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*“Wake Up Sleepy Soldiers”*

ROMANS 13:11-12 PT. 1

NOVEMBER 3, 2024

PASTOR BRIAN SMITH

WILDWOOD CHURCH

EAST MOLINE, ILLINOIS

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## AT A GLANCE

The worst thing a soldier can do while on patrol is fall asleep on the perimeter of a patrol base. He has one job: be a watchman for the rest of the unit and warn them of enemy attack. To fall asleep on the perimeter invites devastation to the unit. In this text, Paul issues a wake-up call to sleepy soldiers. Are you spiritually asleep? Wake up!

## INTRODUCTION

As we come now to the end of chapter 13, Paul draws his general exhortations to a conclusion. We’re wrapping up the main idea that Paul began in Romans 12:1-2, in which he exhorts us to lay down our lives as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

You and I are in a precarious position. We are children of the Kingdom of God, but we live in the kingdom of the world. Children of light, living in the dark. We live in the already and not yet. The Kingdom of God has come and we wait for the full consummation of the coming of the Kingdom. But we don’t just wait. We wage war. Time to wake up, sleepy soldier!

## ROMANS 13:11-12

**<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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.**

Paul begins **verse 11** with a transitional clause, **Besides this**, which changes the subject. It indicates to me that Paul is transitioning from 12:9-13:10.

## WAKE FROM SLEEP

**You know the time**, eschatologically speaking. The Greek word used for time here does not mean chronologically, but qualitatively. You know what *kind* of time it is. This is the end of times, or as Acts 2:17 says, “the last days.” The Kingdom of God is near.

**that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep.** Paul made a similar statement in Ephesians 5 in a parallel warning about living in the light and abstaining from immorality. *“Therefore it says, ‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’” Ephesians 5:14*

Those who slumber do not understand the times they are living in. They’re spiritually lazy. To them Paul says, “It’s time for you to get in the fight and take your faith seriously.”

Paul is saying since Jesus is coming soon, put all these things from 12:3 to 13:10 into practice as you present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Use your giftings to bless the church. Love one another and abhor what is evil. Be fervent in spirit. Give to the needs of the saints.

Live peaceably with everyone you can. Submit to governing authorities. Pay your debts and again love one another. This is deliberate Christianity. This is living with the purpose of honoring Christ. Why is it time to wake from sleep?

## WE'RE ALMOST THERE

**For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.** Paul is referring to eschatological salvation; Jesus' return.

Which Paul felt was very near, saying 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.**

R.C. Sproul's translation, "We are now in the last watch of the night, and the dawn of the fullness of our salvation is about to break." – R.C. Sproul

There's nothing more encouraging than first light because you know the night is almost gone and naturally, **the day is at hand.**

Christian, in the grand scheme of things, we are in the last minutes of the last hours of the night. This is not a call to stop doing the regular things of life and wait. It's a call to be found doing the work He has given you to do with purpose. It's a call to be ready, sleepy soldier!

A big part of that is walking in righteousness. Both abstaining from evil and doing good, which Paul tells us next, giving us two commands.

## PROACTIVE, NOT PASSIVE

First, Paul says, **So then let us cast off the works of darkness.** That is, worldly living, or living according to the flesh. Sin, pride, lust, selfishness, etc. have no place in a Christian's life.

Not only are we to distance ourselves from the works of darkness, we're also to put on the light to impact the darkness. You are the light of the world, so let your light shine.

Paul continues, **and put on the armor of light.** See the dichotomy of darkness and light? Good and evil? *"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son."* *Colossians 1:13* If we have been delivered from darkness, why would we continue in it?

This is a call to recognize evil for what it is and to stop blurring the lines. To stop flirting with the desires, plans, and values of the world. After all, *"...what fellowship has light with darkness?"* *2 Corinthians 6:14*

Paul says, **cast off deeds of darkness** and **put on** the armor of light. The faithful Christian life is proactive, not passive. Do something about your sin and apathy. Cast them off. Throw them aside. Be rid of them. And put on the light, which I'll describe.

