

PUTTING ON CHRIST

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore CAST OFF the works of darkness, and let us PUT ON the armor of light. Let us WALK HONESTLY, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But PUT YE ON the Lord Jesus Christ, and MAKE NOT PROVISION for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. (Romans 13:11-14)

INTRODUCTION TO SERIES

Lesson 1 of 45

Justification by faith is not a cold and calculating doctrine (Acts 13:39; Rom 3:28; 5:1; Gal 2:16; 3:24). It is not possible for a Living God to issue a lifeless doctrine, intended only for the intellect, and having no impaction upon practical life. The thought of such a possibility must be thrust from us as poison that will anaesthetize the soul.

Neither, indeed, is justification by faith, or the imputation of righteousness (Rom 4:11,22-24; James 2:23), to be viewed as a subject for theologians, or those with specialized academic credentials. This is not a doctrine for the “doctors of the law” (Lk 5:17), although it is often so viewed. This is nourishment for all who are in Christ Jesus.

This section of Romans (chapters 12-16) is the logical exposition of the effects of justification. The imputation of righteousness is declared to have a calculated impact upon the way we live, as well as upon our attitudes, motives, and purposes.

JUSTIFICATION – THE THEME

Justification, or the imputation of righteousness, is the theme of the book of Romans. Justification involves the remission of sin as well as the imputation of righteousness. These are the two means by which salvation is made effectual. Remission is in order that the righteousness of God may be imputed, or credited, to us. Ponder the undeniable emphasis on this matter. The use of the following words in the book of Romans, confirm this to be the case.

1. “Justify” (3:30).
2. “Justified” (2:13; 3:4,20,24,28; 4:2; 5:1,9; 8:30).
3. “Justification” (4:25; 5:16,18).
4. “Justifier” (3:26).
5. “Justifieth” (4:5; 8:33).
6. “Righteous” (2:5; 3:10; 5:7,19).
7. “Righteousness” (1:17; 2:26; 3:5,21,22, 25, 26; 4:3,5,6,9,11,13,22; 5:17,18,21; 6:13,16,18,19,20; 8:4,10; 9:28,30,31; 10:3,4,5,6,10; 14:17).
8. “Impute” (4:6).
9. “Imputed” (4:11,22,23,24; 5:13).
10. “Imputeth” (4:6).

ERRONEOUS TEACHING

Some of the phrases used in Romans are unusually strong, driving home the point that our righteousness depends upon Divine intervention.

1. "His faith is counted for righteousness" (4:5)
2. "God imputeth righteousness without works" (4:6).
3. "Faith reckoned to Abraham for righteousness" (4:9).
4. "The righteousness of faith" (4:11,13).
5. "It was imputed to him for righteousness" (4:22).
6. "The gift of righteousness" (5:17).
7. "By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (5:19).
8. "The righteousness which is of faith" (10:6).
9. "Man believeth unto righteousness" (10:10).

These, and similar, phrases have led some to believe there is little or no involvement of the individual in justification. Thus doctrines such as "once in grace always in grace," or "eternal security," have arisen to the confusion of many. Since, it is reasoned, God makes us righteous, and that righteousness is based upon our faith in Christ, it is not possible for our works to interfere with the culmination of salvation. The fact that God begins salvation is considered to be proof enough that He will finish it, whether He has the cooperation of the one being saved or not. This is a completely erroneous view of the situation. It wholly misrepresents God, Christ, the grace of God, and salvation. Neither God nor Jesus ever overlook unbelief and disobedience and, especially since the exaltation of Jesus, are never represented as doing so.

This series of lessons deals with the impact faith has upon the one possessing it, and what they are expected, and required, to do. We have been saved from one condition, in order that we might participate in another.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." (Romans 13:11-14)

Lesson 2 of 45

JUSTIFICATION IS BY FAITH

Justification is "BY FAITH," and the justified ones "shall live BY FAITH," and "stand BY FAITH" (1:17; 3:22,28,30; 5:1,2; 9:32; 11:20). We have "access into God's grace BY FAITH" (Rom 5:2). We are "children of God BY FAITH" (Gal 3:26). We "wait for the hope of

righteousness BY FAITH” (Gal 5:5). Christ dwells in our hearts “BY FAITH” (Eph 3:17). The great spiritual exploits of the saints that are chronicled in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews were all “BY FAITH” (Heb 11:4-31).

Remove faith from the equation, and there is no justification, without which Christ cannot be “PUT ON.” What is more, even though faith comes from God (Eph 6:23), it becomes active in the ones receiving it. They are the ones who believe. They are the ones who trust. God gives them faith, but does not believe for them. Faith “comes” (Rom 10:17; Gal 3:23), but it must be used. The life that is given to us in justification is maintained by faith, for “the just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38).

FAITH IS NEVER TO BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED

This is not an incidental matter. Faith is never taken for granted in the believer. There is a fight associated with keeping the faith. We are admonished, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim 6:12). Rather than faith being automatic, those who believe are reminded, “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Heb 10:38). They are also admonished, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12).

Men have made “shipwreck” of faith, putting away a good conscience (1 Tim 1:19). Jesus spoke of those who “for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Lk 8:13). The Holy Spirit “expressly” spoke of some who “shall depart from the faith” (1 Tim 4:1).

Faith, which is the appointed means through which grace comes to us (Eph 2:8), is not to be taken for granted. We are to “continue in the faith” (Acts 14:22), be “established in the faith” (Acts 16:5), and “stand fast in the faith” (1 Cor 16:13). We who are in Christ are admonished, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith” [NASB] (2 Cor 13:5). Categorically we are told we will be presented to the Lord “holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: IF ye continue in the faith grounded and settled” (Col 1:23). The only way to overcome the devil is to resist him by being “steadfast in the faith” (1 Pet 5:8-9).

FAITH IS NOT PASSIVE

Faith is never represented as a passive possession, maintained without any effort on the part of the one possessing it. Faith is much like a tender living treasure. It must be cared for with diligence. It must be fed, nourished, and caused to grow and increase. If this does not happen, faith will die. It cannot exist without nourishment, but “lives by every word of God” (Lk 4:4). This is the appointed means through which the child of God is justified and sustained. It simply is not possible to be cleared from guilt and receive God’s righteousness apart from faith. Neither can those conditions be maintained apart from faith. What you have from God, you have by your faith. Thus it is written, “The just shall LIVE by faith” (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). Habakkuk says the just one lives by “HIS faith” (Hab 2:14).

Salvation is always promised to those who are believing, and never to those who are not believing. There is such a consistency in this throughout Scripture that it requires obstinance and spiritual blindness to fail to perceive it. When we speak of putting on Christ, we are speaking of

something that requires faith – consistent and God-glorifying faith!

PUTTING ON CHRIST

“And that, knowing the time, that NOW it is high time to awake out of sleep: for NOW is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night IS far spent, the day IS at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Romans 13:11-14)

Lesson 3 of 45

THE RELEVANCE OF THIS

I have spent time delineating justification by faith because of its relevance to this passage. I am not merely referring to a theological position, and “justification” must never be approached in such a cold manner. Justification is the means through which God has addressed and solved the sin-problem. As such, it must NOT be hidden by the black shroud of sectarian positions and theological formulae.

All of this is germane to the exposition of this passage. The exhortation that is placed before us is a summons to holy involvement in the matter of our own justification. That involvement is not the basis, or foundation, of our acceptance by God (Eph 1:6). It is, however, the outworking of that acceptance. It provides us with evidence that what we profess in Christ is true.

The point being made in the latter chapters of Romans is this: justification from all things (Acts 13:39) and the imputation of righteousness (Rom 4:5-6,11), have a favorable and God-honoring impact upon the believer. Where those effects are not found, the experience of justification cannot be proved. No one is able to confirm that sins have been forgiven that still maintain a grip upon the individual.

Spiritual life has certain characteristics. Being “made righteous” is not a mere technicality where we remain fundamentally the same, yet are accepted by God anyway. It appears by the positions and expressions of some, that this view is gaining acceptance in the “Christian” community. As a consequence, sin is being countenanced, even though God demands we rid ourselves of it (1q Cor 15:34; Eph 4:26; 1 John 2:1; 2 Cor 7:1-2; Heb 12:1).

There is an alarming prevalence of this kind of thinking in the professed Christian world. There is a general perception that Christians are basically like all other men, except they are forgiven. In fact, the statement is often made, “Christians are sinners, but they are forgiven.” Others are wont to draw frequent parallels between those in Christ and the wayward Israelites. Still others compare those in Christ with the pre-Pentecostal disciples, who often were rebuked for their unbelief and obtuseness.

Because of the general deadness of the professed church, these views are taught and received as

though they were true. They are NOT true! Such persuasions deny the reality of the “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17), being “begotten again” (1 Pet 1:3), and receiving a “new heart” and “new spirit” (Ezek 36:26). They deny we have been “delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom” of God’s “dear Son” (Col 1:13). These erroneous views contradict the proclamation that a fundamental change occurs in those who are justified, and to whom the righteousness of God is imputed (Tit 2:11-13).

There is a process going on within the believer. He is being changed “from glory unto glory, even as by the Spirit of our God” (2 Cor 3:18). By means of God’s “exceeding great and precious promises,” we are participating in the “Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). To liken those involved in such a transformation to the stiff-necked Israelites is a betrayal of gross ignorance and thoughtlessness. In the context of such fallacious views, doctrines such as eternal security flourish. However, such views cannot be espoused when consciously standing before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will vanish like scum in the brightness of His glory. One must be aloof from Jesus to espouse them. Faith will not allow such views to be embraced or proclaimed. They are products of unbelief. If that seems strong, it is not nearly as strong as it should be.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

“And that, knowing the time, that NOW it is high time to awake out of sleep: for NOW is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night IS far spent, the day IS at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Romans 13:11-14)

Lesson 4 of 45

TOO DIFFICULT??

Is the admonition of this text too difficult to receive? Does it appear too harsh? Is it superfluous to exhort those in Christ, “But PUT YE ON the Lord Jesus Christ!” Is it too negative to say, “The night is FAR SPENT?” Is it an exaggeration to say, “the day is AT HAND?” Is CASTING OFF the works of darkness an overly expressed statement? Is it really necessary to tell those in Christ to “PUT ON the armor of light,” or to “walk honestly . . . not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering [idleness, resting] and wantonness, not in strife and envying?” Is it out of order to tell the people of God to MAKE NO PROVISION for the flesh? Is there a time in this world believers reach when such admonitions are no longer necessary?

This is militant language. It presumes adversaries, both seen and unseen. It assumes the ever-present liabilities associated with the flesh, and with being in a world that is destined to pass away. This is language that promotes sobriety, determination, and alertness.

If anything, because of our infirmities, it is understated. Our text will confirm this to be the case. We will be warned, admonished, and urged to more thorough involvement with God. We will be asked to uproot our affections from this world, and awake from spiritual sleep. The Spirit will

call us to consider the nearness of the culmination of our salvation. All of this is utterly superfluous if there is no lurking danger. If it is not possible for us to draw back from God, warnings are absolutely out of order.

Our text calls for the greatest sobriety and honesty on our part. Yet, faith will flood the heart with confidence while we are in the process of giving heed to the words of the Spirit. Faith is not intimidated by the demands of the Lord, for it knows Divine strength will undergird all conscientious effort to please Him. In fact, faith longs to hear what the Lord requires, for it has a longing to please Him and be with Him. It abhors all that competes with God. Faith cries out, “What do You want me to do?” It cries out heartily, with sincerity, and with a readiness to obey.

O that this admonition were heard more regularly, and with great fervency. Take Jesus and the Holy Spirit out of the equation, and our adversary is infinitely stronger than us. The principalities and powers that operate under him cannot be rebuffed or neutralized by scholarship or sectarian allegiance. The “flesh,” or “natural man,” cannot be allowed to roam about freely without taking us down in bitter defeat. Men sleep, but Satan does not. Flesh wears out, but principalities and powers do not. The adversaries we face will not yield if King Jesus is not evident. When the Holy Spirit is quenched, they are loosed. Where the Holy Spirit is grieved, they are given license to operate. When men are spiritually asleep, they are more alert. Where there is slowness of heart, they will make inroads. Where there is mediocrity, they will excel. Where there is ignorance, they will gain the advantage.

This is, indeed, a most sober admonition, and it must be taken seriously.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 5 of 45

KNOW THE TIME

“And that, knowing the time . . .” (Verse 11, Romans 13:11-14)

The tribe of Issachar was noted for knowing the times: “And of the children of Issachar, which were men that HAD UNDERSTANDING OF THE TIMES, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chron 12:32).

Jesus upbraided the generation among whom He walked by saying, “And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering [overcast]. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES? (Matt 16:3). Jesus also spoke of the fulfilling of “the TIMES of the Gentiles” (Lk 21:24). Peter preached of “TIMES of refreshing” (Acts 3:19), and of “the TIMES of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets” (Acts 3:21). In history there were “TIMES of this ignorance of God” (Acts 17:30).

What kind of times are we experiencing? There is a certain kind of “times” that spans many

generations. Such are the times of our text –and they need to be known, or understood. Since the period called “the Enlightenment,” or “The Age of Reason” (1715-1789),” when human reason was exalted to the place of prominence, and God was relegated into the background, men have thought differently about freedom, life, politics, religion, the Scriptures, the translation of Scripture, and salvation itself. The manner of these times continues to this very day. Believers should have some kind of grasp of “the times” in which they live, and how they should conduct themselves.

In Christ, the performance of duty is elevated. Under the Law, the reasonableness of obedience was not clearly seen. There were great temporal blessings held out to the people, as well as dreadful curses in the world (Deut 28:1-68). But this is not the manner of life in the Son! Within the framework of the New Covenant God does not call upon us to follow Him in order to temporal benefits. Search the Scriptures and see if this is not the case. When Jesus spoke to the seven churches of Asia, He held before them benefits that extended beyond “this present evil world” (Rev 2-3).

1. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (2:7).
2. “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (2:11).
3. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (2:17).
4. “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father. And I will give him the morning star” (2:26-28).
5. “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels” (3:5).
6. “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name” (3:12).
7. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (3:21).
8. “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son” (21:7).

Tell me, you that know the glory of the New Covenant, how do those promises compare with those of Deuteronomy 28? Are they not of another and superior order? None of them pertain to life in the flesh, or life in those present evil world. Do they not have a stronger pull upon your heart? This is how the King of kings speaks (1 Tim 6:15) – the Head of the church (Eph 5:23), and the one and only Potentate (1 Tim 6:15).

Already, the twelfth chapter of Romans has mentioned the reasonableness of giving our bodies as a “living sacrifice unto God” (Rom 12:1-2). Now, the Spirit will continue that same approach

to living in a godly manner. He will not hold the wrath of God before us as a primary incentive. Nor, indeed, will He promise us that all will be well with us if we knuckle down and keep the commandments of God. Rather, He gently elevates us into the heavenlies, showing us the utter insanity of being ungodly. For those with “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16), this is the strongest way to move the believer to a life that honors God and prepares us to stand before Him with joy. For those who are living beneath the privileges of salvation, frolicking about in spiritual childhood, and even living dangerously close to this present evil world, the King has told us how to approach such people. They must be commended for any rightness found in them (Rev 2:2-3,13,19; 3:4,7-8), confronted with their manner (Rev 2:4,14-15,20; 3:1-2,15-17), warned of the consequences of living in a spiritually sloven manner (Rev 2:5,16,21-23; 3:16), then given the promises as an incentive to move forward (Rev 2:7,17,24-28; 3:4-5,8-12,18-21).

The times in which we are living call for such things.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 6 of 45

DO THIS

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep” (Verse 13, Romans 13:11-14).

The New American Standard Version reads, “DO THIS, knowing the time . . .” Other versions read, “Besides this” (NRSV), and “This also” (DARBY). WHAT IS IT THAT IS TO BE DONE? As exceedingly practical as it may appear, this refers first to the exhortation in verses seven and eight. “Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.” Second, it refers to the admonition that will follow in verses twelve through fourteen: “let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:12-14).

In other words, what men refer to as the practical things of life – everyday life, as it was – is to be lived out “knowing the times, and that “it is high time to awake out of sleep!”

The Spirit does not say “Try and do this,” or “Do your best to do this.” His words are like piercing arrows that provide us no alternative. “DO this!” Valid obedience is always preceded by determination – godly determination. When the convicted sinners on Pentecost cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we DO?” they were ready to respond. The only thing they lacked was direction, and that was provided to them (Acts 2:37-38). When the Philippian jailor cried out, “Sirs, what must I DO to be saved?,” he was ready to DO whatever was required of him. Resolution and determination are twins that must visit the heart before true obedience can be rendered to God.

Here is an area in which the contemporary church could improve: a DETERMINATION to do what the Lord commands. It appears to me that this is a very deficient area in the modern church. The proper attitude is one that responds like Abraham to the angel of God: "Here am I" (Gen 22:11). This is the same response Moses had when the Lord called to him from the middle of the burning bush: "Here am I!" The idea is, "Here I am, ready to listen to Your voice, and ready to do what you command!"

It is the attitude conveyed in Eli's instruction to young Samuel, who did not yet know the Lord. When the Lord called to Samuel, Eli instructed him to respond, "Speak, LORD; for Thy servant heareth" (1 Sam 3:9). Samuel was to listen with a mind to yield to whatever direction was given to him.

This is the same spirit Isaiah had when he saw the Lord "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." When a sense of forgiveness had gripped his heart, he heard the Godhead talking among themselves: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" At once Isaiah spoke up: "Here am I; send me" (Isa 6:1-8).

That is the kind of spirit that is reflected in this words, "This DO!" Such an attitude was exceedingly rare prior to Jesus Christ. There were a few notables who were renowned for their response to God: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, the holy Prophets, and a few others. But this was not at all common.

In Christ, however, this posture of soul is assumed. The Spirit speaks as though there was a readiness on the part of believers to obey God. He appeals to the "inward parts," where God desires that truth be found (Psa 51:6). He speaks to the "inner man" (Eph 3:16), the "new man" (Col 3:10), and the "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17). When we are moved by this part of our being, we always do what is right, for the Holy Spirit is granting strength to the inner man.

Now, the Spirit will show us how reasonable it is to love our neighbor as ourselves. He will show us that this is much more than "the second" greatest commandment. This is how new life from God lives in this world. He will also show us WHY new life responds in this manner.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 7 of 45

KNOWING THE TIME

"And that, knowing the time . . ." (Verse 1, Romans 13:11-14)

Other versions read, "understanding the present time" (NIV), "you know what time it is" (NRSV), "you know what hour it is" (RSV), "knowing the season" (ASV), "you know how late it is" (NLT), and "you know the time has come" (NJB).

