence.

- The commandments Paul lists in v. 9 (adultery, murder, stealing, coveting) are not arbitrary rules designed to restrict our joy.
- They are guardrails built over the cliffs of spiritual destruction.
- Just as defying gravity results in a fall, defying the moral law of God results in the fractures we see in our homes, our culture, and our own hearts.
- Just like the law of gravity that pulled down those walkways in Kansas City, God's holiness is absolute.

Gravity doesn't care about **our opinions**; neither does God's holiness.

Look at...

Romans 13:10: *"Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."*

Therefore...

C. To call ourselves Christian means we stop trying to change God's blueprint.

- We cannot vote on what God has called holy, nor can we edit the Bible to match the current cultural climate of Rome—or America.
- We do not get to renegotiate the physics of the universe without severe consequences to follow, just because the culture thinks God's laws are too heavy or narrow minded.
- To call ourselves followers of Christ means we accept the physics of His universe.

Our starting point is surrender: What God calls dark is dark, and what God calls light is light.

[TRANSITION]: But God doesn't just declare the laws of physics and leave us in the dark to figure out how to survive them. He doesn't just demand a holy foundation; He hands us the exact architectural plans.

- Because we cannot negotiate the physics of His holiness, we must look to the design He has given us, the Word of God.
- When we open that Word, we find that the Master Architect has made His expectations undeniably clear.

Those expectations clearly define the nature of our...

Pt. 2 of 2 parts of this one sermon

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

When the Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Rome, he was writing to people who lived in the shadow of the greatest military machine the ancient world had ever seen. Every Roman citizen walking the streets of the capital understood the brutal discipline of the Roman legion, especially when it came to the night watch.

In the Roman army, the night was divided into four watches, called the ***vigiliae***. If a soldier was assigned to the night watch, falling asleep at his post was not considered a minor mistake; it was a capital offense. A sleeping guard endangered the entire camp. But when the long night finally ended and the sun began to crest the horizon, the camp trumpet would sound. At that exact moment, the soldiers were required to immediately cast off their heavy, cumbersome night cloaks—which they used for warmth in the dark—and strap on their battle armor for the day.

When Paul tells the Romans in verse 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,*" he isn't just

using pretty poetry. He is using urgent, military language. He is telling them: the trumpet has sounded, the King is approaching, and it is a fatal mistake to be caught sleeping in your night clothes when you are supposed to be dressed for war.

Last week, we began looking at this urgent warning. We covered the first stage of our spiritual reality:

I. MORALITY: We Cannot Negotiate the Physics of God's Holiness.

We established that God's absolute standard of holiness is the spiritual physics of the universe. It is the unseen foundation that dictates our reality. Because God is the architect of this universe, society does not get a vote on the building code. We concluded last week by realizing that to call ourselves Christians means we stop arguing with this reality. We surrender to the fact that what God calls dark is dark, and what God calls light is light.

But

Acknowledging the physics of God's holiness is not enough if you are caught sleeping when the enemy attacks.

Even Paul tells Pastor Timothy to...

"...be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come." 2 Tim. 4:2-6

Paul knew his time was short, and he knew that as the days grew darker, the temptation to abandon the truth for our own desires would only grow stronger. His charge to Timothy to be ready—in season and out of season—is the exact same wake-up call he issues to the church in Rome. We do not have time to play games with the flesh.

Listen carefully again to the main idea of our text:

Because God's absolute morality dictates our Christian ethics, the urgency of Christ's return demands that our daily behavior cast off the flesh and put on the functional righteousness of Jesus.

[TRANSITION]: Last week, we established that we cannot negotiate the physics of God's holiness. But God doesn't just declare the laws of physics and leave us

defenseless in the dark. He hands us the exact standard by which we are to fight and live. When we open the Word of God, we find that the Master has made His expectations undeniably clear.

Those expectations clearly define the nature of our second unique stage of construction in our spiritual lives.

II. ETHICS: We Cannot Deviate from the Blueprint of Christ's Character

- Because God is holy, the Christian life has a precise, systemic design—we are commanded to walk as children of light and not of darkness.

A. A holy God does not leave His people to guess what pleases Him. (Ephesians 5:14-18)

Ephesians 5:14–18 "14 For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you." 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,"

- In Ephesians 5, Paul commands, "Awake, O sleeper... look carefully then how you walk."
- "Looking carefully" implies there is a visible, objective standard to see and be your guide.
- God has supplied the blueprint.
- Think back to those original Hyatt engineers we mentioned last week who had a flawless plan to follow yet tragically chose a devastating shortcut that ended in the loss of life—God didn't just demand a holy structure; He gave us a perfect, flawless blueprint in His Word for us to follow.

