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*“Living In The Light”*

ROMANS 13:13-14

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## AT A GLANCE

What does it mean to put on the armor of God? I’m concerned a lot of Christians say they put it on, but have no idea what that actually means and it becomes just another Christian cliché. In this week’s passage Paul tells us to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ,” which interprets what he said in a previous verse to “put on the armor of light.” Armor of light, full spiritual armor of God, the Lord Jesus Christ seem to be synonymous; but what does it mean to put it on? Check out this week’s sermon!

## INTRODUCTION

Christians are called to actively participate with the Holy Spirit and manifest outwardly what has taken place internally. Christ has given us new lives and we are to live new lives. As Paul wrote to the Colossians, *“and [you] have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator...Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,”* Colossians 3:10, 12

There is a tension that Christians live in while we wait for Christ’s return. We have been transferred from the darkness and we are told to cast off the works of darkness. We have been made new and we are told to live new. We are in Christ and we are told to put on Christ. We are in the light and we are told to live in the light. As I said a couple of weeks ago, the indicative – what is true about us, never contradicts the imperative – what we are to do.

## ROMANS 13:13-14

**<sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.**

## LIVING IN THE LIGHT

**<sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly as in the daytime.** Having put on the armor of light, let us **walk** in the light of **daytime**. In Pauline language, to walk is to live. Paul is exhorting us to us live in in the light. It means to live upright lives, forthright and transparent. Let our lives be integral, such that who we are outside of church matches the person we present at church.

Having told us in verse 12 to cast off works of darkness, now Paul supplies three pairs of examples of those works of darkness. While it is not exhaustive, it is representative of a life contrary to walking properly as in the daytime.

## THREE ODD PAIRINGS

Paul begins by contrasting a life of light with **orgies and drunkenness**. Other translations read “carousing and drunkenness” and “riots and drunkenness.” Think of wild partying, probably with a

ritualistic undertone. In his day there was a false god called Bacchus, the god of wine. The celebration in his honor was called Bacchanalia and involved orgies and binge drinking.

This activity tends to lead to the second pairing, **sexual immorality and sensuality**. Sexual immorality includes a whole host of sexual sins, and sensuality has to do with a lack of self-control and decency. It means to have no shame. When combined, this pairing carries the sense of shameless sexual behavior.

Up to this point the modern reader is thinking, “Ok, yep, got it. Don’t go to the brothel, don’t solicit sex online. Don’t sleep with someone not my spouse. Pretty standard stuff for a Christian.” And then we come to the final pairing. The first two pairs are generally socially taboo. Most people in our culture look down upon wanton sexual vices, even if it is becoming more and more mainstream.

But then we get to this third pairing and it’s like, “You serious, Paul?! You’re going to place this next pairing with shameless sexual sin?!” Not only are Christians to have nothing to do with abhorrent sexual immorality, but we’re also to refrain from what others might deem less serious sins, like **quarreling and jealousy**.

Paul is setting us up to make the connection here. In the same way there’s no place in the church for wanton sexual sin, neither is there a place in the church for catty infighting. I wonder if Paul was primarily concerned about this pairing and simply used the first two to intensify the impact of the third. I mean was there really a concern that the Roman Christians were engaged in wanton sexual sin? Perhaps. But it seems more likely that they, like so many churches since, treated quarreling and jealousy as if they were no big deal. That seems more likely to me.

There’s a reason Paul tells the church to give a divisive person two warnings and then have nothing to do with them. It’s not lost on me that one of the elder qualifications is we must not be quarrelsome. Christians shouldn’t be looking for a reason to get sideways with people. We should have no chips on our shoulders! Quarreling is a sin that destroys the church community and completely sidetracks it from its mission. One of the main reasons people fight is the other issue Paul addressed in this pairing: **jealousy**.

*“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel...” James 4:1-2*

Christians are not immune to this sin that grieves the heart of God. We look at people who have something we want or represent something we crave, whatever it is, and we are filled with jealousy. One of the craziest things Christians get jealous over is another Christian’s spiritual gifts and callings. “I wish I had that gifting.” “I wish I had that opportunity.” “I wish I had that influence.”