You can see from these various renderings of the text that, for the saints of God, a certain awareness is taken for granted. He does not say you OUGHT to know the time, but that we

know, or are aware, of it. From the standpoint of a segment of history, it is “THE time.” Seen as an appropriate period, when certain benefits can be reaped by the soul, it is “the SEASON.” Viewed as a time we must not allow to pass us by, it is “the HOUR.” Considered as a Divine appointment, “the time HAS COME.”

Some people think only of the time in which they live – contemporary time. These are the people who make much of relevancy, speaking in contemporary language, incorporating fads into their music, etc. They imagine that speaking in contemporary speech makes things clearer, more understandable, and more relevant – when actually, such speech may hide the truth. It is important to know the times.

All times are not alike. The time the flood was not like the time when Jesus walked among men. The time of the reign of Manasseh was not like the time of the reign of David. The time of the Babylonian captivity was not the time when Judah returned to Jerusalem. The time of the building project in the plain of Shinar was not like the time when Jesus commenced building His church. The time of renewal is not like the time of falling away. The time when the truth is the dominant message is not like the time when false doctrine is prominent. The time of chastening is not like the time of blessing. IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THE TIME.

The tribe of Issachar was noted for knowing the times. It is said of them, “And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had UNDERSTANDING OF THE TIMES, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chron 12:32). The New Living Translation reads, “all these men understood the signs of the times and knew THE BEST COURSE for Israel to take” (1 Chron 12:32).

What are God’s people to do when immorality is standardized, sodomy allowed and promoted, and an entire younger generation going astray. What are we to do when entertainers are more popular than preachers and teachers, crime is breaking forth, and churches are uninformed and dead. What are the saints of God to do in those circumstances. The presence of such trends, fashions, and preferences identifies “the times” in which we live.

Is this the time for theologians to have symposiums to rethink the reality of hell, and the nature of the atonement? Is this really the time to build religious empires and institutions? Is this the time to emphasis health and wealth? Is this really the time for more translations of the Bible? Is this the time to be speaking about our country as “the greatest nation in the history of mankind?” Are these times to which we should accommodate ourselves – times in which people do not think of God as Creator, Omnipotent, and doing His will in both heaven and earth? Should Noah preach the love of God to his generation? Should Lot proclaim the mercy of God to Sodom? Should Moses tell the stiff-necked Israelites God is the God of the second chance? Should Jesus declare the grace of God to the scribes and Pharisees? Should Paul reason with Elymas the sorcerer about alternative life-styles?

This is a time that calls for discernment, understanding, comprehension, and perception. John the Baptist was positioned in a “time” that called for the message of repentance. He also spoke of the kingdom of God, and the Son of God – but it was within the context of repentance (Lk 3:3).

Now, our text affirms that knowing the time “it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our

salvation nearer than when we believed” (Rom 13:11). This is not the time to be “slow of heart to believe” (Lk 24:25). This is not the time to be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God (2 Tim 3:4). It is not the time to be children in understanding (1 Cor 14:20). It is not the time to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb 10:25). It is certainly not the time to provoke God with deviate behavior (1 Cor 10:22).

Are you one the can accurately be described as “knowing the time?”

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 8 of 45

GOD IS ASSOCIATED WITH TIMES

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” (Verse 1, Romans 13:11-14)

Throughout history, God has hinged His dealings with men upon appropriate times, or periods. There came a TIME for Noah to build an ark (Heb 11:7). There also came a TIME when he had to enter into the ark (Gen 7:1). The TIME came when Abraham had to leave Ur, and begin a journey to the promised land (Gen 12:1-3). The TIME came when he had to leave Haran (Gen 12:3-4). A TIME arrived when Moses had to confront Pharaoh, demanding that he release the people of God (Ex 7:1-2). The TIME came when the Israelites had to leave Egypt (Ex 12:51). Again, the TIME came when they were to enter into Canaan (Josh 1:2). In God’s TIME, the forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist, came on the scene (John 1:6-7). In “the fulness of TIME,” Jesus was “made of a woman, made under the Law” (Gal 4:4). Even the day of Pentecost is said to have “fully come” (Acts 2:1). A TIME has been appointed when the Lord will return (Matt 24:36). The day of judgment is set for a certain TIME (Acts 17:31). God has always worked within “times” and “seasons” which are in His power, and are used at His discretion (Acts 1:7).

However, the point of our text is KNOWING the time:– i.e. being aware of the period in which we are living. The men of Issachar distinguished themselves as “men that had understanding of the TIMES , to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chron 12:32). By way of contrast, Jesus rebuked His generation for being ignorant of “the TIMES.” “When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the TIMES?” (Matt 16:2-3).

When Jesus came “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3), there were those who, cognizant of the times, “looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Lk 2:38). There were others who were “in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he might be the Christ” [NASB] (Lk 3:15). They sensed the TIMES!

Some have been taught that we can have no real knowledge of the times – that God does not precede epochs with indicators that can be read by sensitive hearts. This word, however, did not come from God, and is at variance with the entire revelation of God. Daniel “understood by

books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” He was able to decipher the TIMES, and thus set his “face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes” (Dan 9:1-2). The book of Hebrews was written to a people who were informed sufficient TIME has elapsed for them to have grown up in Christ and obtain mature understanding (Heb 5:21). Peter reminded the saints, “the TIME is come that judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Pet 4:17).

The Spirit of God will now call us into account for knowing THE TIME in which we are living. We are to be able to assess where we are, and how to respond appropriately to things confronting us, knowing the Lord is in them. It is not acceptable to remain ignorant of the Divinely orchestrated circumstances that surround us.

If God is driven by His own agenda, it is certainly out of order for us to be motivated by the temporal agendas of this world, whether they be our own, or those established by our peers. Think about it! What is God doing in this generation. Are the trends, customs, and preferences that are exhibited throughout this nation evidences of God’s presence or absence? There did come a time when God would not allow the building of Shinar to continue (Gen 11:1-9). There came a time when the population of the whole world had to be deduced to eight (Gen 7:23; 1 Pet 3:20). There came a time when Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim could no longer exist (Deut 29:23). We know by revelation that when God gave them up in the lusts of their [own] hearts to sexual impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves [abandoning them to the degrading power of sin]” (Rom 1:24), the provocation and result was, “for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature, And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet” (Rom 1:26-27). Unless God has changed, that will help us assess our times, and heed the admonition in it: “awake out of sleep.” If these conditions exist in our nation – and they do – what does it mean? It is imperative that we know the time! It may be easy to sing “God bless America” – but He will not do it while He is being misrepresented, blasphemed, and contradicted by its citizenry.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 9 of 45

HIGH TIME TO AWAKE

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep . . .” (Verse 11, Romans 13:11-14)

See what a sense of urgency attends this text! It has a spirit that calls for our attention. The Word of the Living God not only contains facts, it also has a spirit or tone. If you will hear it in an acceptable manner, the WAY God speaks will call for your immediate attention. Heard in faith it captures your mind, bringing you to a high level of awareness and alertness. On the day of

Pentecost, that sense of urgency, without an invitation, caused the people to cry out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). **THEY HAD BEEN AWAKENED!** After hearing Philip “preach Christ,” a certain Ethiopian eunuch cried out, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36). **HE HAD BEEN AWAKENED!** When Saul of Tarsus confronted the living Christ, and realized who He was, he said, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:5). **HE HAD BEEN AWAKENED!** When a certain Philippian jailor was confronted with Paul and Silas, and of their miraculous deliverance, he cried out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” **HE HAD BEEN AWAKENED!** When seven pretentious Jews attempted to cast a demon out of a man, and that man leaped on them and overcame them, certain people heard of it, “the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified,” and “many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (Acts 19:18-20). **THEY HAD BEEN AWAKENED!**

It is not enough for professing Christians simply to spend some time together in general religious activities. It is time for something to happen – something that is God-honoring. It is time for alertness and interest to be brought to high and compelling levels, when people become determined to make some significant advancement toward the Lord. When normal activities are resumed, it should be with a refreshed attitude, and increased determination to please the Lord in those activities.

Too often this perspective is missing in professed Christian circles. There is altogether too much casualness in the average church. “Casual” means nonchalant, blase, and indifferent. Judging from the manner in which preachers preach, teachers teach, and listeners listen, you would conclude nothing of any consequence is imminent. Expectation has not been awakened, and resolve remains sleeping in the church pew. When the people came, they really did not expect anything significant to happen. They did not anticipate the opening of some new vista of truth. They did not look for an increase of godly zeal, and an acceleration of pace in the race set before them. So far as they were concerned, it was just another “ho-hum” day.

This kind of spiritual sterility is seen in feigned intellectualism of some presenters, and even in their appearance. Instead of sensing the spirit of deliberateness and intentionality, there is often the waft of disinterest and detachment. Many of the younger generation try and address this spirit of boredom with hyped up music played by spiritually ignorant people, and generally accompanied with juvenile words. I understand there are holy minstrels whose music the evil spirits hate. But, apart from such people, the “inner man” (Eph 3:16) cannot be awakened by the mere strum of a guitar or a drumbeat. Others attempt to promote interest with flashy expressions that lack power, and still others with visual effects through which it is difficult to sleep. But such approaches will not cause people to “awake” spiritually, becoming keenly aware of both their circumstances and their state.

It appears as though men think they have a lot of time – time to correct any flaws, time to make more plans, and time to do their own will. Like Felix they reason, “when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25). But this may not be the case at all, and woe to the person who proceeds in life as though such a view was true. God’s people must have the “now it

is high time” point of view.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 10 of 45

NOW

“And that, knowing the time, that NOW it is high time to awake out of sleep: for NOW is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” (Verse 1, Romans 13:11-14)

“ . . . now . . . ” One of the particular benefits of faith and spiritual understanding is that they put God in the “NOW.” Response to God is associated with “now.” Obedience is connected to “now.” The time to serve God becomes “now.” There are things available to us “now” that have not always been known. This is knowledge that was made available to the sons of men after Jesus has taken away the sin of the world.

1. “NOW” we know why the Law was given (Rom 3:19).
2. “NOW” the righteous of God is made known “without the Law” (Rom 3:21).
3. “NOW” we are justified (Rom 5:9).
4. “NOW” we have “received the atonement” (Rom 5:11).
5. “NOW” is the time to “yield” our capacities to the Lord (Rom 6:19).
6. “NOW” we are “ashamed” of our former way of living (Rom 6:21).
7. “NOW” we are “made free from sin” (Rom 6:22).
8. “NOW” we are “delivered from the Law” (Rom 7:6).
9. “NOW” there is “no condemnation” to those who are in Christ (Rom 8:1).
10. “NOW” the God of all peace can fill us with “all joy and peace in believing” (Rom 15:13).
11. “NOW” the mystery hidden from the foundation of the world has been “manifested” (Rom 16:26).
12. “NOW” we have received “the Spirit that is from God” (1 Cor 2:12).
13. “NOW” we no longer “know Christ after the flesh” (2 Cor 5:16).
14. “NOW” is the “acceptable time,” when God is receiving us (2 Cor 6:2a).
15. “NOW” is the “day of salvation,” when deliverance can be realized (2 Cor 6:2b).
16. “NOW” in Christ Jesus we have been “made nigh” to God Himself (Eph 2:13).
17. “NOW” we are “fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph 2:19).
18. “NOW” we are “light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8).
19. “NOW” we are “the sons of God” (1 John 3:2).

It should be apparent to us that faith makes God and the things of God contemporary – NOW! While faith does reach back to the death of Christ and His resurrection, its power is found in the “NOW,” not the then! Faith brings the “wonderful works of God” from the past into the present, making them vibrant to our souls, and imparting resources to us. Men may speak of “historic faith,” but God does not. Faith cannot live in the past. It lives in the present, with the future in view. Believers take hold of the past death, burial, and resurrection of Christ with all of the impact of things that have happened today. Faith brings the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ into the present, where we can actually participate in them (Rom 6:3-4,8; Col 2:12,20), as

well as reap the benefits of them.

Our text reads “NOW.” It demands immediate attention. It assumes there is an awareness that must both dominate and motivate us right now. The word “now” will not let us sit down, but moves us forward into action. It denotes urgency and immediacy. It is only when this transition actually happens that the future becomes relevant and meaningful – when Christ shall come, gather His people to Himself, and they will ever be with the Lord.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” (Verse 1, Romans 13:11-14)

Lesson 11 of 45

HIGH TIME

“ . . . it is high time.” Other versions read, “it is already the hour” (NASB), “The hour has come for you” (NIV), “it is now the moment” (NRSV), “it is full time now” (RSV), “it is already time” (DARBY), and “time is running out” (NLT).

The words translated “high time” are translated from a Greek word which means “the moment, instant, occasion, or hour of the day.” We often use the expression in this manner. When a favorable reaction is finally realized, we will say, “Well it is high time . . .”

The obvious meaning is that this is the time to do what is admonished. For the last 2,000 years, believers have heard these words, urging them to immediate and resolute action. If it was “high time,” or precisely the right moment, for the Roman believers in the first century, it is even more so for us. The Spirit will make that very point in the next phrase. There is a sense or urgency in this word; it is a pressing moment, a time that is demanding us to do something. It speaks of a period that compels us – requiring us to do something that is imperative. This is a time to assert ourselves, putting ourselves forward in a decisive and insightful action.

This is a time when we ought to know enough to realize delay can very well thrust us into state from which we cannot recover. This is a word that cannot be placed on the back-burner of life, and reserved for some later consideration. With us today, it is like midnight was to the Israelites who were coming out of Egypt (Ex 12:29). It is like the “day that Lot went out of Sodom” (Lk 17:29). Another way of saying “high time” is, “To day if ye will hear His voice” (Heb 3:7). Or “To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb 3:15; 4:7).

Satan tempted Eve by saying, “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? . . . Ye shall not surely die” (Gen 3:1-4). Satan will tempt you to think you can delay, or even ignore the warning of our text. When you are in a state of slowness to respond, he will say to you, “Your heart will not become hard” (Heb 3:13) “That day will not take you unawares!” (Lk 21:34). “Do not worry, the latter state is not worse than the beginning” (2 Pet 2:20). “You will

not come short of the promise” (Heb 4:1). The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, will be saying, “Take heed to thyself and unto the doctrine” (1 Tim 4:16). “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2 Pet 1:10). “Be swift to hear” (James 1:9).

What we are now urged to do is critical. There is no guarantee that we will have another opportunity to do what is exhorted. Right now, when we hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches, is the appropriate time to react to the word of the King. If this is true, and our text affirms this is the case, then to fail to do what is urged is wrong, and cannot be justified. These are matters concerning which no delay is in order.

If we are going to love our neighbor as ourselves, this is the time to do it (Gal 5:14). If we are going to render to every person their dues, this is the time to do it (Rom 13:7). If we are going to love one another with a pure heart fervently, this is the time to do it (1 Pet 1:22). If we are going to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, today is the day (Phil 2:12). If we are going to cleanse ourselves of all unrighteousness, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, there is no more opportune time than right now (2 Cor 7:1). There will not be a better time than right now! You see with what urgency the Spirit speaks. He makes no allowance for slothfulness.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 12 of 45

AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep . . .” (Verse 1, Romans 13:11-14)

Other versions read, “to wake up from your slumber” (NIV), “to rise from sleep” (DOUAY), “be aroused out of sleep” (YLT), and “stop sleeping and wake up” (NJB).

I do not understand this to be “the sleep of death” that characterizes those who are alienated from God (Psa 13:3), although it can lead to that kind of “sleep” if not arrested. Rather, this is the sleep of indifference that can settle upon the people of God – a sort of spiritual drowsiness in which the soul becomes insensitive to God and unaware of His will, or even of impending judgment. This frame of mind is a constant liability. It has the appearance of being benign, but it is serious beyond comprehension. Jesus traced the time of the devil sowing tares among the wheat – his children among the children of God – to a time described as “while men SLEPT” (Matt 13:25). This suggests that wherever there is an insensitive and unresponsive church, Satan is at work placing his people – tares that cannot possibly produce fruit.

When speaking of His second coming, Jesus said, “Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he FIND YOU SLEEPING” (Mk 13:35-36). This does not mean they were merely unconscious, as when men rest during the night. It rather refers to a condition where people are living without a lively awareness of the presence, blessing, and return of the Lord

Jesus Christ. Such people are caught up in the affairs of life in the world, and are occupied with thoughts, ambitions, and purposes in which Christ is not at the center.

There is so much of this in the modern “church” that it boggles the mind. A staggering amount of religious activity is going on while men are, in the terms of our text, “asleep.” They simply are not thinking about the Lord, preparing to face Him with joy when He returns, or occupied with being a faithful steward. For the most part, their religion, or outward regimen, is heartless routine. They are asleep!

Like a mighty clap of thunder, the Spirit shouts to lethargic churches, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph 5:14). The context of the exhortation to the Ephesians is much the same as it is in Romans. In our text, our conduct in society is considered, and the necessity of living for God’s glory in every association with mankind. In Ephesians the Spirit follows the exhortation to wake up with these words, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:15-16).

How are the people of God to live in a decadent departing generation? What is to be the focus of their lives when God is being kicked out of every major area of life. How are we to conduct our lives when religious charlatans are rising to prominence? What is to be our spiritual posture when men that cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine are multiplying (Rom 16:17)?

Those who conduct their lives in purely self-interest, and with no regard for the glory of God, are asleep (John 2:15-17)! Those who are caught in the snare of pleasure are asleep. Those who resort to religious mechanics when they meet are asleep (Col 2:20-23). All who are occupied with personal “dreams” and worldly ambitions are asleep. Those who do not have an ear to hear are asleep (Rev 2:7). Those who are not perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord are asleep (2 Cor 7:2). Church members who are not seeking the things that are above, are asleep (Col 3:1-2). They must awaken, for they are sinking into a pit from which they might not be able to recover. The seriousness of such a condition cannot be overstated.

“Sleep” is a Scriptural word denoting the antonym of “sober.” “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thess 5:6). Those who are “asleep” are conducting their lives as though God had guaranteed they will live for many more years. As a result, they have become insensitive to His direction. They also are no longer aware of the advances of the wicked one. Such must be awakened from their slumber, else they will fall into “the sleep of death.” It is time for a WAKE UP CALL to be issued to the church, as it was to the church in Rome (Rom 13:11), the church in Corinth (1 Cor 15:34), and the church in Ephesus (Eph 5:14). In the word of the prophets, it is time to “blow the trumpet” (Jer 6:1; 51:27; Joel 2:15).

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 13 of 45

SALVATION IS NEARER!

“ . . . for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” (Verse 11, Romans 13:11-14)

Here the Spirit confirms why slumbering souls are in such danger. Something is fast approaching that requires our readiness. This is no time to be lacking in spiritual alertness and awareness! It is no time to remain in spiritual infancy, or to be spiritually naive, simplistic, unlearned, and unalert. War must be waged against indifference, disinterest, undue distractions, and living with a love for, and preference of, this present evil world. The people of God have not been “delivered” to live at a distance from God, be uninvolved in the work of the Lord, or become absorbed with “the affairs of this life” (2 Tim 2:4). Our deliverance is real, and it is calculated to produce real effects (Rom 7:6; 2 Cor 1:10; Col 1:13; 1 Thess 1:10).

