Are You Properly Clothed?
Scripture Text: Romans 13:11-14

Introduction

Are you properly clothed? Did you put on the right clothes today? To some, that may mean putting on something nice for church. To others, it might mean having something that is comfortable to wear. But, what if you were to go out in rough weather, like a snowstorm. If that was the case, you would most likely wear certain clothes. For instance, if there is one snowflake in this area, we will make all sorts of preparations to make sure we are ready for the snow. My brother-in-law used to live in Alaska, where there is considerably more snow than there is here. Snow was not a problem for him, though. He was accustomed to it. In fact, he would sometimes shovel snow in his shorts. That is not me, though! If there is snow, or any kind of cold weather, I will put on more clothes. If there is inclement weather and I need to go out in it, I will put on certain clothes in order to be warm and safe. Are we properly clothed for our spiritual lives?

Last week, we read about how we ought to be a loving people. By being a loving people where we love others as we love ourselves, we actually fulfill the Law of God. This pleases our Father in Heaven. If you want to be loving, if you want to fulfill the Law, be Christ-like. Be like Jesus who gave Himself for others. He did not just love those who loved Him. He loved those who betrayed Him, who rejected Him, who beat Him, and who killed Him. Jesus loved His enemies. Loving others genuinely will be expressed in specific acts. Because we love God and we love others, we will behave a certain way. Today, Paul continues that thought and points out the connection of loving others to living for Jesus. In fact, Paul mentioned that putting on Jesus Christ fulfills the Law of God. Putting on Christ is loving one another. How much Christ are you wearing today?

Now is The Time to Act

Have you ever waited for the right time to do something? Have you ever missed something because you were not ready for it? I think of a story Jesus once told about ten virgins who were waiting for the bridegroom. Five of them were wise and prepared, having their lamps ready with oil. Five were foolish and not prepared for the bridegroom when he came. So, when the bridegroom finally arrived, the five foolish virgins went to the wedding feast and knocked on the door, but the bridegroom told them that he did not know them. Because they were not ready and prepared, they missed the wedding feast. Jesus then said, “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.” (Matthew 25:1-13) We do not know when Jesus will return, but He will return. We need to live each day as if He is returning today. The final verses of this chapter call Christians to action, given the shortness of time before Christ returns.

*Romans 13:11–12*  
*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.

Scripture quoted from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.
Are you awake? Sleep in this passage means living in moral carelessness. It means being spiritually lethargic. Is that us? Are you spiritually asleep, not awake and working while there is time? In another letter, Paul told the church to “wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God.” (1 Corinthians 15:34) As the Church of Christ who ought to be following Jesus. We need to be like Him and not go on sinning like the rest of the world. Since Christ is coming soon, there is no time to waste by acting like the rest of the world when so many people are lost and going to hell. How are people going to hear about Jesus and turn to Him if the Church, Jesus’ witness here on earth, is too busy playing with sin and not bearing witness of Christ? How will people hear the good news if we are so busy living contrary to it? Are we playing in the dark, hoping the King does not see our sin? Are we like little children reaching into the forbidden cookie jar thinking our parents will not see?

Our salvation is closer than ever before. When scripture speaks of our salvation, there are several ways to understand it. If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then you have been saved. You are now forgiven and adopted into God’s family. If you have been adopted into God’s family, then you are also being saved, meaning the Holy Spirit is now working in your life to conform you into the image of Jesus Christ. We call this sanctification — you are being made more like Jesus. The third way of salvation is in the sense of when we will be finally saved — when Jesus returns for His Bride, the Church, and takes us to our home He has prepared for us. In this passage, Paul spoke of salvation as something that will happen in the future and which draws nearer every day. Our final salvation is closer now than ever before. It is at hand. The fact that Jesus’ kingdom is upon us calls for godly living. The world lives as though human history were destined to continue forever, but we know from God’s promises, that is not true.

