

The Ups

Sometimes we are reminded that life is short. It may not seem like it at times. But it's short. And we don't even know how short it will be!

We need to have more of an urgency in our lives. Shouldn't we be living each day as if it could be our last?

Romans 13:11-14 (NKJV)

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. 12 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. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

And do this - Do what? Love one another. In the preceding verses Paul tells us that we should owe no one anything except to love on another. We do that by following the commandments because love does no harm to a neighbor.

Not causing someone harm is loving them. Love one another. Do this!

Do it knowing the time. Do you know what time it is? Do you know the end is near?

Two pastors were standing by the side of the road holding up a sign that read, "The End is near! Turn around before it's too late!"

One speeding motorist yelled out his window, "Leave us alone, you religious nuts!" as he flew by. From around the curve they heard screeching tires and a big splash.

"Do you think," said one clergy to the other, "we should just put up a sign that says 'Bridge Out' instead?"

That's funny. But you know what's not funny, the end is near! Our time is short. Do you believe that? Or do you think "leave us alone you religions nuts"? We are warned to love one another knowing the time.

Not to be ignorant of the season. Do you know that Jesus could come back any time?

Billy Graham said "We are to wait for the coming of Christ with patience. We are to watch with anticipation. We are to work with zeal. We are to prepare with urgency."

If you knew tomorrow was going to be the last day, how would you spend the time you have left? Would you be care-free, content, and relaxing? Or would you have a sense of urgency trying to help people who are clueless and unprepared?

At the very least we would reach out to those close to us.

We are not even promised the rest of this day. A week ago I was reminded of how short life is. When you see someone young die, and you see how it affects those around him, it's heartbreaking. If only there was more time.....

Paul says "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep!" When? NOW, right now! TODAY! It's not tomorrow, it's not next week, month, or year.....it's NOW! This is the time to wake up!

Awake out of sleep! This is a message for the church! Wake up followers of Christ!

You ever caught someone sleeping and the try to tell you they weren't sleeping? They were "resting their eyes" or "it was a long blink" or whatever other excuse they can come up with. People don't like to hear that they were asleep when they weren't supposed to be asleep.

Sleep- is the state of inactivity with loss of consciousness and a decrease in responsiveness' to the events around you.

When I'm asleep I am not really responsive to things going on around me. Not until something wakes me up. Then I am very responsive.

Is the church really responsive to the unsaved people around them? We are at such a state of inactivity and decrease of responsiveness that one might think the church is in a coma!

We must wake up! *"For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed."*

Church we are in the end times and we don't have any idea how long this period of time will last! We are nearer to the consummation of our salvation.

Salvation is a three part process

- Have been saved - justification - price paid by Jesus' death on the cross
- Are being saved - sanctification - life long process of the Spirit making us like Christ
- Will be saved - glorification - Jesus returns, we are made like Him

That process is closer than ever to being completed. That's why we must wake up!

Mark 13:35-36 (HCSB)

Therefore be alert, since you don't know when the master of the house is coming—whether in the evening or at midnight or at the crowing of the rooster or early in the morning. 36 Otherwise, he might come suddenly and find you sleeping.

If Jesus returns today will He find you sleeping? The spiritual alarm clock is going off. Will you hit snooze again or will you wake up?

America needs a great awakening and the church need a great awakening and maybe some of you need a great awakening.

Sampson had great power until he fell asleep in Delilah's lap then lost his power. Today it often seems like the church has fallen asleep in Satan's lap and lost its power by compromising and living like the world. It is so easy to fall asleep in the lap of Satan all you have to do is do nothing, just don't fight back, that's easy.

Romans 13:12 (NKJV)

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.

Here night and day refer to periods of time. The night is this period of time where sin had dominion on the earth, that time is far spent, it's almost gone. The day when Christ returns to rule and reign is at hand, it is near, it's very near.

In Mark 13, Jesus tells about some events that lead up to His return, then says:

Mark 13:29 (NKJV)

So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors!

The day is near, before we know it, it's going to be at the door....one step from being fully present!

God's people must be prepared as the bride. We must do the things we need to do to present ourselves to our Groom. When's the last time you went to a wedding and the bride was not at all prepared? They spend months preparing and then on that day or weekend, all they do is prepare for that moment.

Shouldn't we be spending our time preparing for our Groom? Shouldn't we be making ourselves presentable?

We have 3 Ups that are important in Romans 13.

First we have to Wake Up!

Up - in a more elevated position, at a higher point or degree.

Maybe you think you are already awake. Wake up! Be more alert, get in a more elevated position, be awake to a higher degree.