Sadly and unfortunately, a review of nominal Christendom, whether on a personal or collective level, would never lead any observer to think that the people had been “delivered.” Entire and lengthy programs are being employed within the church to enable men to be free from, what they call, addictions and bad habits. If salvation has not really freed the people, pray tell, what has it done? Were the lame people healed by Jesus walking with a limp? Were the lepers that He healed nursing the lingering effects of the disease? Were the blind He healed wearing glasses? Did the deaf that He healed need hearing aids? The religious behavioral specialists need to at least attempt to answer these questions. After that, they should tell us who they really represent!

The statement of our text, if allowed to do so, will enable an astounding level of recovery, personal discipline, and the holy life that is expected of every person in Christ.

NOW

There are approaches to Christianity that tend to lull the soul into a state of complacency. In a nutshell, they lead people to mistakenly assess the present – NOW!

At one extreme, a strictly historical view of the faith can be embraced – the “2,000 years ago” view. In this perspective, the emphasis is placed upon the past – “2,000 years ago.” This approach demands, and vaunts, theological positions above faith, and tends to a legalistic approach to the church at its responsibilities. It leads some to believe that all of the good things, the Divine power, and the effectiveness was confined to the time of the apostles.

At the other extreme, souls are led to major on, what they call, “prophesy.” In this case, little is learned from the past, the present is relatively unimportant, and what is coming ON THE EARTH becomes the emphasis. This approach depersonalizes religion, and encourages a view of prophesy that is confined to temporal things. Men become more afraid of coming temporal judgments or a tyrannical global ruler, than they are of being cast into hell. Their minds are thus drawn away from the words of Jesus. “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28).

Amidst these varying emphases, the Spirit fairly shouts to us, “NOW!” He is calling us to a consideration of where we stand right now in relation to Divine appointments. He is making a strong appeal to our hearts. Those who correctly assess the “now” have learned from the past.

They know what God has accomplished for them in the past, and their faith pulls those realities into the “now,” making them relevant, profitable, and precious to the soul. Living in the power of the “now” factor, also reaches forward to things God has appointed for the future, bringing them into current consideration:—i.e. the end of the world, the resurrection of the dead, the coming of the Lord, and the day of judgment. All of these are anticipated and longed for by those who are living by faith.

Thus the soul is moved to live in the prospect of the future because of the effective work of God in the past. Those living in the “now” build upon the past and prepare for the future. They know that the ultimate purpose of salvation will be fulfilled in the world to come. The greatest joy will be realized when we are forever with the Lord. The most extensive and satisfying work will take place after our tenure has been served in this world. The saints are being readied for the time when the present world is gone, the devil is forever banished from any kind of influence, and the wicked are cast into hell, with all the nations that forgot God (Psa 9:17).

As for the “NOW,” our salvation “is nearer than when we believed.” That being true, we must be more prepared, more mature, and more involved NOW than when we first believed. If that is not true of you, then begin NOW to do what is required for it to be so. Get ready!

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 14 of 45

OUR SALVATION

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is OUR SALVATION nearer than when we believed.” (Verse 11, Romans 13:11-14)

Here, the word “salvation” is used in the fullest sense. It presumes the individual is presently enjoying the “firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom 8:23), is being “changed from glory unto glory” (2 Cor 3:18), and is waiting for God’s Son to return from heaven (1 Thess 1:9). This is the person who is accurately described as “an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ” (Rom 8:17), “alive unto God” (Rom 6:11), living by faith (Heb 10:39), and walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16,26). These are people who have “tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Pet 2:3).

While those so characterized are in the process of being conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29), the process is far from being complete. They are undergoing continual change by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18). The most immediate proof that the experience of salvation is not yet complete is our body. Because it remains under the curse of death, it is called a “vile body” (Phil 3:21), and “the body of this death” (Rom 7:24). Because salvation includes the reclamation and renewal of the body, we are said to be “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:24). That redemption is not experienced in healing, for a healed body is still a “vile” one, and still must die. A healed body still “cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 15:50). This “redemption” will occur at the resurrection of the dead, when we “shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Christ’s coming will signal the resurrection of the dead, when “this mortal shall have put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:53-54).

Salvation is frequently viewed from this perspective – namely, TO BE COMPLETED IN THE FUTURE.

1. Paul wrote to the Corinthians telling them his afflictions and distress were actually for their salvation – even though they were already in Christ. “Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation AND SALVATION, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation AND SALVATION (2 Cor 1:6).
2. One of the pieces of our protective armor is the prospect of being saved. “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet THE HOPE OF SALVATION. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to OBTAIN SALVATION through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:8-9).
3. Paul’s ministry was with a view to the people of God obtaining salvation. “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may OBTAIN THE SALVATION which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim 2:10).
4. The holy angels minister to “those who will INHERIT SALVATION” (Heb 1:13-14).
5. God has begotten us again to a living hope, “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for SALVATION READY TO BE REVEALED in the last time” (1 Pet 1:3-5).
6. Currently, we are being “saved” by Christ’s life, in which He ever lives to make intercession for us (Rom 5:10; Heb 7:25).
7. Believers will yet stand before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account for their deeds, whether they are good or bad. In prospect of that time, the Spirit declares, “If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself SHALL BE SAVED: yet so as by fire” (1 Cor 3:15).
8. There is such a thing as being “SAVED in the day of the Lord” (1 Cor 5:5).

“Our salvation” is complete from the standpoint of provision and Divine determination. It is, however, in the process of being brought to completion in us. We are not in heaven yet, and ought not allow thoughts to take hold of our minds that approach life as though we were. In our text, “our salvation” speaks of the absence of all conflict and deficiency, and the appropriation of the inheritance that is presently “reserved in heaven” for us (1 Pet 1:4).

It is most unfortunate that this perspective is rarely emphasized in the modern pulpit. In fact, “salvation” itself is rarely mentioned among believers, except in relation to those who are lost, or “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1-3). However, “salvation” is a principle subject in the Spirit’s words to the churches. The day in which we are living is “the day of salvation.” This is more than the time sinners can be saved. Salvation also includes the nourishment, or succor, of the saints. As it is written, “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and IN THE DAY OF SALVATION HAVE I SUCCORED THEE: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (1 Cor 6:1-2).

As already indicated, “salvation” is also viewed from the standpoint of its culmination, or completion. This is when we will receive our new bodies, currently being kept “in heaven” for us (2 Cor 5:1-5). It is also the time when we will be divested of all deficiencies and removed from all conflict. The “salvation” that is “nearer” is salvation in its completeness. The process of

completeness is taking place while we are in this world. This is the reason for Christ's mediation (Heb 8:6), intercession (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25), teaching (Eph 4:10-21; 1 John 5:20), and shepherding (Heb 13:20).

A church in which the saints of God are not being fed, nurtured, edified, comforted, and exhorted, is a living contradiction of the objective of the salvation of God.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 15 of

NEARER, #1

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation NEARER than when we believed.” (Verse 11, Romans 13:11-14)

Other versions read, “our salvation is nearer now” (NIV), “For salvation is nearer to us now” (NRSV), and “for the coming of our salvation is nearer now” (NLT).

O, what a needed perspective is this! It is fuel for both faith and hope. It is a sweet elixir during trial. It is an incentive for the laborer, and a refresher for those who are running the race.

The way in which the Spirit has chosen to say this is most edifying. He might well have said the following, all of which are true.

1. Our race is almost completed (Heb 12:1-2).
2. The good fight of faith will soon end (1 Tim 6:12).
3. The devil's time is running out (Rev 20:10).
4. Our trials will soon be over (1 Pet 1:7).
5. The wicked will soon cease from troubling us (Job 3:17).
6. The time is nearing when we will no more have another law within our members, warring against the law of our mind (Rom 7:23).
7. Soon we will cease to wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph 6:12).
8. The time of testing will soon end (1 Pet 1:7).
9. The time of temptation is fast coming to a close (James 1:12).
10. Soon we will no longer have this treasure in an earthen vessel (2 Cor 4:7).
11. It will not be long and we will no longer see through a glass darkly (1 Cor 13:12).
12. The time is approaching when we will not know in part (1 Cor 13:12).
13. Persecutions will soon come to an end (2 Tim 3:12).
14. The time of being “unknown” will end (2 Cor 6:9).
15. The time of not knowing what to pray for will conclude (Rom 8:26).
16. There will be no more tears (Rev 22:3).
17. There will be no more death (Rev 21:4).
18. There will be no more sorrow (Rev 21:4).
19. There will be no more crying (Rev 21:4).

20. There will be no more pain (Rev 21:4).
21. There will be no more curse (Rev 22:3).
22. There will be no more night (Rev 22:5).

What a heritage!! All of these are true, and are blessed to consider. But that is NOT the perspective of this text. It is not what is coming to an end that is the point, but what is up ahead that is the focus of this passage. “Our salvation” accentuates what God has determined we will APPROPRIATE and BE. This is the destiny to which we are appointed in Christ Jesus. Among other things, this includes the following.

1. We will be conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29).
2. We will be like Christ (1 John 3:2).
3. We will shine like the sun in the kingdom of our Father (Matt 13:43).
4. We will judge the world (1 Cor 6:2; Dan 7:22).
5. We will judge angels (1 Cor 6:3).
6. We will reign with Jesus Christ (2 Tim 2:12).
7. We will experience “glorious liberty” (Rom 8:21).
8. We will be changed, putting on an incorruptible body (1 Cor 15:52).
9. We will be forever with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17).
10. We will receive praise from God (1 Cor 4:5).
11. We will be given a crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8).
12. We will receive the crown of life (James 1:12).
13. We will receive a crown of glory (1 Pet 5:4).
14. The whole body of the saved will be presented to Christ “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27).
15. “The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High” (Dan 7:27).

These are only introductory to the magnitude of what is drawing closer and closer to the people of God! The time is fast approaching when “the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever” (Dan 7:18). From our point of view, we are rapidly moving toward the glorious inheritance for which we have been predestinated (Eph 1:11).

From the heavenly point of view, the time is fast approaching when the cumbersome tares will be gathered out (Matt 13:40), all of the saved will be gathered together (2 Thess 2:1), and the Lamb will be presented with His spotless bride (Eph 5:27).

The saved are participants in a great salvation that will culminate in unparalleled glory being given to God and Christ, and that very glory being shared with the people of God. This salvation is worthy of your investment, your time, your commitment, and your zeal. Throw yourself into it! Fight anything and everything that competes with it. Lay aside everything that impedes your progress.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 16 of 45

NEARER, #2

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” (Verse 11, Romans 13:11-14)

Here the Spirit confirms why slumbering souls are in such danger. Something is fast approaching that requires our readiness. This is no time to be lacking in spiritual alertness and awareness! It is no time to remain in spiritual infancy, or to be spiritually naive, simplistic, unlearned, and unalert. War must be waged against indifference, disinterest, undue distractions, and living with a love of, and preference for, this present evil world. The people of God have not been “delivered” to live at a distance from God, be uninvolved in the work of the Lord, or become absorbed with “the affairs of this life” (2 Tim 2:4). Our deliverance is real, and it is calculated to produce real effects (Rom 7:6; 2 Cor 1:10; Col 1:13; 1 Thess 1:10).

Sadly and unfortunately, a review of nominal Christendom, whether on a personal or collective level, would never lead any observer to think that the people had been “delivered.” Entire and lengthy programs are being employed within the church to enable men to be free from, what they call, addictions and bad habits. If salvation has not really freed the people, pray tell, what has it done? Were the lame people healed by Jesus walking with a limp? Were the lepers that He healed nursing the lingering effects of the disease? Were the blind He healed wearing glasses? Did the deaf that He healed need hearing aids? The religious behavioral specialists need to at least attempt to answer these questions. After that, they should tell us who they really represent!

The statement of our text, if allowed to do so, will enable an astounding level of recovery, personal discipline, and the holy life that is expected of every person in Christ.

NOW

There are approaches to Christianity that tend to lull the soul into a state of complacency. In a nutshell, they lead people to mistakenly assess the present – NOW!

At one extreme, a strictly historical view of the faith can be embraced – the “2,000 years ago” view. In this perspective, the emphasis is placed upon the past – “2,000 years ago.” This approach demands, and vaunts, theological positions above faith, and tends to a legalistic approach to the church at its responsibilities. It leads some to believe that all of the good things – the Divine power, and the effectiveness of it – were confined to the time of the apostles.

At the other extreme, souls are led to major on, what they call, “prophesy.” In this case, little is learned from the past, the present is relatively unimportant, and what is coming ON THE EARTH becomes the emphasis. This approach depersonalizes religion, and encourages a view of prophesy that is confined to temporal things. Men become more afraid of coming temporal judgments or a tyrannical global ruler, than they are of being cast into hell. Their minds are thus drawn away from the words of Jesus. “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to

kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28).

Amidst these varying emphases, the Spirit fairly shouts to us, “NOW!” He is calling us to a consideration of where we stand right now in relation to Divine appointments. He is making a strong appeal to our hearts. Those who correctly assess the “now” have learned from the past. They know what God has accomplished for them in the past, and their faith pulls those realities into the “now,” making them relevant, profitable, and precious to the soul. Living in the power of the “now” factor, also reaches forward to things God has appointed for the future, bringing them into current consideration:—i.e. the end of the world, the resurrection of the dead, the coming of the Lord, and the day of judgment. All of these are anticipated and longed for by those who are living by faith.

Thus the soul is moved to live in the prospect of the future because of the effective work of God in the past. Those living in the “now” build upon the past and prepare for the future. They know that the ultimate purpose of salvation will be fulfilled in the world to come. The greatest joy will be realized when we are forever with the Lord. The most extensive and satisfying work will take place after our tenure has been served in this world. The saints are being readied for the time when the present world is gone, the devil is forever banished from any kind of influence, and the wicked are cast into hell, with all the nations that forgot God (Psa 9:17).

As for the “NOW,” our salvation “is nearer than when we believed.” That being true, we must be more prepared, more mature, and more involved NOW than when we first believed. If that is not true of you, then begin NOW to do what is required for it to be so. Get ready!

These words lack significance to the person enslaved to academics. They seem too apparent to such an one. Of course time is progressing toward a Divinely appointed role! “Why,” the intellect reasons, “is it necessary to remind us of something so obvious?” But here is where the absolute inferiority of a cerebral approach to the faith becomes apparent. It may very well appear that it is obvious the day of “our salvation” is “nearer.” But it is not at all obvious! That is precisely why this statement is made! If it was conspicuous, or apparent, there would be no need to “awake out of sleep!” Exhortations to sobriety and vigilance would be pointless if everyone was living in an awareness of the approaching apogee of “our salvation.”

Time and circumstance tend to throw a veil over this truth, so that it is not clearly seen. Scarcely an hour will pass without the reality of a fast approaching new heavens and new earth beginning to fade from our view. The “cares of this world” aggressively attempt to “choke the word” (Mark 4:18). Trouble stirs up a dust storm in an attempt to obscure the coming glory. We are not in a moral vacuum! Rather, we are in a fiercely competitive arena of conflict. All of this is used by Satan to pull us off the wall of Divine appointment into the valley of the “here and now.” Many a soul, deluded by the wicked one, has forgotten what is coming for the righteous, as well as what is closing in upon the wicked.

This is why we must hear these words spoken often and with power: “for now is our salvation nearer!” We are progressing toward the objective of our hope, and that objective is quickly moving toward us.

This is not the language of time, and ought not to be so viewed. A salvation that is rooted in eternity cannot be opened up to us within an overriding consideration of time. This is language for the heart, and is to be comprehended by faith. It may appear as though time and circumstance are dominating, and that we are slaves to both. But that is not the case: “for now is our salvation nearer!”

It is “nearer” because God has been working His salvation in the earth! Everything is progressing to His appointed conclusion. It is “nearer” because we are making advancement in the Spirit, being changed “from glory unto glory” (2 Cor 3:18). We are closer to what we will be! The inheritance God has appointed for us is drawing closer to us. What a blessed consideration! Hope thrives on such a circumstance, while faith makes us more determined to obtain the prize that awaits us.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 17 of 45

WHEN WE BELIEVED

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than WHEN WE BELIEVED.” (Verse 11, Romans 13:11-14)

Other versions read, “than when we became believers” (NRSV), and “than when we first began to believe” (NJB), and “when we first believed (adhered to, trusted in, and relied on Christ, the Messiah) [AMPLIFIED].

A LINE OF DEMARCATION

The time “when we believed” is the line of demarcation between condemnation and justification. It is when we began passing from darkness to light, death to life, and the power of Satan into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. It is when we obeyed the form of the doctrine, being baptized into Christ (Rom 6:17). This is the language of the Spirit, and we should not be ashamed to use it.

Churchmen are fond of asking when we were “saved,” or “born again,” or become a “member of the church,” or even when we were baptized. It is certainly not that any of these are unlawful. However, there remains an unfortunate suspicion among institutionalized Christians that believing somehow falls short of what is required to save a person.

The point at which we believed was the point when Jesus gave us “power to become the sons of God.” As it is written, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that BELIEVE on His name” (John 1:12). That believing is what compelled us to obey the Lord, and the Holy Spirit enabled us to follow through by obeying the truth we believed: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in OBEYING THE TRUTH THROUGH THE SPIRIT unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Pet 1:22). Further, those in Christ are told, “it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to BELIEVE ON HIM, but also to suffer for His sake” (Phil 1:29). God fills us with all joy

and peace “IN BELIEVING” (Rom 15:13). It is in BELIEVING that saints “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet 1:8). It was a happy day, indeed, when we “first believed.” That is the precise time we were enabled to obey anything and everything required of us. Even when referring to our baptism into Christ, believing is what validated it (Mk 16:16; Acts 8:12; 18:8).

Primarily WHOM We Believe

Further, when we “first believed” does not accentuate WHAT we believed, but WHOM we believed. As it is written, “I know WHOM I have believed” (2 Tim 1:12). Believing the Gospel is thus described in these words. “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in YOU WHO BELIEVE” (1 Thess 2:13, NKJV). The Word of God, which is the “Seed of the kingdom” (Luke 8:11), begins to work in men when they believe it is, in truth, God’s own Word!

When Paul confronted some disciples from Ephesus, he asked them this probing question: “Did you receive the Holy Spirit WHEN YOU BELIEVED?” (Acts 19:2). When they replied they did not even know there was a Holy Spirit, he asked them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.” At that point he told them, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should BELIEVE ON HIM who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus” (Acts 19:4, NKJV). The people whom John baptized were not required to believe on John, but to repent, and believe on the One for whom he was preparing the way. Following Paul’s words those disciples “first believed,” and received the Holy Spirit.