For now, notice these are imperatives, or commands to do something. Christian, if you think Jesus just wants you to wait for Him to do everything for you, you're mistaken. He has given you His righteousness and new life.

## INDICATIVES AND IMPERATIVES

You are made new in Christ. That's called an indicative, what is true about you. You have been given a new nature. But the indicative doesn't contradict the imperative, what you are to do. You are new, therefore live new. You are in the light, therefore cast off the deeds of darkness. Because of who you are, do these things.

Paul said to put on **the armor** of light. Armor is protective gear. And what protects us? The righteousness of Christ protects us. It's the breastplate of righteousness, or of faith and love as Paul wrote the Thessalonians, and the helmet of our salvation. It's the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

## YOU ARE A SOLDIER

How much time do you spend considering the fact that the Bible tells you to suit up in armor? What does that imply? Who puts on armor? Combatants do. Warriors do. Soldiers do. Jesus said he did not come to bring peace but the sword. He said the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church. Paul refers to his fellow workers in the Gospel as “soldiers” in Philippians 2:25, 2 Timothy 2:3, and Philemon 1:2.

I rarely use other translations, but I love the New English Bible’s translation of Romans 13:12, *“Let us therefore throw off the deeds of darkness and put on our armor as soldiers of the light.” Romans 13:12 (NEB)*

I think this translation underscores what is in Paul’s mind; how he conceives of us as soldiers. To be clear, we do not fight flesh and blood. People are not our enemies. They are souls held captive by the enemy, the devil and his demons, just as we once were. Our fight is against the principalities of this dark world. It’s a spiritual fight and it’s a real fight.

Many Christians are on a spiritual battlefield with no armor, no situational awareness, and they have no weapon in hand. Because of this, they have no lasting peace; no prevailing joy; no conspicuous victory over sin to which they can look back and say, “I see how the Lord is working in my life.”

They’re not growing in their faith. They’re not becoming like Christ. They’re stagnant, complacent, and spiritually weak, and they constantly succumb to the enemy’s attacks. All they do is murmur about it.

John Piper once said, “I hear so many Christians murmuring about their addictions and their failures and their shortcomings. And I see so little war. Murmur, murmur, murmur...why am I this way?...Make War!” – John Piper

## PUT ON THE ARMOR

Do you acknowledge that you are a soldier in a spiritual battle and you’ve been given spiritual armor? One of the first fundamentals Army leaders drive into the minds of young soldiers is the importance of putting on their armor. It’s heavy. It’s bulky. It’s hot. It’s uncomfortable. It makes the top of your head hurt. It’s no fun.

Even less fun than the standard Kevlar helmet and body armor is MOPP gear. It’s our chemical protective gear. It’s thick and lined with charcoal. In the summer, soldiers dread nothing more than to hear “don your MOPP gear.” Especially, MOPP4, which includes your gas mask and thick gloves.

In training it’s inconvenient. You dread it and you can’t wait to take it off. But in a real-world situation, you thank the Lord you have it. But soldiers have to experience its efficacy to believe they really need it.

That’s why every new soldier goes through a gas chamber filled with CS gas, or tear gas. You’re standing there in this room with your protective mask on and you can see gas swirling all around you, but you think “what’s the big deal?” because you’re breathing normally. You’re sweating profusely, but you’re breathing fine.

Then the instructor tells you to remove your mask and that’s when it hits you like a ton of bricks right in the nostrils. You can’t breathe, you can’t keep your eyes open. Snot starts running out of your nose. They make you wait a while to make sure this is an experience you’ll never forget.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words; a [VIDEO](#) is even better.

Now who wants to sign up?! That’s pretty intense isn’t it? Hard to watch? I can tell you from multiple trips through the gas chamber, it’s harder to experience! It’s hard, but this training saves lives. It saves lives because it instills confidence in soldiers that their protective masks work.

It demonstrates, in a way that a PowerPoint slideshow never could, that when you put on your protective mask, you are protected from what would otherwise kill you. Lord forbid, when soldiers find themselves in a real-world chemical scenario, they'll instinctively and confidently put on their mask.

[This is where I realized I had too much left in this sermon to continue and made the decision to return next week. Hope you'll return also!]

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