In a morning maybe you are awake but you drink coffee to get awake to a higher degree! Maybe you are not a coffee drinker but you take morning showers to help you wake up more. Whatever it is, you know what you need to do physically to get yourself prepared for your day.

What do you need to do spiritually to be more prepared? Wake up!

Once you wake up, it's time to clean up!

The night is almost over, the day is almost here. Do you know what happens when the day comes? All that was in the dark gets exposed in the light. Things that were hidden and unseen in the dark are now uncovered and visible in the light.

Romans 13:12 (NKJV)

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.

This is a military metaphor. The Roman military at night would take off their armor and their tents would become scenes of partying, having a "good time", drinking and fighting, talking about women, telling dirty jokes, causing turmoil in the camp.

Eventually the whole camp would fall asleep but when the first glimpse of dawn appeared in the sky, the watchman would yell out "The night is departing, the day is advancing. Arise comrades, and prepare to meet the light."

Immediately the camp would wake up, and begin to clean up. They would cast off the garments of the night and begin to clean their armor so that it would shine in the light. They would be ready for inspection.

We are to cast off whatever those things are that are done in darkness. Not that it's ok to do them at night and just clean up in the morning, but know that the day is at hand. It's dawn, we can see the glimpse of Christ's return. It's so near, He's almost at the door.

We must cast off those things that are not going to pass inspection. We must put on the armor of light. We should reflect light. We should amplify light into this dark world.

Romans 13:13 (NKJV)

Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

Listen, YOU choose to walk properly. This speaks of your conduct. Not of those around you. We often blame our sin issues on others, they don't cause you to do it, you CHOOSE to do it.

You choose what to look at, what to listen to, what to say, what to think.

If you choose what you do, then you choose what you don't do!

Your spiritual walk is similar to learning to physically walk. If you watch a child learning to walk, you will see that it is pretty simple. It consists of two simple steps repeated over and over again. Left, right, left, right. It's not complicated at all.

At first they fail over and over and can only take a couple steps. Do they give up? NO! They keep trying. If they give up they will NEVER walk. It's not going to just miraculously happen! It takes persistence. It also requires help, mom and dad holding their fingers and assisting them as they walk. There with them every step.

It takes doing it every single day until it becomes easier. Once you do it for so long, you don't really have to think about it. It just becomes a regular part of life.

It's the same with your spiritual walk. It consists of two simple steps repeated over and over again. Turn from sin, follow Jesus, turn from sin, follow Jesus. It's not complicated at all.

At first you fail over and over and don't seem to get to far. Don't give up! If you do you'll never walk. Keep trying. It's not going to just miraculously happen. You will always have to make those choices. Be persistent and know it requires help. It requires you relying on the Holy Spirit to help you, you hold your fingers and guide you every step. Let the Spirit assist you!

It takes doing it every single day until it becomes easier. Once you do it for so long, you don't really have to think about it. It just becomes a regular part of life.

"By the indwelling Spirit working through our new nature in Christ, we not only have every resource necessary to forsake the deeds of darkness but also every resource we need to put on the armor of light." ~ John MacArthur

Once you wake up, you clean up. Even if you feel like you are already pretty clean. You need to be clean to a higher degree. You should be striving toward holiness. A level you won't fully attain in this life, but you can get closer every single day!

Finally, Grow up!

Romans 13:14 (NKJV)

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

It's time to recognize we are all growing and will continue to do so, the question is are you growing up or down. Closer to Jesus or closer to this world? Closer to heaven or closer to hell?

Remember a part of the word up is a more elevated position.

Growing up is not just getting older or taller but it means you are growing toward and more elevated position. It means you are spiritually at a higher point than you were and you are headed to a higher point than where you are now.

*****WORSHIP*****

Instead of trying to force ourselves into new habits, Paul says we should clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and stop thinking about how to gratify all our other desires.

"We know we should avoid a certain place, but we go there anyway. We recognize a personal weakness for a particular activity, but we tempt ourselves anyway. How often do we fall into sin because we plan for it?" ~ Charles Stanley

If you seek to follow Christ, to truly put him first in your life, your desires for other less helpful things will diminish. Here the goal is not to live the perfect, sin-free life, but simply to follow Jesus, to become more like him every day. "Stop trying harder. Start trusting more!"

To "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" carries the idea of making Jesus a part of everything you say and do. "Like a comfortable piece of clothing that you wear all day, Jesus wants to join your decision-making process. He wants to be Lord over your singleness or your marriage, over your career and free time, over what you hear and watch. By the way you live, you reveal that either He is Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all"

It's time to Wake up, Clean Up, and Grow Up.