As in our text, it was not WHAT those disciples believed that made the difference, but WHOM they believed. It is a Person who saves, not a body of teaching. The purpose of the doctrine is to introduce us to, and clarify, the Person of Christ – who He is, what He came to do, and what He is currently doing. I know by experience that there is an approach to doctrine that minimizes the Lord Jesus Christ, and prohibits people from participating in His life, and being made a partaker of Him (Heb 3:14). There is teaching that is powerless, only promoting a lifeless form of godliness (1 Tim 3:5). However, when Christ, and Him crucified (1 Cor 1:23; 2:2) is preached, and the hearers “believe,” things begin to take place that are under the category of LIFE. Blessed is the person who comprehends these realities.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Romans 13:11-14)

A MODERN DAY MISCONCEPTION

Often, those who wear the name of Christ associate fervency, sincerity, and progress, with when men “FIRST believe.” It is not unusual to find zealous believers to be the youngest, or most recently converted ones. It is generally thought that spiritual zeal abates with age. Further, this total misconception is being lived out in virtually every church in our country, and in the rest of the world as well. Those who are seriously engaged in the work of the Lord see this, and it grieves them. Yet, within an institutional agenda, it has not been able to be successfully addressed.

The Lord has been very clear about the nature of real spiritual life. There is an upward change taking place through the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18). There has been no place allowed for stagnation, retardation, or continual immaturity – none at all! According to the Divine agenda, those in Christ are being “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29-30). Where this is not taking place, the productive presence of the Lord is only an imagination. Solemnly, believers are admonished to rid themselves of any and every thing that is not compatible with spiritual life (Heb 12:1-2; Eph 4:22; Col 3:8-9; Heb 12:1). They are told “be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men” (1 Cor 14:20). A fervent appeal is made to them to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18). The Lord has revealed His unalterable agenda: “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15). Jesus made perfectly clear, “Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away” (John 15:2). It is plainly written, “the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). Is there anyone of sound mind that thinks God will brush aside the consistent ignoring of these admonitions?

Yet, whether it is done cognitively or ignorantly, men continue to imagine that a zeal for the Lord is associated with becoming a “Christian” instead of remaining one. But this is a total misconception. From the perspective of our text, this would mean the new believer would be more keenly aware of the fast-approaching salvation than others. They would tend to live with more of an awareness of Divine appointments than others. And, indeed, this does appear to be the norm in the average church. But a lie is being lived out, not the truth. Godly expectancy grows, it does not wane.

This is, however, a thorn in the thought processes. It is a total misrepresentation of the case. Faith causes the individual to increase in a longing for, and anticipation of, the fulness of salvation and the fruition of hope. There is nothing about salvation itself, or the effects of it, that diminishes, lessens, or erodes. The “glory” into which we are being “changed” only increases, it never fades. A fading glory and a diminishing persuasion, at the very best, belong to the Old Covenant order (2 Cor 3:10-14). Such has no place in “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim 2:10).

A backward posture causes “our salvation” to seem further, not “nearer.” In such a case, the glorious appearing of Christ will bring a time of condemnation, not salvation. Should this sleepy posture be upon any soul, the word of our text is sharp and to the point. “The moment is here for

you to stop sleeping and wake up, because by now our salvation is nearer than when we first began to believe” (NJB). This time is not the time to “sleep.” It is not the time to be unaware of what is ahead, or the time to be caught up in the transitory things of this world. If the modern church as a whole does not wake up, it will be excluded from the marriage supper of the Lamb! As with the churches of Asia, there are some who have not participated in this backward movement (Rev 2:24; 3:4). Those are the people through whom Jesus will work.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 19 of 45

THE NIGHT IS FAR SPENT

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” (Verse 12, Romans 13:11-14)

The Spirit will not let this matter go. It is too critical to treat this text as though He was only providing interesting information. This is a matter where our souls are at stake. We must be brought to behold our troubles as temporary, and our salvation as everlasting. The hardships of life must be perceived as only for a while, while the inheritance reserved for us is eternal.

THE NIGHT

“The night . . .” This is a synonym for time itself. When sin entered into the world, a long moral and spiritual night began that will be finally terminated when the Lord appears in all of His glory. “The night” also speaks of the time of obscurity, or ignorance, when things are not seen plainly (2 Pet 3:10). It is also used to denote the time of sleeping, when souls are not alert, and are unaware of impending danger or blessing (1 Thess 5:5). Jesus spoke of “the night” as the time when men stumble, not knowing where they are going (John 11:10).

A TIME OF DANGER

Briefly summarized, “the night” is a time of jeopardy and danger. It is the time allotted to the devil, in which he walks about as a roaring lion, “seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:7-8). This is when “the powers of darkness” can do their work (Luke 22:53). It refers to times when we are tested and tried, and when the Lord hides His face from us (Psa 143:7). It is a time when we are subject to perplexity and fears (2 Cor 4:8; 7:5). There are “night seasons,” when only the Lord can effectively instruct us (Psa 16:7). The “night season” is also a time when we cry out to the Lord, yet sense no answer from Him (Psa 22:2). Troubles can so beset us during such seasons that it is written, “In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted” (Psa 77:2). It is a good word, indeed, when our Lord speaks to us about “the night” drawing to a close.

FAR SPENT

And what does our blessed Lord tell us about “the night” – the time of trial and testing, of

ignorance and obscurity, and of the working and deceit of the wicked one? “The night is FAR SPENT!” Other versions read, “The night is almost gone” (NASB), “The night is nearly over” (NIV), and “the night is far gone” (NRSV).

Again, this is not calendar language, but the language of faith, addressed to the heart. The time of our trials is almost over (James 1:12; 1 Pet 1:7; 4:12)! The time when we see through a glass darkly is about to conclude (1 Cor 13:12). The devil’s time is running out, and soon he will be violently and suddenly removed from the presence of the saints of God (Rev 20:10). All of the liabilities of being in the body are about to come to a close (2 Cor 5:6). It is just around the corner, and we are to live in expectancy of the removal of everything that is evil, limiting, and incomplete!

For the person living by faith, everything caused by sin is about to conclude. This is not to be viewed as those in the flesh, but as those who are walking in the Spirit and living by faith. From a practical viewpoint, this can take place at any moment. However, only faith can live with constant expectation. The flesh cannot stand to wait, and therefore becomes disappointed when the anticipation is not realized immediately. Flesh can go to sleep, hoping for something good when it awakens. However, it cannot sustain that hope from day to day. It soon throws hope away, frustrated by delay.

BUT FAITH IS NOT SO! It can retire in the evening believing that in the morning trouble and sorrow will be gone, and there will be no more night. If that blessing does not occur, faith can make it through another day, still “rejoicing in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2).

When the Spirit declares, “the night is far spent,” He means it has been assigned a limited duration. It is not intended to be eternal – not for those who have believed. Only the longsuffering of God accounts for the presence of “the night.” And, it is only here until the children have all been gathered in and prepared for the coming glory.

Mark it well, just as surely as the day of salvation is marching forward to fruition and glory, the night is moving forward to frustration and termination. Whether in our death or Christ’s return, “the night” is fast advancing to its conclusion. We will not long have to contend with darkness and things that attend it. Soon the night of suffering, trial, and battle will end. You can believe that!

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 20 of 45

THE DAY IS AT HAND

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand . . .” (Verse 12, Romans 13:11-14)

Other versions read, “the day is almost here” (NIV), “the day is near” (NRSV), and “daylight is on the way” (NJB).

THE DAY

This is the ultimate day. From the standpoint of the wicked, it is “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom 2:5). Considered as a time of unveiling, it is “the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ” (Rom 2:16). Viewed as the time when Jesus will be fully seen, it is “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:8). Regarded as the time when the nature of every persons work will be made known, “Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it” (1 Cor 3:13). Considered from the standpoint of the resurrection of the dead, it is “the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30). It is also the time when “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet 3:10). That is “THE DAY” that is “at hand.”

With sorrow of heart I must acknowledge that as I view the average American church, I would never conclude that this day was at hand. Such a revelation cannot be confirmed by the conduct of, what might be called, “the average Christian.” If this assessment is correct, there is no acceptable excuse for the condition. All truly spiritual life is leaning in this direction – the coming “day.” If the Holy Spirit is not being grieved and quenched, there is a fervent longing for this “Day.” Salvation provides every single participant in it with all of the resources required to get us ready for that ultimate day. Jesus is interceding and ruling with that day in mind. Whoever is not presently prepared for that day, whatever the reason may be, has been negligent, having neglected “so great salvation,” and their entire life has been lived in vain. Cite all of the reasons you can. Make a valiant effort to explain the condition. But when you are finished, know this, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation” (Heb 2:3). I, for one, do not believe this matter has been taken seriously by the prevailing percentage of modern-day “Christians.”

“The day” is the time when everything will be made plain. At that time, the Father will unveil the Son in all of His glory (1 Tim 6:15). He will then be seen, and acknowledged to be, everything God revealed in the record He has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11). Nothing about Jesus will be obscure. Thus, it is said of that day, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:10-11). If you have not been bowing to Jesus before that day, your bowing then will be the prelude to condemnation!

CHILDREN OF THE DAY

This matter of the day fast approaching is of particular interest to those who are in Christ Jesus, for they “are all the children of light, and the children of the day” (1 Thess 5:5). That is, in Jesus we are being oriented for “the great and notable day of the Lord” (Acts 2:20). We are being prepared to not only survive that day, but to blend in with it. Our ultimate advantages and blessings will be brought to us on the wings of light! Just as we began our journey to glory in the light of the Gospel of Christ, so we will conclude our journey at the dawning of an eternal day, after which we will never again be exposed to the night!

At the resurrection of the dead, every person’s future will be sealed and be unchangeable. Jesus announced this when He said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which ALL

THAT ARE IN THE GRAVES shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto THE RESURRECTION OF LIFE; and they that have done evil, unto THE RESURRECTION OF DAMNATION” (John 5:28-29). The eternal destiny of every person will not be determined on the day of judgment, but will rather be announced, revealed, and made known at that time. The separation of the wicked from the righteous will actually take place before the judgment (Matt 13:30, 38-43; 25:32).

Pour yourself into getting ready for the day that is fast approaching. Once that day comes, no further moment – not even a split second – will be allowed for moral and spiritual change.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 21 of 45

AT HAND

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand . . . ” (Verse 12, Romans 13:11-14)

Those with a penchant for word studies are fond of telling us “at hand” is a term related to time. They tell us it is a phrase meaning “it is just about to happen.” But their professed scholarship has NOT been able to decipher the meaning of the Holy Spirit. The “day” of which our text speaks will not appear until time has run its course and is no more.

Again, this is the language of faith. By saying “the day is at hand,” the Spirit means we are living with an enlivened prospect of that day. Faith enables us to live just as though, in time, “the day” was going to occur in the very next moment. And, indeed, that is quite possible. However, faith does not live in the prospect of possibilities, but of appointed verities. Faith does not grow in the soil of vagueness and uncertainty, but in the soil of certitude and confidence. Faith does not think in terms of time, and “eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9) is not measured by time. When we consider “the day” that is “at hand” we step outside the border of time. That is where faith functions – outside the constraints of time.

The phrase “the day is at hand” speaks of the same reality as is declared in Philippians 4:5: “The Lord is at hand.” It speaks of the time declared by Peter, “But the end of all things is at hand” (1 Pet 4:7). It is the appointed time of Christ’s unveiling. His glory is what will make it “the day.”

Faith maintains a certain perspective that enables a proper and productive life in “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4). Because it is not anchored to time, it must have a point of reference – an objective for which to live, and a goal for which to strive. In a Person, those requirements are met in God Himself, for faith believes “He is, and that He is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6). Stated as an objective, “the Lord is at hand!” Faith longs for that day, and brings it so close to the heart that it dominates the individual. That is the perspective of this text.

THE 70 A.D. FOLLY

Although they are totally unworthy of mention, there are those who believe that the epoch of the ending of the night and the coming of the day speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem. The theology of such people is to be discarded as filthy and contaminating rags. Those who imagine that “the day” occurred when Jerusalem was razed as an act of Divine judgment betray a level of ignorance that is astounding. Rather than a day beginning, a spiritual night settled over the ancient people that has been unparalleled. For believers in Christ, 70 A.D. is not the pivotal consideration, and is nowhere is it so proclaimed in Scripture. That is not when the ultimate blessing occurred. That is not when redemption took place (Eph 4:30). It is enough to say that such a theology is too close to the earth, and thus too far from heaven. It has, therefore, no real value for the soul.

The purpose of God did not revolve around the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. That was never held forth as something the saints were to look forward to. It was something appointed to unbelievers, not believers. It was a time held forth to unbelievers, not believers (Lk 19:41-44).

“The night” of which our text speaks is the reign of the wicked one, who is “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4), “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2). “The night” is the time he is permitted to work – not freely, but under the hand of Divine restraint. Similar to when Jesus was arrested, suffered and died, this is Satan’s “hour, and the power of darkness” (Lk 22:53). However, the entirety of Satan’s effort and kingdom is in an appointed state of deterioration. Since Jesus died, it is in its death throes, gasping for breath. Every time a sinner believes, repents, and obeys the Gospel, Satan’s impotence is confirmed. Whenever the saints of God “go on to perfection” (Heb 6:2), perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1-2), Satan’s weakness is verified. Whenever he is resisted, he is absolutely powerless to anything but “flee” (James 4:7). There is a certain “power” in Satan’s darkness, to be sure, but it is vastly inferior to “the power of Christ” (2 Cor 12:9), and will yield to it every time.

Faith can receive this word: “the night is far spent!” Other version read, “is almost gone” (NASB), “is nearly over” (NIV), “is passed” (DOUAY), “is advanced” (NAB), “has advanced toward dawn” (NET). Even as Joseph could speak of, and make plans for, a deliverance that would not come for four hundred years (Gen 50:25), so those who live by faith are expecting the conclusion of “the night” and the dawning of an eternal day. Before Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, God said to the devil, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel” (Gen 3:15). Since that day, those who possessed faith have lived expecting that time. Four thousand years later, there were “them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38). From the practical point of view, they lived as though that time was going to occur the next day.

When God makes a promise of what shall be, those who believe can live their lives just as though it was going to occur the very next morning – and that is a distinct possibility. For them, “the night is far spent,” so they refuse to become absorbed in those nighttime activities. How about you? How firm is your persuasion that “the night is far spent, and the day is at hand.” Your life testifies of your persuasion.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 22 of 45

CAST OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness . . .”
(Verse 12, Romans 13:11-14)

Other versions read, “Let us then drop (fling away) the works and deeds of darkness” (AMPLIFIED), “put off” (BBE), “discard” (CSB), “get rid of” (GWN), “throw off” (NAB), “put aside” (NIV), “remove” (NLT).

The Spirit consistently takes the things revealed and moves us to act upon them. It is not enough to merely know these things intellectually. They must be translated into living, else they will hold no benefit for us. The truth of God that is held within the confines of a creed or theological position brings no advantage, for faith cannot work in such constricted surroundings. Therefore the Spirit arouses us to an appropriate response to the truth. Remember, only when the truth is known does it bring us freedom. Knowing the truth takes place when we embrace it and act upon it.

THEREFORE

The admonition before us is required by the compelling facts that have been affirmed. First, it is high time to awake out of sleep. Second, our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. Third, the night is almost gone. Fourth, the day is at hand. No person persuaded of these realities will continue to live close to the world, for it will appear foolish to do so. However, because of the enormous influence of the flesh, we must be stirred up to action, for it is easier to fall asleep in this evil world than to stay awake. The culture that surrounds us promotes spiritual slumber. The itinerary of the average church allows too much time for being asleep and insensitive to the things of God. Few professing Christians think that is it “high time to awake out of sleep.” There is not the pervading persuasion that “the day of our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.” Lukewarmness, though soundly condemned by Jesus (Rev 3:15-16), is covering the modern church like the waters cover the sea. Every person whose spirit is tuned to heaven knows this is the case, and has been so for some time. Satan is having a hay-day in the average church. There is now more evidence of his diabolic work than the redemptive work of the Son of God. No popular church that I know of is asking for more of the Word of God, more gatherings, more exhortation, more insightful preaching. In fact, time given to the feeding of the flock of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2) is being reduced. There is not a perception that “the night is far spent.” God is being provoked by the average church, and like Corinth, they are not even aware of the circumstance (1 Cor 10:22).

The word “therefore” also means that no response, other than the one specified, is acceptable to God. This is a thread of reasoning that is dictated by the circumstance and the will of the Lord. If people do not think as this text states, it is only because the statement is neither understood nor believed. Those refusing to do what this text demands cannot be pleasing to God, profession notwithstanding. Those who leap forward to respond in faith will be given the grace necessary to

fulfill this word. “THEREFORE, LET US . . . ”

“US”

We must never allow the world to rob us of the “us” perception. This is the family of God, the sanctified ones (Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Cor 1:2; Heb 2:11), or those who have been called out of darkness into God’s marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9). The greatest obligation is laid upon the saints because the greatest benefits have been given to them. The inheritance belongs to them alone, and thus they must live in such a manner as to be ready to obtain it.

Let it be clear, this is not a denominational “us,” but a family-of-God “us.” These are the ones who have “received the atonement,” or reconciliation (Rom 5:11). This is the church, which is Christ’s “body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:23). There are certain responsibilities that are placed upon the people of God, and they need to hear them. It is altogether too common for sectarian requirements to be placed upon believers, while Divine essentials are withheld from them.

The text before us is a case in point. You will find that very few contemporary believers are being admonished in this area. The very words will sound strange to those whose religious contacts are largely limited to the organized church. This is, however, the way in which the Spirit speaks to the church – Christ’s church.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 23 of 45

CAST OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS, #2

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore CAST OFF the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” (Verse 12, Romans 13:11-14)

Other versions read, “lay aside the deeds of darkness” (NASB), “put aside the deeds of darkness” (NIV), “let us put off the works of the dark” (BBE), “throw off the works of darkness” (NAB), “So don’t live in darkness. Get rid of your evil deeds. Shed them like dirty clothes” (NLT), and “throw off everything that belongs to the darkness” (NJB).

The strength of these words is apparent. Yet, you will be hard pressed to find a religious environment where they are taken as seriously, as the language demands. It is not unusual to find “works of darkness” flaunted in religious gatherings, musical concerts, and even congregational and board meetings, and Theological schools. However, they are out of place anywhere – on the job, in the home, or in places of business – yes, and even in church gatherings.

The words “cast off” are aggressive. They mean to get rid of, not merely temporarily laid aside to be put on at some other time. This is not language that identifies special church gatherings, but is to be the constant characteristic of those identified with Christ, or called “Christians.” This

is to characterize Christian books, Christian movies, Christian television, youth “ministries,” senior citizen “ministries,” and Christian neighborhood helps and “ministries.” The things that are to be laid aside must not be encouraged by casual fun-loving religious environments.