#### SEE THE ENEMY’S SCHEME

Christian, I wish we could all see how this is a scheme of the enemy to blind us to the gifts, calling, opportunities, and influence that God has given us. Kent Hughes says, This pairing of quarrelling and jealousy, “describes someone who cannot stand being surpassed and grudges others their success and position.” He warns, “Tragically many believers act as if it were their holy duty to keep others in their place.”

Rather than being content with fulfilling their role in the body, they take the bait of Satan and wreak havoc on the body. Such a tragedy. And who wins in this situation? It’s not the individual. It’s certainly not the church. Jesus told us, “The enemy comes to steal, kill, and destroy.” Satan hates Christ’s Church. He may not be able to destroy it, but he has figured out over the last 2000 years how to divide it. He wins when Christians quarrel. He wins when Christians get jealous.

Sexual immorality, sensuality, drunkenness, orgies, quarrelling, & jealousy have no place in the church. They do not come from the Spirit of God, but from the enemy and our own flesh. All of these are works of darkness; evil, and depraved. While I am sure we all can appreciate just how depraved the first two pairs are, I think the third pairing seems to be mostly tolerated and justified. If we could see how our tongues are being wielded by the enemy as a dagger to steal, kill, and destroy, perhaps we'd give a lot more attention to this final pairing of works of darkness.

Whether our temptation is to sin sexually or to damage the Christian community, Paul's instruction is the same. He continues in **verse 14, But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.**

This is a two-pronged approach to deal with the fleshly, sinful impulses that wage war against us: something we do and something we prevent. Let's begin with what we do. Paul tells us to **put on the Lord Jesus Christ.**

As I said last week when I covered "put on the armor of light" in verse 12, the armor of light is Christ. Here Paul tells us explicitly, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Clothe yourself in Him. Armor yourself in Him. Let Him cover you completely so that when the world sees you, they see Christ's nature and character in you. Our lives are to reflect the nature of Christ.

#### PUT ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

I made the connection last week between the armor of light in verse 12, the whole armor of God in Ephesians 6, and now the Lord Jesus Christ. To put on one is to put on all. It's metaphorical language, so I wanted to identify a few ways we put on the Lord Jesus Christ. To put on the Lord Jesus Christ is...

To prioritize like Him: He said to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. We put on the breastplate of? Righteousness. Living righteous lives means prioritizing rightly. It means offering our bodies as a living sacrifice, and with it our goals and ambitions and preferences. It means we align our priorities with His. It means we love Him above all else.

To think like Him: Paul says he took every thought captive and made it submit to Christ. This is protecting the mind, which is what the helmet of salvation does. Because we have been saved, our minds are no longer bound by the deception of the enemy. We are free because the truth has set us free. At the same time, in Philippians 4:8 we're told that we must think about things that are true. Living in the light means guarding our minds, refusing to entertain the enemy's lies – whether that be enticements to sin, accusations, or bitter or otherwise malicious thoughts. Don't give the enemy mental space.

To live & love like Him: Jesus said He came only to do the will of Him who sent Him. To me that sounds like the sandals of the Gospel of peace, the armor for the feet of those who bring good news. Wherever the Lord leads, let our feet take us. It is to follow wherever the Spirit leads and do what the Spirit instructs. It is to hold our lives in the palm of our hands and say, "Lord, you know better than I how to order my life. I submit this decision to you, this opportunity to love others, this hardship, whatever the case may be, I submit this to you."

To speak like Him: I connect this to the belt of truth. In John 14, Jesus said that He is the Truth and He said in John 12 that He only said the things God gave Him to speak, which means He only spoke the truth. Likewise, Paul tells us to speak the truth in love. To live in the light means we do not allow deception, or even half-truths, to come out of our mouths. The bible is replete with exhortations and rebukes for those who allow their tongues to speak words of destruction and deception. The devil is a liar and when the devil speaks, he deceives. When we lie, we do the devil's bidding.