As we study God's Word, we come to discover the embodiment of that spiritual blueprint, the full rendering of it -

We see Jesus!

B. The person of Jesus Christ is the living blueprint for this ethic.

- Christian ethics are not a list of rigid pharisaical laws; they are the codified character of Jesus Christ; it is God's express image.

Look at Romans 13:12 *"12 The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."*

- When Romans 13:12 says "put on the armor of light," verse 14 clarifies exactly what that armor is:

Romans 13:13–14 *"13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."*

- Truly, verse 13 needs little explanation...Paul is speaking quite plain to the decadent Roman culture of the day...and to ours as well.
- After that confrontation of v. 13, Paul gives God's clearly expressed plan. Instead of putting on the world's ethics,

"...put on the Lord Jesus Christ."

- If you want to know what the blueprint looks like, look at how Jesus responded to betrayal, how He loved His enemies, and how He obeyed his heavenly Father.

Ephesians 5:15-16: *"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil."*

Notice that command: "Look carefully." That is the language of a builder constantly checking the plans.

You don't just glance casually at a blueprint; you study it so you don't make a fatal error.

Because God has commanded us to study the life of Jesus closely, we cannot claim we didn't know the specs.

Therefore...

C. Any deviation from Christ's example is an ethical violation.

- Because the blueprint is clear (Christ), we cannot plead ignorance when our lives don't match the design.
- When we choose strife over peace, or jealousy over contentment, or promiscuity over purity, it is not an accident—it is an active rejection of the blueprint. It is what the Bible refers to as not just sin (missing the mark), it is a trespass (crossing a boundary).

Mention the blog

- To ignore Christ's example is to intentionally throw out the architectural drawings.

- We are choosing to build with shoddy materials when the Master Builder has already provided the finest stone.

[TRANSITION]: So, if the physics are absolute [**Morality**], and the Master Builder has given us a flawless blueprint in Jesus Christ [**Ethics**], why do our lives so often look like that collapsing hotel? Why do our homes and our hearts fracture?

It happens because we stop looking at the blueprint

...and start looking for a shortcut.

But a building doesn't get built by simply **knowing the physics** of God's holiness and **closely studying the blueprint** of Christ's character.

Paul, in Rom. 13, takes us beyond the mere knowledge of the physics of our morality and perfect standard of our ethics. Romans 13 leads us to the dangerous reality of contrary behavior...

III. BEHAVIOR: We Cannot Escape the Secret Consequences of the Flesh.

- We fail when we ignore the blueprint, allowing temptation to fester and making premeditated provision for our sin to land.

A. Sin is most often not an ambush; it is the result of a cultivated process. (James 1:14-15)

We love to claim that sin just snuck up on us, or that we were caught completely off guard, or it was an accident. Somehow that makes us feel less guilty. But the brother of Jesus pulls back the curtain and shows us the exact mechanics of how a moral collapse actually happens. Listen to how James describes this step-by-step progression:

James 1:14–15 "14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."

- James 1 makes it terrifyingly clear: we are lured and enticed by our own desires. The enemy only exploits what we have already allowed inside.
- Temptation acts like a seed—it must be conceived, it must grow, and when it is fully mature, it births the consequence...the works of...the result of decay [death].

We do not **fall** into sin overnight; we **walk** into it by degree, **one small compromise at a time**.

But Paul warns us that we don't just passively wander into this danger—we actively lay

out the welcome mat for it.

B. We accelerate this process when we "make provision" (*pronoia*) for the flesh. (Romans 13:13-14)

Romans 13:13–14 "13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."

- In Romans 13:14, Paul uses the word *pronoia* ("provision")—meaning forethought, planning, or premeditation.
- We "make provision" when we keep the app on our phone we know we shouldn't have, or when we rehearse the bitter argument in our head before we ever see the person, or when we make a plan to go somewhere we have no business going to.
- To "make provision" is to build a nest for the flesh, keeping it warm and fed just in case we want to use it later.
- *Pronoia* is the "shortcut." When we harbor private sins, we are acting exactly like those steel fabricators in Kansas City. We are changing the tie-rods. We are choosing convenience over obedience, secretly weakening our own structural integrity and guaranteeing a collapse.

Consider again

James 1:14-15: "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

James and Paul both are telling us that...

C. Functional righteousness requires the aggressive removal of sin's supply lines.

- We cannot "put on Christ" (Rom. 13:14) while intentionally leaving the back door unlocked for our flesh.
- We must identify our provisions—the habits, environments, and secret allowances we afford ourselves—and brutally cut them off.

Starve the flesh.

Stop giving the desires of James 1 the soil they need to conceive.

[TRANSITION]: Starving the flesh and cutting off those supply lines is painful work. It requires tearing out the rotting wood we've grown so comfortable with.