There is nothing casual about these words. Imagine, if you will, that your clothes were on fire. Would you not cast them off with zeal and speed? So it is with “the works of darkness.” We are to rid ourselves of them with dispatch, not allowing them to linger in our lives. Some, in removing themselves from the Lord, have “cast off their first faith” (1 Tim 5:12). They should have rather “cast off the works of darkness” in order that they might be saved.

This kind of activity – casting off – is described elsewhere as “putting off,” “put away,” “lay aside,” “mortify,” “crucify,” and being “dead to.” All of these are aggressive, and all of them are to be done with dispatch. They are not projects, but something that is done immediately.

PUTTING OFF.

“But now ye also PUT OFF all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have PUT OFF the old man with his deeds” (Col 3:8-9).

“That ye PUT OFF concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph 4:22-23).

PUT AWAY

“Wherefore PUTTING AWAY lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph 4:25-29)

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be PUT AWAY from you, with all malice” (Eph 4:31).

LAYING ASIDE

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us LAY ASIDE every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1).

“Wherefore LAYING ASIDE all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings” (1 Pet 2:1).

MORTIFY (Put to death)

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do MORTIFY the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:13-14).

CRUCIFIED

“Knowing this, that our old man is CRUCIFIED with Him, that the body of sin might be

destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom 6:6).

“And they that are Christ's have CRUCIFIED the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24).

DEAD TO

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are DEAD TO SIN, live any longer therein?” (Rom 6:1-2).

“Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being DEAD TO SINS, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pet 2:24).

The church, the redeemed of the Lord, the followers of Christ, are to rid themselves of these things. They are to be cast off, thrown off, and laid aside. Sin simply is not to be found in the church, and it is time for it to get to work on this matter. I suggest that all outreach activities should be put on hold until the professed church is worthy or representing the Lord Jesus Christ. If it is defiled, everything it does is also defiled.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

“ . . . let us therefore cast off the works of darkness . . . ” (Verse 12, Romans 13:11-14)

Lesson 24 of 45

WHAT ARE “THE WORKS OF DARKNESS”

“Works of darkness” are activities that result from NOT knowing the Lord. They are also the product of unbelief, as well as being deceived by the devil. They are both developed and expressed without an awareness of God, or a desire to please Him. They do not spring from the knowledge of God, through which grace and peace are multiplied (2 Pet 1:2). Also, they have nothing whatsoever to do with fellowship with Christ, into which we have been called (1 Cor 1:9). These are “works” that allow a person to remain aloof from God – in fact, they can only be done apart from a consciousness of Him. They are works that are done in darkness, blend with the darkness, and promote moral and spiritual darkness. Men may call them addictions, but the Spirit calls them “works.” Consistently committed, they confirm enslavement to “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2).

These are “the works of the flesh” which exclude people from the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9; Gal 5:21). If committed by a professed believer, they are the result of grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30), quenching the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 5:19), and resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). They are the result of yielding to temptation instead of taking the way of escape that comes with every temptation (1 Cor 10:13). They are committed when men walk in the flesh instead of in the Spirit, refusing to be led by the Spirit (Rom 8:13-14). They are committed when men do not crucify the flesh (Gal 5:24), and fail to give heed to Him who is “speaking from heaven” (Heb 12:25). They are the result of walking in darkness rather than in the light (1 John 1:6,9). They are the result of stumbling instead of standing (John 11:9-10).

These are “works,” or human expressions, that primarily relate to this world, and in which no

place is made for faith. They can only be done when one is NOT living by faith (Heb10:38), NOT walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16), NOT presenting their body as a living sacrifice to God (Rom 12:1-2), and NOT seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33). In order to do these “works of darkness” one must refuse to hear “what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). These are works that blend easily with the world and all that is in it, which has been summarily cursed by God. They flow from a love for the world and the things that are in it, which posture is strictly forbidden by the Lord (1 John 2:15-17). They are expressed because the individual has not set his affection on things above, nor sought the things that are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God (Col 3:1-2).

In order to commit these “works of darkness,” the individual must ignore faith and hope, both of which prohibit the doing of such things. The one who does them must forget that he is going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account for the things he has done, whether they are good or bad (2 Cor 5:10).

The “works of darkness” are tainted by the flesh. They call for the activity of the “old man,” or “the flesh,” which has no place in the life of faith (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10). These are works that can only be done prior to when the Lord shall come “the second time” (Heb 9:28). At that time He will usher in eternal light, thus removing the environment in which these works are done. “The works of darkness” belong to our former lives, when we walked in the darkness. There is no place for them now that we are in Christ. If a person is deceived and commits these things, the Spirit will convict him of it – but the person must be sensitive to the Spirit’s conviction, confess their sins, and be cleansed from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). That cleansing will bring a sensitivity to one being cleansed, making sin repulsive to them.

The reasoning of this verse is as follows. The time is coming when works of darkness will have no environment in which to be expressed. That will be the time of “the day,” which is moving in fast upon us. The “night,” in which these works are done, is “far spent,” and will soon be gone. In view of this, let us rid ourselves of all works that will not survive the blazing light of Christ’s glory! Let us do it with zeal. Let it be done now, before it is too late!

If we dare to postpone the doing of this, we must remember how time is moving along with great rapidity. The night is passing, and the day is coming. Live accordingly, and do it now!

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 25 of 45

PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT

“ . . . and let us put on the armor of light. . . ” (Verse 12, Romans 13:11-14)

Other versions read, “the shining armor of right living” (NLT), “arming ourselves with light” (BBE), “the weapons of light” (CJB), “weapons that belong to the light,” GWN), “equip ourselves for the light” (NJB), “ready to live in the light” (CEV), “weapons for fighting in the

light” (GNB), “awake to what God is doing” (MESSAGE). Most of the versions read “armor of light.” It appears that the others try and explain what it means rather than translate what it says. One Interlinear version reads, “the implements of light.”

A lexical definition of the word translated “armor” is, “any tool or implement for preparing a thing; hence . . . weapons, an instrument” (THAYER).

I take it that this refers to the militant part of spiritual life, where “the whole armor of God” is used (Eph 6:10-18), and the “weapons of our warfare” are employed (2 Cor 10:1-3). We are living in a fallen world that is dominated by the devil (2 Cor 4:4; 1 John 5:19). There are seen and unseen personalities aggressively aligned “against the Lord and against His Christ” (Acts 4:26). In addition to these foes, we must contend with “principalities,” “powers,” “the rulers of the darkness of this world,” and “spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). We also have “the old man,” which is to be “put off” (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9) – “the flesh,” which is to be crucified” (Gal 5:24). This is no environment for novices and those with a childish understanding. All of these foes can only be successfully repelled and neutralized by “the armor of light,” or spiritual illumination:—i.e. knowing the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom 12:1-2); comprehending “with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:18-19). Those who are “children” in their understanding will not be successful in this battle (1 Cor 14:20). They will rather be “tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14).

The current blight of the church is its childishness, juvenileness, simplicity, and unwarranted naivety. Not being fed properly, it simply has not grown up as it should (Eph 4:15). All of this is in spite of the clear mandate to walk in the light, and not live in moral and spiritual darkness (John 12:15,36,46; 1 John 1:6,7; 2:9-10).

In spiritual life, things are always abandoned in order that we might appropriate something better. In the text before us, things are put off in order that better things may be put on. Contrary to common perceptions, light cannot blend with darkness. Good cannot merge with evil. Righteousness cannot intermingle with unrighteousness. Scripture says it this way. “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” (2 Cor 6:14-16).

It is not possible to do “the works of unrighteousness” with one hand, and put on “the armor of light” with the other. A person cannot serve two masters. Two conflicting purposes cannot be served at the same time. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt 6:24).

This is a Kingdom principle that is virtually unknown among professed Christians. All manner of activity is being expended among professing “Christians” that requires the adoption of worldly wisdom and manners within a supposed religious setting. It is found in the world of education, church organization, professional religious careers, and supposed Christian music. Devoted

efforts are made to mingle the flesh with the Spirit in order to attract people to Christ. It is all foolhardy, and no good will come from it. Before a person can appropriate the things of God, he must let go of the things of the world. In keeping with this principle, we “cast off the works of darkness” in order that we may be able to “put on the armor of light.”

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 26 of 45

PUT ON

“BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Verse 14, Romans 13:11-14)

“ . . . put on . . . ” Other versions read, “clothe yourself “ (Amplified), “Let your armor be the Lord Jesus Christ” (New Jerusalem Bible), “ask the Lord Jesus Christ to help you live” (Living Bible), “Let the Lord Jesus Christ be as near to you as the clothes you wear” (Contemporary English Version), “take up the weapons of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Good News Bible), “live like the Lord Jesus Christ did” (God’s Word), “Get out of bed and get dressed . . . dress yourselves in Christ” (Message Bible).

As you can see, the different versions present quite different views of the text. One version equates putting on Christ to donning the armor of God. Another portrays it as seeking for help from Jesus. Another sets it forth as Jesus being near to us. Still another represents it as taking up weapons. While yet another says it means living like Jesus. These, of course, are interpretations, not translations. They are to the Scriptures what the Talmud was to the Torah. Just to get our bearings, so to speak, Jesus said the merging of tradition with Scripture transgressed the Scripture, making it devoid of power (Matt 15:6; Mk 7:8-9,13).

SOMETHING THAT IS TO BE DONE

First, putting on Christ is something we are to do – an assignment from heaven that is not to be ignored. The word translated “put on” means to clothe, put on, or wear” (Louw-Nida). This may appear to be redundant, for elsewhere it is affirmed, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ HAVE PUT ON CHRIST” (Gal 3:27). How is it, then, that our text admonishes us to “put on Christ?” Is that not something that was accomplished when we were baptized into Christ?

When we put on Christ at our baptism, it has to do with COMMENCEMENT – “newness of life” (Rom 6:4; 7:6). It is the beginning of our new life, not the entirety of it. Now, life is to be lived daily, as in continuance (Rom 11:22; Col 1:23; 1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 3:14; 1 John 2:24), running a race (1 Cor 9:24-26; Heb 12:1-2), fighting a fight (1 Tim 6:12). These are all activities that are begun, but must be CONTINUED to the intended “end” Rom 6:22; 1 Cor 1:8; 15:24; Heb 3:6,14; 6:11; 1 Pet 1:9,13; Rev 2:26).

The purposed conclusion of the work of salvation is conformity to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29-30). Stated another way, it is Christ being “formed” in us (Gal 4:19). This is done a day at a time – and each day must commence by putting on Christ. This does not mean attempting to emulate Christ’s life. Rather, He is the superior influence in our life. He is the Director and Leader of our life. To ”put on Christ” means He is the default of life, and that we always defer to His revealed will. You cannot do that once, and it last for the entirety of your life, any more than you can get out of bed once a year, and go in the vitality of that single night of sleep for the rest of the year.

There is such a thing as “renewal” – continually being made new. That is part and parcel of salvation itself. As it is written, “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration AND RENEWING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Tit 3:4-6. NKJV). That renewal is ongoing, and involves being “changed” from one increasing stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). However, it is not something that happens automatically, and without any participation on our part. We are to daily “put on Christ,” consciously and deliberately consenting to His leadership by following Him wherever He leads.

Frequently the words “PUT ON” are used in Scripture. We are to have a working familiarity with them.

UNDER THE LAW

Under the Law, the service of God required the putting on of certain attire. The priest had to “PUT ON his linen garment” (Lev 6:10). Aaron was required to “PUT ON the holy linen coat” (Lev 16:4). When he went into the holy place, he had to “PUT ON” his linen garments (Lev 16:23). Kings “PUT ON their robes” before sitting upon their thrones(1 Kgs 22:10). Divinely appointed activities often required the putting on of certain attire. Priests “PUT ON” priests clothing. Kings “PUT ON” kings clothing. Soldiers “PUT ON” armor, or military overdress.

UNDER THE NEW COVENANT

Life in Christ is also attended with certain requirements – things that are to be “PUT ON.”

Those who are justified have “PUT ON Christ” (Gal 3:27). They are also to “PUT ON the new man” (Eph 4:24), and PUT ON “the whole armor of God” (Eph 6:11). As “the elect of God,” they are to “PUT ON . . . bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering” (Col 3:12). And, as a covering over all of these, they are to “PUT ON charity” (Col 3:14).

These are not mere suggestions, or goals toward which we are to strive. They represent absolute Divine requirements. There is no acceptable alternative action. In keeping with this manner of the Kingdom, we are to “PUT ON the armor of light.” God has provided it, we are to put it on. He will not put it on us, but enable US to put it on. None of this can be done once for all.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 27 of 45

THE ARMOR OF LIGHT, #1

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” (Verse 12, Romans 13:11-14)

Our spiritual “armor” is referred to in different ways. From the standpoint of the NATURE of this protection, it is called “the armor OF RIGHTEOUSNESS” (2 Cor 6:7). Viewed as a thorough means of security, it is called “the whole ARMOR OF GOD” (Eph 6:11,13). Here, it is called “the armor OF LIGHT.”

APPROPRIATED IN THE LIGHT

This is “armor,” or an array of protection or weaponry, that is appropriated in the “light” of God’s “countenance” (Psa 4:6). That is, it is obtained while we are in fellowship with the Lord, walking in the light AS HE IS in the light (1 John 1:7). From a practical point of view, this is when we are acutely conscious of God, sensing His approval and blessing. It is when we are living by faith (Heb 10:38), walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16), and motivated by the unseen realities He has revealed through the Gospel of Christ (2 Cor 4:18). This is involved in the “fellowship” which John desired for his readers: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1John 1:3).

This is a glorious fellowship that simply cannot be realized in an institutional agenda, a sectarian environment, or among those whose first priority is not seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33). Through the Spirit David affirmed, “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [hades], behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (Psa 139:7-12). YOU CANNOT GET AWAY FROM THE LIVING GOD. Such an escape is simply impossible.

And yet, there are places where God does NOT dwell – places where He does not bestow His blessing, deliver, help, or give grace. One time, when Israel was presumptuous, attempting to go up where God had promised, Moses told them, “Go not up, for the LORD IS NOT among you” (Num 14:42). God had said this in Deuteronomy 1:42: “I am not among you.”

There is really only one alternative to being profitably in the presence of the Lord, and that is dwelling in the tents of wickedness. As David wrote, “For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psa 84:10). Hosea once lamented to Israel, ““They shall go with their flocks and

with their herds to seek the LORD ; but they SHALL NOT find Him; He hath withdrawn Himself from them” (Hos 5:6). Amos prophesied of a spiritual famine when “they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD , and SHALL NOT FIND IT” (Amos 8:12). The presence and blessing of the Lord is not to be assumed! There are some people whom God has “given over to a reprobate mind” (Rom 1:28).

Glory and honor are only in the Lord’s “PRESENCE” (1 Chron 16:27), and there alone “the fulness of joy can be realized” (Psa 16:11). These cannot be effected in institutionalism, sectarianism, pleasure, or other fleshly priorities.

We are where God dwells when we are preferring the things of God so strongly that nothing else holds the priority. In that environment, we procure the armor that will protect us from all the devil can hurl at us. You cannot find the armor of reference if you insist on dwelling where God is, at the very best, afar off (Psa 138:6).

Many a soul never obtains the “armor” that can protect the soul because they are rarely, if ever, “in the light.” You will learn by experience that Divine resources are not to be found in dark places. If you desire to have what the Lord longs to give, you must come into the light! As Solomon once wrote, “In the light of the king's countenance is life” (Prov 16:15). Isaiah admonished, “Let us walk in the light of the Lord” (Isa 2:5). Jesus spoke of things being “heard in the light” (Lk 12:3). He also admonished His disciples to “believe in the light” (John 12:36). John wrote of walking “in the light” (1 John 1:7), and “abiding in the light” (1 John 2:10).

“Light” is the environment of illumination, where the things of God are discerned (1 Cor 2:14; Heb 5:14), comprehended (Eph 3:18), and perceived (1 John 3:16). It is what enables the saints to say “We know” (Rom 3:19; 7:14; ; 8:22,26,28; 2 Cor 5:1; 1 John 3:2,14,24; 5:2,15,18,19,20). All of this marvelous knowledge is “in the light.” The people of God are identified by what they “know,” not what they do not know.

If you have been involved in the work of the Lord, and have a discerning acquaintance with the church world, you know that there is an alarming dominance of spiritual ignorance among professed “Christians.” Because of this ignorance, an inordinate number of people cannot handle the Word of God (1 Tim 2:15). It also ought to be noted that this kind of ignorance alienates people from God (Eph 4:18). Further, this inexcusable level of obtuseness exists among a staggering number of “Christian” activities: schools of higher learning, media ministries, workshops, training institutes, publishers, literature, music ministries, marriage ministries, youth ministries, etc., etc. It is not that all of these are of themselves wrong. It is rather that they have not been able to dissipate the cloud of ignorance that continues to hover over Christendom.

All of this has a great deal to do with our text, for this armor is appropriated “in the light,” and thus is called “the armor OF LIGHT.” Where there is no valid light, there can be no effective armor.

In this sense, we “put on the armor of light” by walking in the realm where the armor can be appropriated. It is “in the light” that we become aware of what the Lord has provided, and “put on” manners and traits that cannot be penetrated by the fiery darts of the wicked one.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 28 of 45

THE ARMOR OF LIGHT, #2

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” (Verse 12, Romans 13:11-14)

THE LIGHT ITSELF IS ARMOR

There is a sense in which the light of God protects us. In this view, the light itself is the armor. The Psalmist knew that if God would but shine His light upon him, all would be well. “For with Thee is the fountain of life: in THE LIGHT shall we see light” (Psa 36:9). “O send out THY LIGHT and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles” (Psa 43:3). “Make Thy face to SHINE UPON Thy servant: save me for Thy mercies' sake” (Psa 31:16). “Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to SHINE; and we shall be saved” (Psa 80:3). All of these texts suggest the protective aspect of Divine light. That light successfully offsets adversarial circumstances, and brings in the element of safety and indemnity.

Satan has been cast out of the presence of the Lord. Thus, those who walk in the “presence” of light will experience victory over him and all of his devices. Satan’s hierarchy includes the “rulers of the DARKNESS of this world” (Eph 6:12). His entire domain is “the power of DARKNESS” (Col 1:13). His angels are “reserved in everlasting chains under DARKNESS unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). There is no better way to neutralize Satan’s power than to be “in the light,” for he has been once and for all expelled from that domain. That is what exposes him, and even repels him. If you “walk in the light” you will not have to grapple with Satan. Like all who are under his rule, Satan himself hates the light (John 3:20). Light repels him, and causes the devil to flee. If, on the other hand, one insists on walking in darkness, he will be a victim of Satan, who comes “to steal, to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10). There is no disciplinary program that can repel the devil! New habits lack Divine power, being rooted in human ability, not Divine potency. Walking in the light, or putting on the armor of light is imperative if we are to “reign in life” (Rom 5:17).