To respond like Him: Peter says that though reviled Jesus did not revile in return but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. I think about the shield of faith here. Jesus rested so completely upon God's judgment that He did not take matters into his own hands to get even. Likewise, living in the light means we know that our heavenly Father sees and judges matters much more clearly than we do. Because of that, we respond to the enemy's attacks, even when they come through human agency. Even when that human agency is someone close to us, we can respond like Christ and entrust our souls to Him who judges justly.

Finally, to put on Christ is to fight like Him: When Jesus came face to face with the enemy and He was tempted three times, Jesus responded to Satan with the word of God, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."* Matthew 4:4

In so speaking Jesus wielded the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, to counter the enemy's temptation. You and I will never be wiser, stronger, or more capable of defeating the enemy's attacks than Jesus. But we can fight like Him by wielding the Word!

To wield the Word, we've got to read the Word. To wield the Word, we've got meditate on the Word. If we want to live in the light and fight like Christ, we have to hide the Word in our hearts.

### WINNING THE WAR AGAINST THE FLESH

And primary to Paul's thought here is not the war out there, but the war within ourselves. It's a fight against our own flesh, our own sin nature. This is why Paul tells us to not only put on the Lord Jesus Christ, but also to **make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires**.

**The flesh** in this context is not the physical human body. There's nothing inherently wrong with the material body. Paul is referring to the sinful, carnal nature latent within us.

The flesh is the source of temptation. James says, *"but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."* James 1:14

What you make provisions for now, you will gratify later. What you gratify later will eventually consume you. Mark my words. Heed the warning of Paul to **make no provision for the flesh**. Don't even think about how you're going to sin. Don't daydream about it. Don't romanticize it. Don't give your mind permission to entertain it.

Though I did not coin this, I have often said, *"Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you there longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay."*

Do you struggle with alcohol? Don't hang out with the people who can't get together without booze. Don't take the route that leads you next to the liquor store. Don't even have a little taste.

Do you struggle with pornography? Don't take the route home that leads you by the adult store. Don't click on links in your junk mail or spam texts. Don't follow the friend request or Instagram follower that you know good and well is a porn bot. Jesus said if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out. That may be hyperbole, but we need to take Him more seriously than most of us do. He knows how sin leads to death.

Do you struggle with pride? People-pleasing? Gossiping? Quarrelling? Jealousy? The answer is the same – take that sin behind the woodshed and beat it to death. I wish more Christians would harness their inner warrior spirit and get violent with their sin because at some point it's going to get violent with you. Your sin wants to kill you and destroy everything in your life! The enemy came to steal, kill, and destroy.

## INFLICT VIOLENCE

Would you allow a rattle snake to slither around in your house? Would you lay down to sleep with a scorpion in the sheets? No! You cut its head off. You crush it! You hunt it down and you inflict violence upon it.

Seem like overkill? Paul said he beat his body and made it his slave! The Puritans “mortified” the flesh. Are you mortifying the flesh or gratifying it? Are you killing it or making provisions for it?

Make no mistake, God is not mocked! Your day is coming. What is done in the darkness will be brought into the light. You keep messing around with this sin and you’re going to regret it.

Christian, the enemy may have lost your soul, but he will do everything he can to keep you distracted by sin and discouraged by shame. “But I say,” in the words of Paul, “...walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” *Galatians 5:16*

If you live in the light, brother and sister, if you put on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will not have to worry about gratifying the flesh and being consumed by it. No, you will walk by the Spirit and He will produce in you much good fruit.

I will leave you with the life-giving, life-transforming gospel, “*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*” *1 Peter 2:24*

Sinner, we don’t make ourselves right with God. No amount of effort on our part can make that happen. We are made right with God by faith in His Son. But, because of what God has done for us in Christ, and because the righteousness of God has been given to us by faith in Jesus, we have the blessed privilege of living in the light. Let us therefore “die to sin and live to righteousness.” Let us live in the light.

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