The nearness of our salvation should compel us to put off all evil works and to live as Christ would. It should compel us to work harder for Him as our Savior is coming soon. What kind of work is this? What work has Jesus left for us to do? Is it not to make disciples of all nations? Is it not to share the gospel with as many people as we can? How well are we working in this respect? Are we waiting for something to happen? Are we waiting for more people to show up? Are we waiting for more money? Are we waiting for God? Maybe God is saying, “I am here and I am working. What are you doing?” Whether we have five people or five hundred people, or five dollars, five thousand dollars, or fifty-thousand dollars, we have the same mission as Jesus gave His church almost two thousand years ago. We are to make disciples of all nations. What are we doing with the time and treasures God has given us? Jesus is coming soon, therefore, we need to act like the Lord is coming. Are we ready for the return of the King? Will He find us working for Him or will He find us wasting time? Now is the time to act!

Turn Away From Worldliness

The second thing Paul mentioned in this passage was about putting off sin. How much like the world are we? When you look in the mirror, do you see yourself more like the world and its sinful desires, or do you see an image of Jesus and His righteousness living within you? The Church has a call to holiness. Look at the next verse.
**Romans 13:13** Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.

In the Gospel According to John, we read that people prefer darkness to light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). Darkness hides, but light reveals. Evil flourishes in darkness because those who do evil assume that what they are doing cannot be seen. Nothing, however, is hidden from God. The Church ought not to be those trying to hide evil. Since Jesus is coming soon, we ought to act like He is coming soon. Therefore, it is critical for us to rid ourselves completely of the works of darkness. Our conduct ought to be decent and honorable. One example is Saint Augustine. In his *Confessions*, Augustine told of his conversion to Christianity. In AD 386, at a time when he was deeply moved by a desire to cease his sinful lifestyle, Augustine sat weeping in the garden of a friend. Suddenly he heard a child singing, “Take up and read! Take up and read!” Augustine picked up a scroll lying there, and his eyes fell upon Romans 13:13–14. Reading about not living in orgies and drunkenness and sexual immorality, he was convicted of his own sin. God’s Word pierced His heart and Augustine went on to be one of the greatest and most influential theologians of the Church. God’s Word should pierce our hearts, too, but oftentimes it falls on deaf ears! Are you hearing it?

Notice the “works of darkness” Paul mentioned here — orgies, drunkenness, sexual immorality, sensuality, quarreling, and jealousy. These are things that are not proper for anyone to do, but certainly not for those who belong to Christ. As you look at this list, maybe you think to yourself that you do not have a problem with this sin or that sin. Hopefully, none of us are participating in orgies, but this word may also refer to wild parties and revelry. Are we partying with the world so much that we no longer look like Christ anymore? There is a difference between being in the world and showing Christ to it and acting like the world. What about drunkenness? In this passage, Paul was referring to intoxication by alcohol, but there could be other forms of intoxication. Is there something you are abusing that is causing you to not think clearly? Are you addicted to some substance that has you bound and not able to live fully for Jesus Christ as you should? Are you intoxicated with the world, acting like unbelievers?

What about sexual immorality? This is illicit sexual behavior. The only sexual behavior God permits is between one man and one woman who are married. Anything else is sinful. Do you have a problem with lust? Do you have a problem with pornography? Jesus defined adultery as something in the heart. These are things contrary to how God’s children ought to behave. God wants us to be faithful, in mind and body, to our spouse. What about quarreling and jealousy? Maybe you are surprised to see these sins in the same list as orgies, sexual immorality and drunkenness. These too are acts of darkness. Unfortunately, the Church is oftentimes more tolerant toward those sins than sexual immorality or even drunkenness. It is interesting to note that Paul placed quarreling and jealousy together with the others as deeds of darkness. Maybe you are not tempted by drunkenness or certain sexual sins. Maybe where you are more like the world in causing dissension or being jealous. The danger of these two sins of darkness is that they inhibit unity in the church and are listed as deeds of the flesh (Galatians 3:27). Quarreling and jealousy cause division in the church and keeps us off mission.

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In verse twelve, Paul wrote that we should cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor or weapons of light. You could say that we are to put off the way of the world and not be like it. There is a spiritual battle going on and we need to fight it with the right tools. This sounds very much like another passage where Paul mention that we ought to put on the whole armor of God. Look at the following passage.

**Ephesians 6:11–12**  
11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.  
12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

We are to put off works of darkness like a spoiled garment, and put on in place of it the whole armor of God. This includes such things as the truth of God’s Word, the righteousness of Christ, our faith in Him that shields us from the enemy’s attacks, and praying at all times with perseverance. We are to take off the sins of the world and put on the things of godliness. This leads us to the next and final point of the passage.