RELATED TO UNDERSTANDING

“The armor of light” is related to “spiritual understanding.” It has to do with seeing things properly, and knowing what is really happening. Ignorant disciples are never ones who triumph! If you are to be protected from the devices of the wicked one and the eroding influences of this world, you must have some grasp of the truth of God. That is why Paul admonished the church, “be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men” (1 Cor 14:20). Again, he prayed that the people of God might experience “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened” (Eph 1:18), and “that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). There is such a thing as “the full assurance of understanding” (Col 2:2). John tells us that the Lord Jesus is come, and

hath given us an understanding” (1 John 5:20). Being “without understanding” constitutes a people being “foolish” (Jer 5:21). It was a primary mark of the Gentile world that lapsed into degeneracy (Rom 1:31).

Notwithstanding the sober warnings against being “without understanding,” the fervent labors and prayers for the people of God to have understanding, and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Himself to give understanding, the nominal church is noted for its spiritual ignorance and obtuseness. It has become fodder for charlatans and opportunists. It is a discouragement to godly people, and is impotent to repel the powers of darkness. The trait of wayward Israel is not found in the professed church: “They KNOW NOT to do right” (Amos 3:10), and “they KNOW NOT the thoughts of the Lord” (Micah 4:12). Above all the Lord must be saying, “they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and THEY KNOW NOT ME, saith the Lord” (Jer 9:3).

Putting on the armor of light involves knowing the truth, and it is KNOWING the truth that makes you free (John 8:32). When the truth is known, the soul becomes aware of the blessings of God and the snares of the devil. When we are “illuminated” (Heb 10:32), we can perceive what is to be gained, and what is to be shunned. That perception contributes to our protection. It is not the whole of it, for holy angels are working for us as well (Heb 1:13-14). However, putting on “the armor light” is our role in the matter of survival, and cannot be neglected with impunity. God will give us strength to put it on, and keep it on. It is time to declare war against ignorance, not knowing, obtuseness, dullness, simplicity, childishness, and naivety. They are all conditions in which “the armor of light” has NOT been put on.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

WALK HONESTLY, #1!

Lesson 29 of 45

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day . . .” (Romans 13:11-14)

Other versions read, “Let us walk properly” (NKJV), “walk becomingly” (ASV), “With right behavior” (BBE), “with decency” (CSB), “live honorably” (NRSV), and “in a seemly manner, decently” (AMPLIFIED).

The word from which “honestly” is translated has the following lexical meaning: “in a seemly manner, decently” (THAYER), “honest and orderly behavior decently, properly, with propriety” (FRIBERG).

Is there really a standard of behavior for the child of God? Indeed, there is – but it is not a standard developed by men. The living embodiment of that standard is “Jesus of Nazareth” (John 18:5), “the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). A point is made of this by John the apostle: “And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, EVEN AS HE IS PURE” (1 John 3:3). Again he writes, “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of

judgment: because AS HE IS, SO ARE WE in this world” (1 John 4:17). Paul wrote of this likeness as something that has been manifested, or made known: “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be THE EPISTLE OF CHRIST” (2 Cor 3:3). He also writes that this “epistle,” or letter, is “known and read of all men” (2 Cor 3:2).

This likeness should not surprise us, because salvation is all about conforming us to “the image” of Christ (Rom 8:29-30). That conformity will be completed when Jesus comes again (1 John 3:2). Now, while we are living by faith, that image is being “formed,” as we are regularly “changed” into it by the working of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18).

To walk “honestly,” or “properly,” is to live in strict harmony with what God has determined us to be, and in concert with the shaping and conforming work of the Holy Spirit. It is imperative that our lives not be in conflict with God’s Divine appointments. If Jesus delivered us from this present evil world according to the will of God (Gal 1:4), what sense does it make for professing “Christians” to adopt worldly manners, looking and talking like the society of the condemned. I will tell you that there is altogether too much of the world in the modern church – and it is wholly improper and, in the sense of our text, dishonest.

The association between being made righteous by God and living in this world is again made very apparent. One’s theology cannot be divorced from life, as some are wont to do. A significant number of debates have raged through the centuries over whether or not the believer is secure while living in an unacceptable manner. I am sure you are familiar with some of the positions that are being perpetrated among the churches. Flesh has a strong propensity toward the exploitation of the grace of God. As soon as it hears of “grace,” or of being “made righteous,” it begins to excuse involvement in iniquity. The “natural man” considers the grace of God to be a loving mantle that is thrown over the professed believer, moving God to ignore the thoughts, words, and deeds of the individual, as though they did not even exist. However, this is a total misrepresentation. The grace of God rids us of the guilt of sin, gives us a nature that is not prone to sin, and teaches us “that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Tit 2:12-13). That is the effective work of God’s grace – bringing salvation, effectively teaching us to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly and righteously in this world, and look for, eagerly anticipating, the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ. Where these effects are not being demonstrated and confirmed in life, the grace of God is NOT at work. No theological position can change that fact. The grace of God cannot be seen by the naked eye, but the work of grace can – and where that work is absent, grace has left the house.

The Spirit’s admonitions to us are all given with this reality in mind – the effective teaching of the grace of God. When we comprehend the loving favor of God, lavished upon us because of Christ Jesus, an effective teaching process begins. The Spirit exhorts us in view of that tutelage. What He requires is not only necessary, it is well within the range of possibility. Unlike the Law, the exhortations of the Spirit are not “weak through the flesh” (Rom 8:3). That is because they are not addressed to the flesh, but to man’s renewed spirit, which has the dominion over the flesh. Make sure you are one in whom the grace of God can be “seen” (Acts 11:23).

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 30 of 45

WALKING HONESTLY, #2

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day . . .” (Verse 13, Romans 13:11-14)

The word “walk” is a Scriptural synonym for the manner of living, or the way in which one directs and conducts his life . Notice, the various translations confirm the breadth of this word: “behave,” “live,” and “conduct ourselves.” The New Living Translation uses a paraphrase for the word: “in everything we do.” Our “walk,” has to do with the entirety of our lives – what we do, the way we do it, and the reason for doing it. Our “walk” speaks of the direction or focus of life, as well as its activities.

THERE IS A PROPER WAY TO LIVE!

The manner in which we live is not inconsequential. This is a weighty consideration in a hedonistic society that aggressively seeks personal and fleshly gratification. We are living in a time that directly contradicts the revealed manner in which Jesus Himself lived. At His most critical hour He cried out, “NOT My will, but Thine, be done” (Lk 22:42). During His ministry, Jesus confessed, “I seek NOT Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me” (John 5:30). The consuming objective of the Savior’s life among men was to please His Father and successfully complete the mission on which He was sent (John 10:17-18). He actually lived for the purpose of pleasing God and saving His “sheep.” As He Himself said, “As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep” (John 10:15).

Let it be clear, any other motive for life is totally unacceptable! Self gratification and a dominating quest for objectives unrelated to God’s great salvation are completely out of order – always. Life must be lived “properly.” Every person must weigh the value and propriety of their own thoughts and purposes. What causes you to be “cast down” (Psa 42:11)? Is it when your personal purposes on earth are frustrated, or when you sense they you not pleased God, or have come short of His revealed will? When are you your happiest? When your personal plans in this world are realized, or when they have done the will of God from the heart. None of your peers have the right to judge you in these matters, but YOU are obligated to do so – to “examine” yourself (2 Cor 13:5). Further, after you have examined yourself, pray, “Examine me, O Lord , and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psa 26:2). God will try your heart whether you do or not. However, when YOU ask Him to do it, He will let you know what He has found. When you are aware of these things, you will be able to say with David, “Thou has proved mine heart; Thou hast visited me in the night; Thou has tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. Concerning the works of men, by the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not” (Psa 17:3-5).

We are living in a time when the approach to religion and spiritual life does not encourage introspection. Too many professing Christians talk about their trouble to their friends and do not

take advantage of their access to God. That kind of life is a walk of fundamental dishonesty. Such are conducting their lives just as though there was no God (Dan 2:28), no access to Him (Eph 3:12), no Intercessor (Heb 7:25), no grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:15-16), and no Lord to make them stand (Rom 14:4), and keep them from falling (Jude 1:20). That kind of life cannot be justified, and no attempt should be made to explain it. God did not deliver us to leave us wallowing in the pit of despair, and we simply should not do so. Rather, we must live honestly, properly, and in a God-honoring manner.

The word from which “properly,” or “honestly,” is translated, from the standpoint of language, means “honest and orderly behavior, decently, properly, and with propriety” (Friberg). I prefer the word “honesty,” for it accentuates the dominance of faith. Before persons who have received Christ can walk in an unbecoming manner, they must become dishonest, insincere, and corrupt in their thinking. The truth must be thrust from them, Jesus must be forgotten, and eternity violently pushed into the background of their thinking. It simply is not possible to live unbecomingly while acknowledging the truth. One cannot walk after the flesh while beholding “the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus” (2 Cor 4:6). No person is versatile enough to plant one foot in the Spirit, and the other in the flesh.

To “walk honestly,” therefore, is to live within a prevailing persuasion of the truth and Person of Jesus Christ. Let it be clear, this is not a requirement of institutionalized Christianity. There are plenty of churches that will accept, and even promote, those who do not live in this manner. God Almighty, however, is not so congenial. His Word, which is unalterable, affirms, “So then they that are in the flesh CANNOT please God” (Rom 8:8) – and there is no program conceived by men that can enable them to do so. That is precisely why it is NOT common to find professed Christians living in an honest and proper manner. However, this is a Divine essentiality. When any person is serious and consistent about pleasing God, they will be given the grace to do so, and will “walk honestly.”

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 31 of 45

AS IN THE DAY

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day . . .” (Verse 13, Romans 13:11-14)

This is a significant expression: “IN the day.” This is “the day” created by the light of God’s presence (2 Cor 4:4,6). It is living with an acute consciousness that it is the God of heaven “with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13). Whether we know and recognize it or not, “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him” (Heb 4:13). The Lord is looking upon the hearts of men (1 Sam 16:7), searching their hearts and knowing their thoughts (1 Chron 28:9). Jesus reveals to the churches that He “searches the minds and hearts” (Rev 2:23, NKJV). Walking “as in the day” is living with those things in mind.

Here are some expressions that unveil what it means to walk “as in the day.”

1. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my Strength, and my Redeemer" (Psa 19:14).
2. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psa 139:23-24).
3. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil 3:8-11).
3. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:12).
4. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13-14).

Living "as in the day" does not suggest pretension, or indicate that we are not really "in the day." Rather, it declares we are to walk with a dominating awareness of who and where we are in Christ Jesus. This is living with the knowledge that all of our deeds, and even the counsels of our heart, are fully known by the Lord. Your heart will confirm to you that it is not possible to so live and be dominated by sin.

This is why it is affirmed of those in Christ, "Ye are all the CHILDREN OF LIGHT, and the CHILDREN OF THE DAY: we are NOT of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Thess 5:5). And again, "But let us, WHO ARE OF THE DAY, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thess 5:8).

The saints of God stepped into the light when they were "illuminated," and began to see things clearly (Heb 10:32). We are told, "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). This is walking, or living, with an understanding – "spiritual understanding" (Col 1:9), as compared with living in a state characterized by an ignorance of God and the things of God. It is most arresting to ponder the number of professing Christians that are "without understanding" (Rom 1:31). They "stumble" about in the dark, snared by the devil, falling into sin, and living just as if there was no God, no salvation, no grace, and no heaven.

Jesus said of such people, "But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (John 11:9). This is the state of blindness to which the apostle referred when he wrote, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor 4:3-4). At the root of the matter, these are people who have not believed the Gospel. This is precisely why "the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ" has not "shined unto them," or "SHOULD NOT shine upon them" (NKJV). That is, God will not allow a person to be illuminated, or to understand His truth, who does not believe.

Programs may be developed to enable such a person to perceive the things of God through academia, or cleverly developed programs of learning. But they will not work. God will not allow them to work. He will hide the truth from such people, and even send them “strong delusion” because they have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved (2 Thess 2:10-12). If it is really true, as Jesus said, that “this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3), then it is a serious thing not to know God, be acquainted with Him, or be unable to grasp what He says. “God is light” (1 John 1:5), and to “walk in darkness,” or in a state of fundamental ignorance of Him, is a state that will conclude in condemnation. John wrote, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1 John 1:6), church membership, congregational leadership, of religious education notwithstanding! Jesus affirmed, “I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall NOT walk in darkness, but shall HAVE the light of life” (John 8:12).

Today, there is a staggering number of purported “Christian ministries” that are tailored for the spiritually blind. They deal with such things as marriage, personal discipline, problems unique to the youth, etc. There are countless workshops, seminars, and the likes that represent themselves as supplying knowledge that will bring understanding. The difficulty is that the light that is required cannot come from humanly devised programs.

From this vantage point, conversion is the introduction of light into the individual. It is described in this manner: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). There you have it: a light COMMANDED by God, designed to produce the knowledge of God, as it is perceived in the Person of Christ.

Now, according to our text, that light is to be the environment in which we live our lives. No other manner of living is acceptable to God.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 32 of 45

NOT IN . . .

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.” (Verse 13, Romans 13:11-14)

It is not enough to know how we should live. The flesh, which is ever with us, is so corrupt, that we must also be reminded how NOT to live. If we were not occupying a “vile body” (Phil 3:21), – a “mortal body” (Rom 8:11) – that has to be managed and controlled (1 Cor 9:27); and if we did not “another law” within us, “warring against the law of our minds” (Rom 7:23), and did not need grace to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts (Tit 2:11-12) – and if we were not running in a race we have not yet finished (Heb 12:1-2), and fighting a fight we have not yet won (1 Tim 6:12). If we were not strangers and pilgrims in the world, and were not in need of renewal (Tit 3:5), and on going change (2 Cor 3:18). I say if these circumstances were not so, we might be

free to speculate about whether or not we could be lost, or if we should actually be admonished not to do this or that.

However, we are not in a circumstance without danger, and that has no need of vigilance. We are in a world presently occupied by the devil and his hosts (2 Cor 4:4, whom we must “resist” (James 4:4). We are wrestling “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). We are carrying about “the old man,” which must be crucified, or put off (Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9), and are regularly faced with temptations, from which we must escape through the provided way (1 Cor 10:13).

How are we to respond to those who insist we are locked in, so to speak, to a saved condition, and that there is nothing we can do to cause God to love us less, or not deliver us over to things that damn the soul (Rom 1:24-26)? Are we to hold dialog with them as though they were presenting a valid consideration? Or, should we plug our ears, and refuse to listen to people who have espoused positions perpetrated by the same devil; who said to Eve, “Thou shalt NOT surely die” (Gen 3:4)?

How we ought to thank God for the manner of instruction employed in this text. There are promises and warnings, blessings and curses, instruction concerning doing and not doing. The promises, blessings, and instruction in doing good draw upon our hearts. They are the superior incentives – but they are not the only ones. The warnings, curses, and admonitions about what not to do are like trumpets that arouse us from spiritual slumber. Thus we have two good reasons to move forward toward the prize. First, to obtain glory. Second, to avoid hell.

The Spirit provides three categories of reprehensible conduct. All of them are to be avoided. None of them are acceptable before God. In each category, the sinful expression is mentioned, as well the cause of it.

– Given O. Blakely

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 33 of 45

EXCESSES

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness . . .” (Romans 13:11-14)

Other versions read, “not in revelry and drunkenness” (NKJV), “not in carousing and drunkenness” (NASB), “not in orgies and drunkenness” (NIV), “not in pleasure-making and drinking” (BBE), and “Don't participate in wild parties and getting drunk” (NLT).

RIOTING AND DRUNKENNESS

In English, the word “rioting” is defined as “to indulge in revelry or wantonness.” “Revelry” is defined as “noisy partying or merrymaking” (Merriam Webster). In Greek, the word translated

“revelry” is lexically defined as, “a nocturnal and riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows who after supper parade through the streets with torches and music in honor of Bacchus or some other deity, and sing and play before the houses of their male and female friends; hence, used generally, of feasts and drinking-parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry” (THAYER). In America such an activity is found in non-Christian college Spring breaks, night clubs, musical concerts, super-bowl parties, and miscellaneous indulgent celebrations.

Revelry, rioting, carousing, and wild parties, are the EXPRESSION. Drunkenness, or sinful indulgence, is the CAUSE for it. These are sins of excessiveness or overabundance. In these sins people indulge themselves in external involvements that distort the mind, and cause beastliness to surface. Such transgressions cause men to be unreasonable and foolish, even in the sight of the world. Their minds become incapable of reason, and they degenerate to the moral level of the beasts of the earth. Carousing, revelry, and excessive feasting are involved.

Some few years ago, such sins were largely in the history books, or the heathen cultures of the world. Now, however, they have entered like a moral hurricane into the Western world. Such things are characterized by a lack of control and intemperance. Thus, those created in the image of God are carried along by indulgence to such a degree as to destroy every semblance of reason.

Peter also referred to these activities, identifying them with the past lives of many believers. “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in . . . excess of wine, reveling, banquetings . . .” (1 Pet 4:3). Other versions read, “drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties” (NKJV), and “drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties” (NASB).

There are some within the Christian community who speak of being “drunk in the Spirit.” In such a state, they conduct themselves just as unreasonably and foolishly as those who are drunk with wine. They may very well be “drunk,” but it is emphatically NOT “in the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit heightens reason and sobriety. Others, generally among the younger generation, seek to sanctify intemperate conduct with, what they call, “Christian music.” In their activities some actually conduct themselves unreasonably, intemperately, and without any lasting awareness of the Lord Jesus Christ. During such occasions, the minds of those involved are shut down, so to speak. Immorality is more easily indulged as minds are nailed to the earth like Sisera’s head (Judges 4:21). The “flesh” is accented, and it becomes difficult, if not impossible, for those involved to fulfill the admonition of Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil 4:8). Worldly pleasure encloses the mind in the temporal zone, and carnal expressions flow from the people. It is then that godly sobriety, moderation, meditation, motivating insight, the expectation of the Lord’s return, and the quest for Divine approval are all shut down and put to sleep. There are a number of contemporary “Christian” activities that draw one into such a state. They are all spiritually disarming, and provide an entrance for the devil and his hosts.

Let every believer be diligent to avoid any activity that causes them to lose control of their mind

and affections. Such is not a proper activity, and ought never to be identified as lawful pleasure.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 34 of 45

UNCLEANNES

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, NOT IN CHAMBERING AND WANTONNESS . . .” (Verse 13, Romans 13:11-14)

Other versions read, “not in lewdness and lust” (NKJV), “not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality” (NASB), “not in sexual immorality and debauchery” (NIV), and “not in debauchery and licentiousness” (NRSV).

