

## **“PUT ON CHRIST.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

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**Scripture Texts: Romans 13:11-14**

### **Introduction.**

How many of you have been watching the Olympics in Milan, Italy? How about curling? Lots of records are being broken and lots of history is being made. I wonder if there is anyone in Milan who knows about some other history made in Milan over 1600 years ago.

One day some children were playing a game inside a courtyard and they were saying over and over again in Latin, “Tolle, lege; tolle, lege”, take up and read, take up and read. Unknown to them there was a man sitting on the other side of the wall in utter misery, deeply dissatisfied with his life. For decades he had lived gratifying every sinful desire of his flesh. Decades of sexual immorality, sensuality, drunkenness, wine, women and song. And all of this even though he had been raised in a Christian home. But he didn’t know God. Here he was miserable, crying, trying to pray, and then he hears these children’s voices. “Tolle, lege; tolle, lege”, take up and read, take up and read.

Next to him on a bench was a copy of the NT so he picked it up and opened it totally at random and started reading, “not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

In that moment his life was changed. A life consumed by gratifying the flesh, transformed by the sword of the Spirit, the sword of the Word of God. This verse drove him to Christ to seek mercy and relief from the dominion of sin and the fear of hell. That was the history changing grace of God that found Augustine in that Milan garden. From there he became a giant pillar in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of sinful nature.

But our flesh is always hungry and thirsty, always looking for and wanting more. Our flesh is insatiable. Just a little more, but never satisfied. Our flesh is always asking us to find ways of getting what it wants. More money, more lust, more trying to please others,

more stroking the ego, more pleasure, more comfort. More me, me, me. More, more, more.

The mantra of the flesh is “some is good, more is better and too much is just right.”

So how do we stop this vicious cycle? Let me offer three steps from our text.

Wake up. Change your clothes. Go for a good walk.

### **Wake up, vs. 11.**

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.

Do you know what time it is? The hour has come to wake up. Paul isn't talking about alarm clock time like 7 AM. The ancient Greeks had two different words for the two kinds of time that make clear which kind of time they were referring to. English doesn't have that clarity.

There is Chronos time, like a chronometer and chronology. This is calendar time, clock time, time measured in minutes and days and years.

Then there is Kairos time. This is seize the moment kind of time, this is opportune time, this is time that is pregnant with meaning and significance. This is spiritual time.

**Romans 5:6** For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

**Galatians 4:4** When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son.

Do you know what time it is? This is the day the Lord has made. This is the day of salvation, not tomorrow, not next week. Today.

Why today? Because today is the only day any of us has. We don't have tomorrow, we don't know if we will be alive tomorrow. We don't know that opportunity we have today that will be gone tomorrow.

The rich fool in Jesus' parable (Luke 12:16–20) thought he had plenty of time to enjoy life, but God had news for him: “This very night your life will be demanded from you” (verse 20). We have today—we have the present moment—and we should use it wisely.

But Paul isn't just calling us to salvation. He is writing Christians in the church who are asleep or sleepwalking through life. What is this sleep? It is the sleep of this world, the dullness of worldliness. This world puts us into a spiritual sleep. It is the sleep from the

sleeping pills of sin, pleasure, sensuality, selfishness, pride. It is the sleep of upside down priorities, putting earthly concerns and earthly pursuits before spiritual realities, gaining the world and losing our souls.

This is the spiritual complacency when everything is going along just fine right now. No major problems or worries. In peaceful times we sleep. When things are good spiritually, we sleep.

How are we doing as a church, are we complacent, coasting? Are we awake to the enemy who is constantly working? Are we awake to the needs all around us? Is our worship half-hearted, or are our hearts in it all?

**I Thessalonians 5:2-6** ... the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

Wake up to how fleeting this life is and how long eternity is. But it is not enough to wake up, you have to change clothes and get dressed.

### **Change clothes, vs. 12.**

12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. 14 Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

**I Thessalonians 5:8** Since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

Again, remember Paul is writing to Christians in the church; it is to us he says cast off, and put on. Take off, put on.

We continually put off the old man, our old corrupt way of being a human being, and we put on the new man, our new nature, the glorious way of being a human being—the Lord Jesus.

We cannot be neutral in our commitment and still go around wearing our old clothes, the clothes we wore in the darkness, clothes of sin and selfishness. We need to keep changing our wardrobe.