And if we think we have all the time in the world, we will never do the demolition.

We will continually push our repentance off until tomorrow.

But in our final point, Paul absolutely shatters the illusion of tomorrow when he relays to us the urgency to not put off until tomorrow, what is imperative for us to do today.

The reality of urgency is that...

IV. URGENCY: We Cannot Pretend We Have Tomorrow When the Night is Already Gone.

- The Alarm is Ringing Because the Inspector is at the Door
- The impending return of Christ demands that we strip off the deeds of darkness violently and immediately put on the armor of light.

A. The return of Christ is an approaching, unavoidable reality. (Romans 13:11-12)

- Paul tells the Romans, as we glance back at vv. 11-12: *"You know the time... salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed."*
- Every tick of the clock is not just a second passing; it is a second closer to the eschatological - the cataclysmic arrival of the King.
- The "night" of this fallen, broken world is far gone, and the "day" of ultimate glorification is cresting the horizon.

The reality is that ...

B. Approaching deadlines destroy the illusion of unlimited time.

- That is why we set or others set for us deadlines. It creates needed urgency.
- The great lie of the flesh is that we always have tomorrow to get our act together.
- But when the spiritual alarm clock goes off, hitting the snooze button is no longer an option.
- The building inspector is pulling into the driveway; the time for simply just staring at the blueprint is over.

Romans 13:11-12: *"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. 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."

C. We must cast off the flesh and put on Christ today.

- Because the Morals are real, the Ethics are clear, and our Behavior is compromised, The Urgency of Christ's return demands action **now**, not tomorrow.
- Notice the verbs in verse 12: "**cast off**" and "**put on.**" These are decisive, violent actions.
- The night is over. Rip off the grave clothes of the flesh, wrap yourself in the functional righteousness of Jesus Christ, and step out into the light.

[TRANSITION]: That brings us to the ultimate, unavoidable question this morning:

What will you do with the time you have left?

CONCLUSION

- The Apostle Paul is ringing the spiritual alarm clock this morning that harkens back to Romans 12:1-2. This alarm gives those pivotal verses in his letter to the Romans urgency.
- We have the physics. We have the blueprint. We know the danger of the shortcuts. But theology on a whiteboard has never saved a collapsing building. At some point, you have to put your work boots on, pick up the hammer and nail, select the right materials, and use them how God designed them.

Look at the verbs Paul uses in verse 12: "*Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.*"

- He doesn't say "gradually phase out" the darkness.
- He doesn't say "slowly transition" your wardrobe.
- The verb is *apotithēmi*—to violently strip away.

You do not negotiate with a shortcut that is going to collapse your life; you rip it out!

Remember the Roman ***vigiliae*** we talked about at the beginning of the service? That ancient military term for the night watch is the exact place we get our modern English word ***vigilant***. To be vigilant doesn't just mean to pay attention—it means you absolutely refuse to fall asleep on the night watch.

- Some of you came in here this morning wearing the pajamas of the flesh. You are sleeping on the job site. You are holding onto a bitterness you refuse to let go of,

someone who hurt you or belittled you; maybe someone who let you down. It may even be a bitterness toward God and His sovereignly allowing some hardship in your life. You are entertaining a private habit you think no one sees. You are making provision for the flesh, altering the tie-rods of your heart, thinking the structure will hold forever.

- But I am here to tell you on the authority of God's Word here in Romans 13 and Eph. 5 and James 1: the night is far gone. The day is at hand. The Building Inspector is pulling into the driveway! The return of Jesus Christ is not some distant, abstract theological concept—it is the imminent, approaching reality of the universe.
- You do not have unlimited time to get your life into alignment with the blueprint, whether it is Christ's return or God's calling you home. You do not have "tomorrow" guaranteed to make things right with your spouse, to kill that secret sin, or to start living a life of unhypocritical love.
- Just like Susan Hossack shared last week how she is racing to get the Word of God into the hands of the people in Chad and teaching others to do the same in France before it is too late,

We must race to get the Word of God into the daily mechanics of our own lives.

- The alarm is ringing.
- The King is coming.
- We must wake up
- Strip off the grave clothes of the flesh.

Put on the functional righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and let us walk out of these doors today as children of the light!

Ask the musicians to come forward to play while we have a moment to talk with our Father in heaven who is desperately waiting for you to let go what you are holding onto that needs to go.

What must you surrender to the Lord today and strip away out of your life.

Come forward and pray here today.

Leave it here and walk out with a clear path to God's blueprint for you.

Pause for music and response.....

Remember...

Because God's absolute morality dictates our Christian ethics, the urgency of Christ's return demands that our daily behavior cast off the flesh and put on the functional righteousness of Jesus right now, not tomorrow.