**Put On Jesus Christ**

There is a battle raging with us. The old man before we were saved tries to do those things contrary to God’s will. The new man saved by God’s grace tries to assert himself and follow Jesus faithfully. Which man will win the battle? What is our role in it? Are we just bench warmers silently waiting for the battle to end? Do we have no part to play in this, but just let whatever happens happen? Not according to Paul. He saw us very much engaged in this battle. This is not to diminish God’s grace and work in our lives, but we are to put on the armor of light. This idea of putting off something and putting on something else is similar to what Paul told the church in Ephesus. Look at the following.

**Ephesians 4:22–24**  
22 …put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,  
23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,  
24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Paul refers to the putting off the old self and putting on the new self, again as if they are garments to be worn. This means to be a different person and be like our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (v. 14). Be clothed with His righteousness. Instead of maintaining a lingering relationship to sinful desires, believers are to put on the new self. This calls for a decisive action. The critical nature of the day in which we live and the imminent return of our King, demands that we separate ourselves unmistakably from all that belongs to darkness. Jesus Christ Himself is our armor against wickedness. Those who are “in Him” know what it means to experience victory in spiritual warfare. The victory has already been won. Though we long for our final salvation, which is nearer than ever before, we must still wage war with the flesh that will raise its ugly head every so often. Maybe you say to yourself, “I just cannot do it.” Maybe you think that you just cannot win the battle within you. You are right...you cannot. You need Christ. This passage can be summed up in one call to action — *put on Jesus Christ*. Look at verse fourteen.
**Romans 13:14** But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Put on Jesus Christ. This is an imperative, a command. It is not a suggestion or a good idea. We ought to do it. If it is a command and we ought to do it, then Paul assumed we are able to do it. We need to be like Jesus and imitate His love for others. The idea of putting on clothing might seem like we just fake it. It might seem like we just cover up the old man. It is much more, though. Putting on Christ means living in close personal fellowship with Him. Even though believers have new life in Christ, they must constantly renounce the flesh and refuse to gratify its desires. The way to stop living like the world is to live for Jesus Christ. For example, if I have little to do with my wife, if I discount my vows to honor and cherish her and to love her above everyone else, then I am going to more likely pursue other interests. Other people or things will capture my heart because I have left my first love. If I want to honor my marital vows, I will pursue my wife passionately. I will spend as much time with her as I can. I will look for ways to please her. I will do those things that strengthen our relationship.

Some of us are so much like the world because we have so little to do with Jesus. We have stopped spending time with Him. We have stopped pursuing Him. Some will say, “I am saved. I have accepted Christ. I am good.” They think that the whole purpose of the cross was to save us from hell. It wasn’t. God did not save us merely to keep us from eternal death. He saved us to have eternal life with Him. He wants a relationship with us. We have to pursue Him. This means we are praying constantly. It means we are studying God’s Word. We cannot put on Christ if we never go into His closet. To clothe ourselves with Christ is to take off and dispose of the old clothing of sin. It means to replace that old clothing with a close personal walk with Jesus. Following Jesus closely is the best way to refuse temptations of sin. If you are so in love with Him and in such a close relationship with Him, you will not want to be like the world. You will not want to do those things from which Jesus died to save you. Are you following Jesus close enough?

**Conclusion**

In closing, what are you wearing? Are you clothed for the work God has given the Church? Have you renounced the works of darkness or are you living in them? What sins are you doing that is hindering your walk with Christ? Do you have a close personal walk with Christ? Are you following close enough to Jesus to be different from the world, or are you lost trying to find Him? Pray for a renewed passion for Christ. Pray that you will love Him more every day. The time is now for the Church to wake up. We cannot afford to be asleep at the wheel while the rest of the world is going to hell. We must work while there is daylight and while there is time. We must be the salt and the light in this dark world. Though the world may persecute us and evil may seem to prevail, we must still work for Christ. The Church must shine for Him. We must preach and demonstrate the gospel, for without us, how will the world know Christ? What do you need to do different to faithfully be a witness for Christ?

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