Put aside that old sweater of drunkenness, that shirt of crude talk and jokes, that vest of lying, the pants of lust and impurity, the coat of anger and bitterness, the hat of pride, the socks of hatred, shoes of greed, the belt of self and selfishness, the tie of division and strife and critical spirit. Take them off, get rid of them. And don't send them to Second Chance. Burn them. Kill them. Mortify the flesh.

This isn't just about avoiding sin, it is about actively killing sin.

***“Clothing yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ is not just the alternative to gratifying the flesh. It's the means to keep from gratifying the flesh. It's the way we kill those sinful thoughts.*** It's the way we keep them from even arising. When you put on the armor of light daily, or hourly, then you get fresh faith in Christ, hope in Christ and love for Christ—it is hard for the works of darkness to cling to you.” Geoff Thomas

**Put on the armor of light.** And what is that, or better, who is that? Vs. 14 is the parallel, put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

**II Corinthians 4:6** For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

To put on the armor of light means we are armed to do battle with the forces of darkness, to have the light that has overcome the darkness.

Do you hear the goodness of the Gospel in this? To put on Christ is to put on His Holy Spirit. We are not left naked, we are not left without any clothes.

John Piper paints a rather vivid image of putting on Christ as our tools for spiritual battle,

“Clothing yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ means ... putting him on like a high-impact protective anti-explosive suit when you disarm the bombs of the devil. It means putting him on as the asbestos fire-proof suit when you rescue sinners from the flames of hell. It means putting him on as a bullet proof vest when you confront the bullets of sin and unbelief. Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ means ... you have all the resources of heaven that you need to do his will. It means putting him on ... so that there can be constant communication with the one ... who is himself everything you need. .... That is what it means to be clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Stop sleeping, wake up, put off your old clothes, get dressed, put on your armor.

**Go for a good walk, vs. 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. ... [making] no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Let us walk properly as in the daytime. But you are thinking you have fallen so many times, how can you get up and start walking?

This is not moralism, screwing up our will power screw. This is not about your trying harder and harder to do better and be better Christians. This is living by faith under the grace Jesus gives us by His Spirit in us. It means being united to Jesus by faith and being filled with the Holy Spirit who enables us to put off the darkness of our sin, to no longer find ways to gratify the desires of the flesh.

This is an invitation to walk by the Spirit. Not in our own strength, but in His. In Him we are enabled to choose to turn away from patterns that feed the flesh and instead pursue the things that stir our affections for Christ.

We won't get it right every time, but by the Spirit, we are no longer enslaved to sin. And by the Spirit we repent daily, repentance is part of the daily rhythm of our Christian life. Like the Lord's Prayer.

*Paul uses Jesus' fullest title when he tells us to clothe ourselves with "The Lord Jesus Christ".* When you put on the Lord Jesus Christ you are putting on His human nature, His divine nature and His exalted position as Lord, putting Him on in His fullest most powerful person.

Paul points us to Jesus in all His fullness and power and strength. Trust Him, love Him, desire Him more than the things of your flesh.

### **Implications and application.**

Do the desires of your flesh seem to win the day and get what they want. Has pleasure become your master? Does conflict seem to be a frequent part of your life, are you at odds with others?

Do your emotions get the best of you? Anger, bitterness, complaining, critical spirit, short fuse. Do you have little appetite for Scripture and prayer? This is what life looks like when the flesh is in control, when we are walking in darkness.

If anything I have said has created a twinge of conviction or discomfort, you are not alone.

Who do you think Paul is writing about? Who is doing this nighttime behavior? Others out there somewhere, non-Christians? Paul is talking to Christians, about Christians. When Paul says don't do these things, he is saying we are in fact doing these very things.

The only way for God's Word to be helpful to us is if we see it is talking to us and helping us. Every letter Paul wrote to every church says the same things. They weren't worse than today, we aren't better than them. They are like us and we are like them. Don't act surprised when you find out we sin just like them.

Paul didn't write these words to crush us; he wrote them to wake us up, to help us recognize where we're drifting and to point us back to the freedom we've been given when we put on Christ and walk in the light of His truth.

**I John 1:5-9** This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Wake up, get dressed, and walk in the light of Christ by the power of the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Take up and read, take up and read.

**Philippians 4:8-9** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

**Prayer:** Our Lord Jesus Christ, we are bold to ask you to clothe us with yourself. Be for us a strong garment of righteousness, purity and strength against our own evil desires and lust, and against the dangers of the world and attacks of the evil one. As we clothe ourselves, so cover and clothe us with yourself, guard our souls, armor us in all your armor.