

## **“Do You Have the Time?”**

**Romans 13:11-14**

December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Some of my favorite quotes on time:

- “Time keeps flowing like a river to the sea till it’s gone forever.” - Alan Parsons
- “Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana.” - Anthony Oettinger
- “Time is what we want most, but what we use worst.” – William Penn
- “How did it get so late so soon? It’s night before it’s afternoon. December is here before it’s June. My goodness how the time has flown. How did it get so late so soon? – Dr. Seuss
- “Time, like an ever rolling stream, bears all its sons away; they fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the op’ning day.” Isaac Watts, “O God Our Help in Ages Past”

*If you were given an extra hour in the day, how would you manage that hour? Raise your hand – Would you sleep an extra hour? Would you play video games an extra hour (raise your hand)? Maybe you’d work an extra hour?*

Though I sometimes wish for more time, I seem to waste a good deal of it! Our son Zach says that I’m not efficient with my activity sometimes, so therefore, I use up a lot of time on busyness. *Do I have the time to waste any of it? How about you - Do you have the time...to waste it?*

“Do you have the time?” is a question we ask of others if we’re not wearing a watch and we don’t have our cell phone with us. *“Excuse me, but do you have the time?”*

In this message from the last four verses of **Romans Chapter 13**, we’ll be challenged on how we use our time, and whether we spend our time in darkness or in the light. These verses follow a discussion on love – love is an “other” focused word. True, biblical love is something we demonstrate in the lives of others. Match this with today’s sermon text and it is high time for love to saturate the people in God’s Church.

### **Romans 13:11-14:**

“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

Verse 11 and the first half of verse 12 make up the first point – **The time has come for vigilance!** Vigilance is synonymous with ‘watchfulness.’ To be vigilant is to be alert; to look out for danger. The military uses varying threat conditions depending upon the likelihood of enemy activity. If threat condition A is the lowest condition, meaning the absence of imminent danger, then increased vigilance, threat condition B, means everyone should be all the more watchful for the possibility of enemy operations.

Notice the play on the use of the word “time” in verse 11 – Paul writes that as we are demonstrating love for our fellow Christians (“And do this,” is how he begins verse 11, which points back to verses 8-10) we must also ‘know that the time’ – that it is “high time” – the time is ripe for our salvation which is nearer than it ever has been. This refers to the Day of the Lord – the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to earth.

Love each other, Paul writes, because you may not have another opportunity. Love for other Christians is the clearest indication that our Christianity is genuine and legitimate – that’s it’s real. **1 John 5:1-2** teach this – “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.”

Conversely, John writes in **1 John 4: 20-21** – “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”

Not to love, in the context of the passage from Romans before us today, is to be asleep, slumbering through life, rather than alerting others of their need for a Savior, and pointing them to Jesus. In the first half of verse 12, Paul doesn’t reveal what “the night” is, “But he is referring to this present life as in some sense lived in darkness.” (Morris, 471) And, into this world came Jesus, the Light of the World (**John 8:12**).

We think at Christmas of the shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night, when all of a sudden, an angel of the Lord stood before the shepherds and “the glory of the Lord shone around them!” From darkness to glorious light! It is also reminiscent of today’s Call to worship from **Isaiah Chapter 60** where the prophet proclaims to God’s people – “Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you! These people were in a darkness that covered the world – a “deep darkness.” And Jesus descended into that darkness and brought them into the Kingdom of light!

Because this had transpired, Paul urges the Roman Christians in verse 12 that they were to “cast off their works of darkness, and instead put on the armor of light.” This putting off/putting on concept is at the heart of sanctification, which you’ll remember is the process of becoming more and more like Jesus – our walk with Him (and each other). We are to first put off sinful life patterns and then replace them by putting on holy life patterns. It’s always good to do away with the sinful, but not to replace it with the holy is to invite disaster and a hardened reappearance of darkness.

At our preaching study Thursday night, one of the guys shared an illustration of this point. Imagine you’re working out, getting up a pretty good sweat. After your workout, you go to the locker room and take remove those stinky workout clothes. You get in the shower and clean yourself up good and towel off. *Are you going to put those stinky, sweaty workout clothes back on, or are you going to put on fresh clothing?* So, we should never settle for returning to the stinky lifestyle (works of darkness) we lived before God saved us to Himself and to His people.

Moving into verses 13, we come to our next point – **What proper Kingdom living doesn't include**. “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.”

Living the Christian life is to walk in integrity; to walk in the light. Paul includes three pairs of sinful behaviors to help his readers steer clear of actions that regularly trip up God's people.