Lewdness, chambering, sexual promiscuity, wantonness, and debauchery, are the expressions. The “lust of the flesh” (1Gal 5:16; 1 John 2:16), or illicit desire, is the CAUSE of it. These are sins of indulgence – deeds in which the cravings of the flesh are sought to be satisfied by unlawful means. They are also sought with aggression and determination. It is a most vivid depiction of the condition of “uncleanness,” something that is strictly forbidden by God (Rom 6:19; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 4:19; 5:3,5; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:17; 2 Pet 2:10). Of old time the Lord said, “be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord” (Isa 52:11). That word is expanded to the body of Christ. God refuses to receive anyone who is not “clean” – “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and TOUCH NOT THE UNCLEAN THING; and I will receive you” (2 Cor 6:17). “Uncleanness” is set forth as a work of the flesh that excludes one from the kingdom of God (Gal 5:19; Eph 5:5; Col 3:5-6).

“Not in . . . lewdness,” or “chambering.” This is immoral conduct. The meaning of the term is “the defiled bed.” It is intimacy outside of the bounds of marriage, referring to adultery and illicit affairs. “Lust,” or “wantonness,” is unbridled and unrestrained lust or unlawful desire. This is what leads to “chambering,” also called “licentiousness,” or unbridled lust. This is indecent and outrageous moral behavior.

The remarkable increase of this sort of sin within the professed church is staggering. Unwed mothers, teenage pregnancies, and illicit affairs among church leaders are all a blotch upon our times. They all fall into the category or “lewdness and lust,” or “chambering and wantonness,” which are not to be once named among the people of God (Eph 5:3). The inflow of counselors and psychologists have led people into a sort of sympathy for those caught in such conduct. A staggering number of “ministers” have fallen into this kind of sin – some of whom are well known media-ministers. Promiscuity is found in churches, Bible Colleges, Seminaries, and specialized “Christian ministries. Sins like fornication, adultery, and sodomy are all on the increase – in the nation as a whole, and even within churches. This is all in spite of the fact that God has expressly said such things are NOT to be found among those identified with Christ. Believers are even forbidden to keep company with, or eat with such people: “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or

covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat” (1 Cor 5:11). That rule applies to the children of Christian parents as well. Sons and daughters who are dominated by lust, and insist on living in sin, are not to be courted with favor, simply because of relationship in the flesh. Even under the Law, God taught Israel to regard members of their family who violated the will of God as violators, not family members (Deut 13:6). God, for example, destroyed Nadab and Abihu, even though they were the sons of Aaron the high priest (Lev 10:1-3). The same was true of Hophni and Phineas, the sons of Eli (1 Sam 2:33-34).

Immorality is not to be found in the church – anywhere, or at any age. Thus saith the Lord, “But immorality (sexual vice) and all impurity [of lustful, rich, wasteful living] or greediness must not even be named among you, as is fitting and proper among saints (God's consecrated people) [Eph 5:3, Amplified Bible]. When it is found, Jesus Himself condemns it. As demonstrated in the church in Thyatira, He gives a brief time to repent, then in an exercise of His Headship over the church, personally addresses the situation. Here is an example of His words and judgment against a false prophetess who taught the people to commit fornication, and what He would do to her and those who followed her. “I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works” (Rev 2:21-23).

Specialists in moral recovery have become quite popular in the larger churches of the land. Time will be better spent declaring the words of our text to the church. Nothing about salvation allows for such moral defilement – absolutely nothing! Those who insist upon stepping over moral boundaries that have been established by God must know they have entered into an area for which nothing good is promised. There is only one alternative open to such – only one: “REPENT,” and repentance includes the instant cessation of the action from which repentance is required.

– Given O. Blakely

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 35 of 45

CONTENTION

“ . . . not in strife and envying.” (Verse 13, Romans 13:11-14)

STRIFE AND ENVY

“Not in . . . strife and envy.” Other versions read, “strife and jealousy” (NASB), “dissension and jealousy” (NIV), “quarreling and jealousy” (NRSV), “fighting and envy” (BBE), “rivalry and jealousy” (NAB), and “wrangling or jealousy” (NJB).

These are sins of CONTENTION. Strife, dissension, quarreling, fighting, and wrangling, are the

EXPRESSION. Envy, or jealousy, is the CAUSE .

Here are sins that men consider more respectable. They are quite common among professed believers as well as unbelievers. They are one of the primary reasons for division in the body of Christ, and play a key role in maintaining sectarianism, denominationalism, and heresies. Their existence confirms the ABSENCE of “the unity of the Spirit” (Eph 4:3), and “the unity of faith” (Eph 4:13). Even though heaven has issued the solemn word, “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3), those who commit these sins have rebelled against God, disobeyed Him, ignored His Word, and chosen to go their own way. Instead of being “obedient children” (1 Pet 1:14), they have reverted to their former state of being “disobedient” (Tit 3:3; 1 Pet 3:20). They have now fallen into the state described in this manner: “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being ABOMINABLE and DISOBEDIENT, and unto every good work reprobate” (Tit 1:16). Note, those who deny God in their works are appropriately referred to as “abominable.” Other versions read, “hated by all” (BBE), “detestable” (CSB), “odious” (MRD), “vile” (NAB), “outrageously rebellious” (NJB). These are what such people are TO GOD HIMSELF. They have become obnoxious to the Holy One because they have stubbornly preferred their will to His, and have chosen to bow their back and refuse to cease from doing things He hates (Prov 6:16-19).

Although these sins are rather common, there is no dignity in them, or Divine acceptance of those who commit them. A person has to live dishonestly to commit these sins – for they are contrasted with walking “honestly.” Where these sins are found, the ones committing them have not “put on Christ.” It really makes no difference what they profess, or what position they hold. Jesus will not dwell within a person who ignores His word! That is why He said, “He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21). And again, “If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him” (John 14:23).

And what of the person who does NOT keep Christ’s word, but ignores it, not doing what He says? Jesus is quite clear about the matter: “He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings: and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me” (John 14:24). If you wonder about the state of the person who does not love Jesus, that matter is clarified by the Holy Spirit: “If any man LOVE NOT the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema [cursed (BBE), had in execration (GENEVA)], Maranatha” (1 Cor 16:22). No man-made theological system can successfully erase or offset those solemn words!

These sins (strife and envying) are classed along with “rioting and drunkenness,” and “chambering and wantonness.” The flesh begets all such sins, and fosters them as well. Elsewhere, the Holy Spirit identifies such actions with “the works of the flesh.” “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, VARIANCE, EMULATIONS, wrath, STRIFE, SEDITIONS, HERESIES, ENVYINGS, murders, drunkenness, REVELINGS, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things SHALL NOT INHERIT the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:19-21). If such things are found in the “church,” they are to be purged from it, which involves the expulsion of those who cause or commit them. The Father,

Son, and Holy Spirit will not dwell where these transgressions are found – contradicting theology notwithstanding.

It is imperative that Christ is “PUT ON,” for no person can be saved if that is not done. However, it is impossible to put on Christ if the sins of reference are not put off – ceased and put out of the church! These are evidences of the presence and dominance of Satan – not Jesus!

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 36 of 45

SOMETHING COMMON

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.” (Verse 13, Romans 13:11-14)

There is something these categories of sin have in common. THEY ALL CENTER IN SELF, NOT IN CHRIST. They have to do with satisfying earthly desires, not appropriating heavenly benefits. All of them are anchored not only in time, but are riveted to the immediate moment. They all require a mindset that is totally oblivious of God, Christ, salvation, the coming of the Lord, the end of the world, and the day of judgment.

Let us be clear about several things. So far as God is concerned, there is really only ONE MAN upon whom everything is hinged, and for whom all things were made (Col 1:16). He is the Man God has anointed “above His fellows” (Heb 1:9). He is the One to whom He has given “all power in heaven and earth” (Matt 28:18). He is the ultimate “Heir of all things” (Heb 1:2). All men are either accepted or rejected exclusively upon the basis of their reaction to Him – Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the Man God has assigned to “judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:31). If any man comes to God, He must come through Jesus Christ, His Son (John 14:6; Heb 7:25) – and He has appointed the Son to intercede for those who are doing so (Heb 7:25). In fact, Jesus is the One who brings them “to God” (1 Pet 3:18). The preeminent “record” given to mankind is “the record God has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10-11). In the end, no person who has not been “joined to the Lord” (1 Cor 5:16), and has failed to have “fellowship” with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), that will be accepted. God’s acceptance of any individual is exclusively “in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6). Whoever does not love Jesus will be cursed (1 Cor 16:22) – and Jesus defines who loves Him: “If a man love Me, he WILL keep My words” (John 14:23).

Now, this text has to do with our identity with Jesus Christ. It has to do with putting Him on, which depicts Christ as the Governor, Protector, and Shepherd of the individual. The Spirit is detailing for us what absolutely prohibits a person from being identified with Christ. Grace will not cover the person who fails to put off the sins mentioned. Mercy will not be lenient with such an individual. The love of God will not smile on the person who fails to awake out of sleep, cast off the works of darkness, walk honestly, and “not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.” There is a total absence of any Divine attribute that will allow God to receive those who do NOT put on Christ, and insist on NOT making provision

for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof. That is what this text affirms.

Today there is a kind of cotton gospel that offers comfort to the rebellious, tolerates the disobedient, and courts the stiffnecked. Pretentious experts in the Scriptures have invented a God of love who never would have driven Adam and Eve out of the Garden (Gen 3:24), cursed Cain (Gen 4:11-13), destroyed the world with a flood (Gen 7:21), decimated Sodom, Gomorrah, and the cities around them, with “eternal fire” (Jude 1:7), and sent venomous snakes among those who complained (Num 21:5-6). This new God would never have destroyed Jerusalem because they did not know the time of their visitation (Lk 19:44). But this is a false God who would never send “strong delusion” to those who refused to receive the love of the truth (2 Thess 2:10-12). This new and false God is like the god of the Philistines – he is only a “stump,” with no head or hands (1 Sam 5:3-4). Those who have embraced this God have to resort to men to assist them in correcting human behavior. Their God cannot produce a new creature (1 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10), or sanctify them in spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23). He cannot enable the people to “put on Christ.” Such a god is not “the true God” – the God of whom Jesus is currently giving His people an “understanding” (1 John 5:20).

Newness of life cannot indulge the things being tolerated by the nominal church – “rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.” There is no place for even one of the “The works of the flesh” in “newness of life” – Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like” (Gal 5:19-21). It is not that “newness of life” ought not to engage in such expressions, it CANNOT do so, for it has no capacity for transgression (1 John 3:9). The “new man” must be ignored, “the old man” preferred, and the Son of God crucified “afresh” by the individual, before these can be committed.

All of these transgressions are condemned by God, and exclude one from heaven (1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5-6; Col 3:5-6). It is not possible to do these things in such a manner as to make them acceptable. They are corrupt at the core, and there is no way to make them right.

No amount of religious activity can cause them to be good. An imagined Christian environment cannot sanctify them, or provide a just cause for them to be found in us. They are to be shunned like poison, which, indeed, they are. If they are allowed expression in our lives, they will pull us into the bottomless pit. There is no natural force that can stop this from happening. They will become the cause for condemnation and the reason for Divine rejection.

There is, praise the Lord, grace to keep us from indulging in such reprehensible conduct (Tit 2:11-13)! If you wonder where mercy can be found, and grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:16), it is at the point where sin becomes repulsive, and righteousness becomes the quest of preference. It is found when men put off the things that prohibit them, from putting on Christ.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

BUT . . .

“. . . BUT put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Verse 14, Romans 13:11-14)

Not only does the Holy Spirit inform us of what NOT to do, He directs us in the proper manner of life. Not only is there grace to avoid what is wrong, that same grace will teach us what is right (Tit 2:11-13). This is a Kingdom manner – avoiding the wrong while indulging the right; abstaining from one thing, while indulging in another. Those who have a propensity to Law as the means of justification rarely focus on something that is to be accomplished. Their emphasis tends to be the avoidance of the unlawful instead the obtaining of the true benefits. This is a spiritual trap that is perpetrated and fostered by the powers of darkness. In Christ, if there is nothing to obtain, no benefit to be procured, and no blessing to be attained, there really is no reason for abstinence.

“But . . .” Other versions read, “Rather” (NIV), and “Instead” (NRSV). Linguistically speaking, this is an adversative conjunction. It declares the antithesis, or opposite, circumstance or contrast. It is to morality what white is to black, or day is to night. It is not something that is merely different, but what is the opposite. In our text, it is what is diametrically opposed to indulging in sin. The ultimate point of the text is not what to avoid, but what to actually do. What is NOT to be done renders one incapable of doing what MUST be done. This is a perspective that must be discerned. Sin and transgression is not only wrong, and is not only to be rejected, it is fundamentally inhibiting in its effects. If sin is NOT confessed and abandoned, it effectively blocks the channel of blessing. It voids prayers, and renders one unqualified for deliverance. This was lived out in the Israelites, from whom the blessings of God were withdrawn because of their sin. Instead, when they transgress they received judgment. Their history is speckled with such occurrences. Further, we are admonished to take note of their experience, and make sure we do NOT follow their unworthy example (1 Cor 10:1-12). Hear the pleading of the Spirit: “Now these things were our examples, to the intent **WE SHOULD NOT LUST AFTER EVIL THINGS**, as they also lusted. **NEITHER BE YE IDOLATERS**, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. **NEITHER LET US COMMIT FORNICATION**, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. **NEITHER LET US TEMPT CHRIST**, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. **NEITHER MURMUR YE**, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor 10:6-11).

Today, churches are plagued with people who are lusting after evil things, committing idolatry in coveting (Col 3:5), committing fornication, tempting Christ, and murmuring. Who does not know this? Does anyone really think that God has changed, becoming tolerate of such conduct, and willing to endure the presence of such people in the prospective bride of His Son? Because of these conditions two grievous transgressions are taking place. First, the people are doing what is forbidden. Secondly, they are not doing what is required. Are there those who insist that we silently endure these conditions? Well, such people are wrong, and have no right to advise the people of God concerning human conduct. These conditions do not call for counselors, but for bold proclaimers of the truth of God – men who will “be instant in season, out of season;

reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim 4:2).

While this may appear a very elementary point, more is here than meets the casual eye. Those in Christ are not to merely refrain from the sins mentioned, they are engage in the activities here admonished. It is not enough to merely abstain from “rioting and drunkenness . . . chambering and wantonness . . . strife and envying.” There is no virtue in abstinence alone. Unless refraining from sinful expressions is matched by indulgence in the things of the Spirit, the effort is vain. This is particularly noteworthy in view of the remarkable lack of spiritual appetite in the average church for the things of God – a hunger and thirst for RIGHTEOUSNESS is virtually absent.

There are two reasons for abstaining from iniquity. First, if this is not done, it will not be possible to “put on Christ.” Second, if it is not done, Hell is the only destiny that is available – and it will take place where sin is not confessed and forthwith abandoned. That is the reasoning behind the word “BUT.”

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 38 of 45

PUTTING ON CHRIST, #1

“BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST . . . ” (Romans 13:11-14)

Other versions read, “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ” (NIV), “Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (NRSV), “But let the Lord Jesus Christ take control of you” (NLT), and “Let your armor be the Lord Jesus Christ” (NJB).

This is the second admonition of this sort. The first was “let us PUT ON the armor of light” (verse 12). Elsewhere, as I have already indicated (comments on verse 12), we are admonished, “PUT ON the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24), and “PUT ON the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:11). The life of the believer is a deliberate life – lived consciously and intentionally, with careful consideration. Living in a hurried and helter-skelter manner is not acceptable for a “Christian.” Living “in pleasure on the earth” leads to wantonness, or a lack of restraint (James 5:5). Paul said of a widow that lived in such a manner, “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth” (1 Tim 5:6). That is, such are spiritually asleep, unresponsive to God, walking in the dark, and under the influence of the wicked one.

However, there is nothing passive about living by faith. The life of faith is by no means characterized by inactivity – spiritually inactivity. There is a staggering number of professing “Christians” that are spiritually idle. They are not laboring for the food that “endures unto eternal life” (John 6:27). They are not working out their own salvation “with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). They are not running the race with patience that has been set before them (Heb 12:1-2), or fighting the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12). Simply put, they are not putting on Christ. What they are ignorant of, and oblivious to, is that God has made absolutely no provision for anyone living like that to end up in heaven, and forever with the Lord. That kind of life actually excludes

one from the blessing. I do realize that such people are welcome in the First Church of the Frigidaire – but they are NOT welcomed by the Lord, and have no right to tread His courts (Isa 1:12).

Notice that this admonition begins with the word “BUT.” That is, putting on Christ is to be done instead of walking in “rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying” (Rom 13:13). Putting on Christ is something that will not be done unless we do it. There is not even a heavenly Benefactor who will do this for you. There is grace to do it, to be sure, and there is the power of the Holy Spirit to complete the process – but YOU must do it. Further, it is in the process of doing it that grace is received for its accomplishment.

Putting on Christ bears some resemblance to the lame man that was healed by Jesus at the pool of Bethesda. He had been impotent for thirty-eight years – unable to move about freely, and confined to a pallet. When Jesus asked him “Wilt thou be made whole?” – or “Do you want to be made well?” (NKJV) – the man responded that he had no one to assist him in getting into the pool at the time the first person in would be healed (John 5:1-6). Jesus said to the man, “Rise, take up your bed and walk”(John 5:8, NKJV). Now, how is an impotent man going to do that? From a human point of view, all he could really do is “WANT” to get up and walk. However, at the point he wanted to do so, and extended himself to get up – at THAT POINT he received the grace and power to do so. That is how we put on Christ – by earnestly wanting to do so, and preparing ourselves to extend whatever effort is required to do so.

Putting on Christ has to do with our appearance before both God and men. Before God, we come in the merits and accomplishments of Christ. Before men we come bearing His traits and manners. This “putting on” involves a deliberate effort to appropriate what can only be had in Christ Jesus, and we will need Divine grace and power to actually get this done.

Right here we come to grips with some serious misconceptions of spiritual life. Satan, through demonic doctrines, has spread throughout the Christian community that in salvation everything is done for us. If the required activity is not found in us, it is reasoned, it is because God has not done it yet. If we will simply wait in a state of inactivity, men imagine, the Lord will eventually come through for us. The effects of this doctrine are reason enough to reject it. However, this text will afford us the opportunity of opening up the real nature of life in Christ Jesus.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 39 of 45

A BRIEF EXPOSITION

“BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Romans 13:11-14)

Allow me to focus on two aspects of life in Christ that speak of us putting on something. The first is our text: “But PUT YE ON the Lord Jesus Christ.” The other has already been

mentioned, and is found in Ephesians 4:24. “And that ye PUT ON the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” In both cases, the language is quite clear. We are admonished to DO something. It may appear as though this is something that has not, in any sense, been done before. Yet, the Spirit declares elsewhere that both have already been done.