The first pairing is “revelry and drunkenness” as they are mentioned in the *NKJV*. The *ESV* and the *NIV* label these behaviors “orgies and drunkenness.” In the first place, this pairing refers to the riotous living that one would never hope to be part of upright Christian living. Parades and events in large cities highlighting immoral lifestyles previously kept private are now right out there for everyone to witness. Paul here teaches us this is not walking properly. And in the second place, this pairing points to the abuse of strong drink. Abusing alcohol and immorality feed off of each other. Such behaviors will not be found in glory, and they are not to be found in the Church.

The second pairing mentioned in verse 13 is “lewdness and lust” in the *NKJV*. They mean “sexual immorality and debauchery (“sensuality” or “sexual excess”). These pairings include both adultery/fornication of the heart, as well as of actually committing the sin physically. In other words, lustful thoughts are to be done away with as much as the physical activity is to be removed from one's life. This pairing includes the use of pornography – regardless of the form in which it is consumed. Watching pornography dulls the senses needed to keeping sexual relations within the marital relationship of husband and wife, which is the only place according to the Bible, where sexual intimacy should be found.

The third pair (“strife and envy”) includes “quarreling and jealousy” (*ESV*). The *NIV* has “dissension and jealousy.” These descriptors indicate a determination to have one's own way, a self-willed readiness to quarrel. It's unfortunate that many trips from home to the church for worship on the Lord's Day are fraught with quarreling, trying to get the kids (or parent) up, fed, cleaned up, and dressed for church. This quarreling heart often enters the church for worship not to exalt the Lord, but rather to exalt the self. And, that dichotomy often aids in whether we worship God properly, or we, even unknowingly, worship ourselves, which is idolatry.

All of the descriptors reveal a failure to love. *Maybe you're playing kiss and make up with God over your sins?* You tell others that you want help, but your actions show you like your sin better. *Maybe you're here today, and you're convinced you're not a Christian because you keep tripping over some stronghold of sin?* *Would it surprise you to know that you're not alone in that?* I'm not saying you should keep on sinning with others trying to overcome the same sin, but I do want to encourage you to make time to meet with God's people, whether that is as part of a Bible study or prayer group, a Sunday School class, or a one on one discipleship opportunity.

“These vices comprise the deeds of darkness, often even performed in the dark, but certainly always encouraged by “the prince of darkness.” (Hendriksen, 443) By nature we are children of

darkness. This is Jesus speaking in **John 3:19** – “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” Things happen in the darkness that do not happen in the light. People love darkness because it conceals them from exposure.

**Romans Chapter 13** ends with the clause, “make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” *How do we make provision for the flesh?* By yielding to the six sins listed above.

An old country preacher said that if we desire to overcome drunkenness, we best not tie our horse to the post in front of the saloon. We are not to make provisions!

The last several days, multiple people have told me of new relationships they’ve begun with others. I listened to them speak of the virtuous new person in their lives, and when I had opportunity to chime in, the first thing I said was, “Please don’t move in with him/her.” In my opinion, a great failure of the church is the plethora of professing Christian people living together outside of marriage. You should expect such from the unbelieving segment of our culture. But, the church is to live according to God’s Word. You see, a couple living together outside of marriage is making provision for the flesh – sexual activity outside of holy matrimony.

Living together isn’t the same thing as test-driving a vehicle. It’s not immoral to test drive a car, but it is immoral to have sex outside of marriage! And, just because you may have lived together when you were young, that’s no reason to condone your children or grandchildren cohabitating!

Let’s bring this discussion back to time, as we did at the opening of this message. It is not a helpful use of time to spend it on sexual immorality, quarrels, drunkenness, and partying to all hours of the night. That is your former life, Christian. An illustration:

He was born in 354 in a North African town. His father was a pagan, but his mother, Monica, was of devout Christian stock. Aurelius Augustine was steeped in darkness - an undisciplined child, idle and truant. He loved sports, pranks, and a host of adolescent pleasures.

Augustine was also brilliant, and he soon moved to Carthage to further both his studies (light) and his fun (darkness). At the age of 18 he found himself the father of a son. At the same time he joined a cult (darkness).

Years passed, and Monica, praying without ceasing, heard that Augustine was planning to leave Africa for Rome. She begged him not to go. When he refused, she determined to go with him. Using deception (darkness), he left her praying in a chapel and sailed without her; but she took a later boat and intercepted him. They traveled to Milan where she persuaded him to listen to the great Bishop Ambrose (light). The bishop’s razor sharp sermons penetrated Augustine’s head, if not his heart.

One day as Augustine sat in a friend’s garden he heard a child singing, “Take up and read!” He opened the Bible near him and read from **Romans 13**: – “Don’t go to wild parties or get drunk or be vulgar or indecent...Let the Lord Jesus Christ be as near to you as the clothes you wear. By the time he finished the sentence, he later said, he was converted (light).

And a great church father was born.