First, regarding putting on Christ, it is written, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ HAVE put on Christ” (Gal 3:27). Other versions read, “have clothed yourselves with Christ” (NASB,NIV,NRSV). The book of Romans has also affirmed we have been “baptized INTO Christ” (6:3). Yet, those affirmed to have already put on Christ, are admonished in our text, “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.” are these texts in conflict with one another?

Second, regarding putting on the “new man,” it is written, “And HAVE put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col 3:10). Yet, those in Christ are admonished, “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). Once again, are these texts in conflict with one another?

Of course, these texts are not in conflict with one another. Rather, they underscore that the salvation of God, so far as experience is concerned, has a beginning and an ending, or conclusion. The beginning is not static, but is progressive in nature, eventually producing maturity, stability, and spiritual adulthood.

It is with this in mind that Jesus says, “I am Alpha AND Omega, the beginning AND the ending, saith the Lord,” (Rev 2:8); “I am Alpha AND Omega, the beginning AND the end” (Rev 21:6); “Fear not; I am the first AND the last” (Rev 1:17); “I am Alpha AND Omega, the beginning AND the end, the first AND the last” (Rev 22:13). It is also said of Him, “Jesus the Author AND Finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:2).

The salvation of God is a holy process with a beginning that is intended to culminate in a conclusion that brings glory to God and real eternal security to the saved ones. Rest assured, there will not be a God-honoring conclusion that has not had a God-honoring beginning. Both must be experienced for salvation to be personally realized.

This is why those in Christ live in hope – hope of the glorious conclusion, which will take place at the coming of the Lord (Phil 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-3). It is the anticipation of the experiential fullness of our salvation at Christ’s coming that makes it “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Tit 2:13). Thus we are said to be “saved by hope” (Rom 8:24). This is why “hope” is an anchor for the soul, keeping one from being carried away with the tide of carnality (Heb 6:19). When He will appear, we will see Him as the “Last,” “the Omega,” “the Finisher,” and “the End.”

We first “put on Christ” when we are baptized into Him. It is in the process of sanctification that we put Him on in order to grow up into Him in all things (Eph 4:15). When Jesus comes again, we will put Him on in fulness – in immortality. It is then that we will “be ,like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:1-3).

Let it be clear: there is no such thing as a salvation that begins, but is not finished; nor is there a finish that did not have a legitimate beginning. Those who are said to “fall away” (Lk 8:13; Heb 6:6), have, so to speak, dropped out of the process. Jesus represented this as not bearing fruit (Mk 4:7; Luke 8:14). Doctrinally, we are told that saved are married to the Lord Jesus: “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, **THAT WE SHOULD BRING FORTH FRUIT UNTO GOD**” (Rom 7:4). The putting on Christ that is mentioned in our text, has to do with meeting that appointed objective.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

“**BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Romans 13:11-14)

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have **PUT ON CHRIST**” (Gal 3:27_.

Lesson 40 of 45

RECONCILING THE TEXTS

There is a sense in which we have put on Christ, and one in which we have not. We have put Him on by faith, becoming identified with Him through faith, and made accepted in Him by grace. We are no longer separate from Him, but have been “joined” to Him (1 Cor 6:17). Yet, this is all by faith. The treasure we have is in “earthen vessels” (2 Cor 4:7). We are occupying a war zone, hounded by foes within and without. There are influences all about us that deplete our strength, erode our energies, and compete for our attention.

When we began our new life, we did so having “put on Christ.” But this was not a once-for-all transaction. We also believed on Him, and that was not a one-time event either. Because we are not yet in our native habitat, we must continue to believe, and continue to “put on Christ.” It is as though we begin each day afresh, by faith clothing ourselves with the Son of God, hearing Him anew, and following Him wherever He leads.

The justified ones “shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11), not by a once-for-all decision! When we were baptized into Christ, we became “alive unto God” (Rom 6:11). We stay alive by our faith – living by faith (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). We began our new life by putting on Christ. We maintain that life by continuing to put Him on. There is a sense in which new life begins every day. That is because we face new challenges, and expand our spiritual life into new frontiers. As we grow in Christ Jesus, we put Him on, covering the expanded areas.

We are not only saved by the “washing of regeneration,” but by the “renewing of the Holy Spirit” as well (Tit 3:5). Putting on Christ, as admonished in our text, relates to the renewing of the Holy Spirit – that continual work, whereby we are being changed from glory unto glory (2 Cor 3:18), and conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29-30). The putting on of Christ in Galatians 3:27 relates to the washing of regeneration, or the beginnings of our new life in Christ.

This is matter that requires a great deal of proclamation and exposition in the modern church. It is evident from the condition of multitudes of professing Christians that this is not known. Spiritual staleness has settled upon many souls. There is no freshness in their spirits. They are not living by “every Word of God” (Lk 4:4), and do not enjoy the “communion of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor 13:14). They are not “filled with all joy and peace in believing,” nor are they “abounding in hope” (Rom 15:13). Why does this condition exist?

Our text provides the answer. It is because they are not putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. They have too much of themselves showing, and too little of Christ Jesus. Simply put, they are not living by faith. They are not depending on the Lord Jesus to lead and feed them. They have taken matters into their own hands, and are actually living as though Christ did not even exist.

While we have been “made partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14), it remains a work in progress. We have received “of His fulness,” but not the whole of it (John 1:16). There remains vast portions of the “Divine nature” that is yet to be experienced. We have been given “exceeding great and precious promises” that by means of them, we “might be partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). That process is precisely what is meant by the admonition, “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

How can Christ be “put on” apart from faith? Putting Him on is appropriating His character and life. And how is that done? It is by means of the promises – by believing them, meditating upon them, and making it our aim to experience them. They are the appointed means to obtaining Christ’s nature, which is, from the viewpoint of our text, putting Him on. Thus it is written, “According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that BY THESE ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet 1:4).

The particular thrust of this text is that we are to prepare for eternity. The night is far spent, and the great and notable day of the Lord is fast approaching. Our only hope is to be found like Christ Jesus when His glory is unveiled – to be as He is “in the world” (1 John 4:17). It is to be found with faith when He comes (Luke 18:8). All of the effort and activity required for that preparation is summarized in these words: “PUT ON CHRIST.”

The Spirit is calling us into a fuller realization of the life we experienced when we were raised from the waters of baptism “by the glory of the Father.” Putting on Christ is nothing less than walking “in the newness of life” (Rom 6:4).

Many with whom I am acquainted have placed a great emphasis upon our baptism into Christ. In fact, among several of them, this is nearly all they talk about. It is the dominating theme of their religious conversations. Our text lays a solemn obligation upon all such people – those who have seen the relevance of baptism, and its relationship to salvation. They are now to move forward, laying hold of the fulness of the life that began at their baptism. They must not linger on the banks of the Jordan, but launch out into the deep, letting down their nets, so to speak, for a great catch of life.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 41 of 45

MAKE NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH, #1

“ . . . and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Verse 14, Romans 13:11-14)

This is not a casual suggestion. It is not a goal for which we are to strive. This is something that is to be deliberately and successfully done. It is not something to be ignored, or concerning which men can remain without understanding. This is something that will prohibit a person from putting on Christ – that is why it is mentioned.

You see with what care the Spirit speaks to us about managing our lives. We are stewards of life from God, and that stewardship is to be handled with the greatest care. What is required of us necessitates diligence, faith, hope, and zeal – and that is to be coupled with consistency. We will not be able to do this without the Lord, but we are well able to do it while walking with Him in the light.

It is imperative that we see the essentiality of this exhortation. The Lord has provided those in Christ with all of the resources required to do this: make NO PROVISION for the flesh, to fulfill its desires.

NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH

“And make NO provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” Other versions read, “make NO provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts” (NASB), “DO NOT think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (NIV), “make NO provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (NRSV), “DO NOT take forethought for the flesh to {fulfil its} lusts” (DARBY), “DO NOT give thought to the flesh to do its desires” (BBE), “DON’T think of ways to indulge your evil desires” (NLT), and “STOP worrying about how your disordered natural inclinations may be fulfilled” (NJB).

The expressions for “flesh” found in other versions are actually interpretations, not translations. Some of them represent correct views but, strictly speaking, that is not the lexical meaning of the word.

Notice that the exhortation is preceded by the word “AND.” That means this exhortation is necessarily linked with the words “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and . . .” The words “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ are preceded by the word “BUT, which links it with the exhortation “Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.”

There we have a “threefold chord, which is not quickly broken” (Eccl 4:12).” Here we have three actions that take place simultaneously. First, a refusal to walk, or live, in an unacceptable way. Second, to “put on Christ.” Third, to “not make provision for the flesh.” It is not possible to

do only one of those things, or even only two. They must ALL be done – not a single time, but ALL of the time. The Holy Spirit is there to empower us to do them (Rom 8:13; Gal 5:16), and the grace of God will teach us to do them (Tit 2:11-13). In Christ, we have access to the throne of all grace, where adequate supplies are always available (Heb 4:15-16). Candidly, it appears as though a very small percentage of professing Christians are in agreement with the requirements of reference. Speaking for myself, I am not delighted by such a level of ignorance, and would be happy to be wrong in my assessment. The condition of the average church, however, appears to justify this conclusion.

WHAT IS “THE FLESH?”

The strength of the prohibition is evident. It is imperative that we know what “the flesh” means, for too much depends on our response to this admonition. Jesus referred to “the flesh” several times. He said “the flesh is weak” (Matt 26:41), “that which is born of flesh is flesh” (John 3:6), “the flesh profiteth nothing” (John 6:63), and “Ye judge after the flesh” (John 8:15). That alone should produce a determination to have a good understanding of the term.

Most versions translate the word “flesh” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NAS, NAU, NRSV, WEBSTER, DRA, DARBY, BBE, YLT, NAB). Some of the modern paraphrased versions read “sinful nature,” with the footnote that reads “or the flesh” (NIV), “evil desires” (NLT), and “disordered natural inclinations” (NJB). The Greek words translated “the flesh” are “tas sar-kos.” That expression (“the flesh”) is found at least nineteen times in the New Covenant writings (John 3:6; Rom 6:19; 8:3,5,6,7; 9:8; 13:14; 1 Cor 5:5; Gal 5:17,19; 6:8; Eph 2:3; Col 2:11,13,18,23; 1 John 2:16; Jude 23). The manner in which the Spirit uses this word cannot be defined etymologically. There is no word in any language that precisely means what the Spirit intends. The wisdom of men simply could not, and cannot, come up with required definition. That is because it is outside the circumference of human experience – and human knowledge simply cannot extend beyond that border. Lexically, the word means “the soft substance of the living body, which covers the bones and is permeated with blood (of both man and beasts) [Frieberg Greek Lexicon]. The Spirit, however, expounds the expression DOCTRINALLY, so that when we hear the words “THE FLESH” we will have a proper frame of reference outside of the wisdom of men.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 42 of 45

MAKE NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH, #2

“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and MAKE NOT PROVISION FOR THE FLESH, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Romans 13:11-14)

SCRIPTURAL REPRESENTATIONS

First, let us be clear about this. This word is not a suggestion. It is not the statement of an ideal,

or a mere goal. This is a commandment from the Lord, and it cannot be ignored with impunity. In view of this, it is most unfortunate that what appears to be the majority of professing Christendom does not even know what this statement means. Where this condition exists, it is because these things either have not been preached, or they have been preached but not believed – and either circumstance is inexcusable.

The following references show how the Spirit uses this expression, “the flesh.” Taken seriously, they will develop a certain abhorrence for “the flesh” within the sensitive soul. Sometimes the word is translated “carnal.” There is enough said about the “flesh” and being “carnal” to awaken sobriety and diligence in every professing believer.

1. The flesh is weak (Mk 12:38).
2. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh (John 3:6).
3. The flesh profits nothing (John 6:63).
4. The flesh brings with it infirmity (Rom 6:19).
5. Those “in the flesh” are those in whom “the motions of sin work” (Rom 7:5).
6. With the flesh we “serve the law of sin” (Rom 7:25).
7. The holy Law of God was “weak through the flesh” (Rom 8:3).
8. Those living according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh (Rom 8:5).
9. The mind of the flesh is death (Rom 8:6).
10. The “carnal mind,” or mind of the flesh is enmity against God, is not subject to the Law of God, nor can it be (Rom 8:7)
11. They that are “in the flesh, cannot please God” (Rom 8:8).
12. We are not debtors to the flesh (Rom 8:12).
13. If we live after the flesh, we will die (Rom 8:13).
14. The children of the flesh are not the children of God (Rom 9:8).
15. We are to make no provision to fulfill the desires of the flesh (Rom 13:14).
16. Those who are dominated by the flesh, or are “carnal,” are those among whom are found envying, strife, and divisions (1 Cor 3:3-4).
17. There is such a thing as delivering someone to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the last day (1 Cor 5:5).
18. We do not war after the flesh (2 Cor 10:3).
19. The flesh lusts, or desires, against the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:17).
20. The works of the flesh lead to condemnation (Gal 5:19-21).
21. Those who are truly Christ’s “have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24).
22. Those sowing to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption (Gal 6:8).
23. Prior to our new life, we lived in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling its desires (Eph 2:32).
24. In our baptism, we were circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh (Col 2:11).
25. Prior to being in Christ, we were dead in our sins and the uncircumcision of the flesh (Col 2:13).
26. The mind of the flesh puffs one up (Col 2:18).
27. External rules cannot remove the lusts of the flesh (Col 2:23).
28. The lust of the flesh belongs to the world order, and is not of the Father (1 John 2:16).
29. Believers are to hate even the garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 23).

“The flesh” is the part of us that is not born again. While it includes our bodies, it is not confined to them. Ultimately, it is traced back to Adam, in whom “all die” (1 Cor 15:22). Through Adam “many be dead” (Rom 5:15), “judgment came unto condemnation” (Rom 5:16), “death reigned” (Rom 5:17), and “many were made sinners” (Rom 5:19). When Adam transgressed, the era of sin began. The condition into which humanity was thrust requires a NEW birth (John 3:3,7; 1 Pet 1:23), a NEW creation (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10), and a NEW man (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). Now regeneration is a necessity (Tit 3:5), and it is imperative that we “walk in NEWNESS of life” (Rom 6:4).

“The flesh” includes a certain mind set (“mind of the flesh”), and has strong desires (“desires of the flesh”). As to its origin, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” It is traced back to Adam, not Christ. It is what is “natural” about us, or without the Divine nature (1 Cor 2:13). “The flesh” is nothing less than “the old man,” which is to be “put off” (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9). It is imperative that professing Christians give heed to this word: “make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14). Nothing is to be introduced into the church that opens the door to the flesh, or allows for it to express itself – absolutely nothing!

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 43 of 45

THE MEANING

“ But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and MAKE NOT PROVISION FOR THE FLESH, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Romans 13:11-14)

The admonition to make no provision for the flesh means we are NOT to give the advantage to the natural, or unregenerate part of us – “the flesh,” or “the old man” (Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9). We are not to allow our body, the locus for this fallen nature, to carry us, but we must carry it, taking control of it (1 Cor 9:27) There are desires resident in “the flesh,” which relates us to Adam – propensities that pull us away from God and Christ. They dull the appetite for glory, and make the present evil world seem primary. That is the part of us that does not crave the Word of God, the love of God, the grace of God, the Spirit of God, or the righteousness of God. It is the part that sees no advantage to continuing in the fellowship of believers. “The flesh” can live without the “communion of the Holy Spirit,” the fellowship of God’s Son (1 Cor 1:9), and members of “the body of Christ” (1 Cor 12:27) – but the sanctified spirit cannot!

While “the flesh” speaks of the natural part of us, it has more regard to Adam, than to mere life in the body. The Spirit does not mean we are not to provide for food, clothing, and shelter. A father, for example, must make such provisions for his family, or he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel (1 Tim 5:8). Also, parents are to “lay up” provisions for their children (2 Cor 12:14). These are not the desires of which our text speaks. However, in this matter of spiritual life-sustaining provisions, we are not to be consumed with a care for provisions for the body, as though we had no heavenly Father (Matt 6:25).

“The flesh,” however, is not content with food and raiment. It cries out like the blood-sucking

leech, “Give, give” (Prov 30:15). It competes against the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:17), seeking to nail us down to “the course of this world” (Eph 2:2), and thus thrust us out into eternity unprepared to stand before God, and subject to condemnation.

In his delineation of things that never have enough, Solomon made no mention of “the flesh” – “The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough” (Prov 30:15). However, “the flesh” and its nature was not revealed at that time – not even to the wisest man on the face of the earth. The truth of “the flesh” could not be revealed until Jesus took away the sins of the world. That has been done, praise the Lord (Heb 1:5; 9:26; 1 Pet 2:24; 1 John 3:5; Rev 1:5), and now we are told about “the flesh.”

“The flesh” is everything about us that is rooted in the temporal, or connected with death. It is the entirety of what cannot enter into glory, and the whole of what has been contaminated by sin. It has a mind that is focused on the earth, and has inherent desires that strongly crave only what is temporary, with no eternal value.

“The flesh,” if followed, will make it impossible to please God (Rom 8:8). So far as “the flesh” is concerned, “this world” is the only world. Now, take this word seriously: “MAKE NOT PROVISION FOR THE FLESH, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Do not unnecessarily be around people or environments that tend to awaken illicit desires.

It is most arresting that in our time so very little is said in church-circles about “the flesh.” In my Bible College experience, I do not recall much, if anything being said about it. In all of the preachers meetings, board meetings, congregational meetings, revival meetings, etc., I do not recall much being said about “the flesh” – even though the Holy Spirit has said quite a bit about it. Could it be that church leaders are abysmally ignorant on this subject – one that is so critical to a godly life, pleasing God, and gaining the victory over the world?

Failing to heed this admonition will make it impossible to “put on Christ.”

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 44 of 45

WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

“ . . . BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Verse 14, Romans 13:11-14)

We are NOT to give “the flesh” – the “natural” part of us – the upper hand. Making “no provision” for it is never giving it the advantage, or making it easy for its desires to be fulfilled. For the child of God, living in the world should not be more difficult than living in “heavenly places,” where God has placed every single person that is in Christ: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath

quicken us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:4-6).

Let us be clear about this. There is no such thing as a person being “saved” without being “quicken,” or made “alive unto God” – sensitive of Him, and living for Him (Rom 6:11). There is no such thing as a person being saved by grace, yet not “raised up together” with Christ (Rom 6:2-5), and being made to “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). That is how everyone that is “born again” (1 Pet 1:23) begins. They begin “newness of life” being freed from sin’s dominion, and are promised “sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14). That is not the way it should be, that is the way it IS! Jesus does not make men half-free, or partially freed, but “free indeed!” (John 8:36).

Those in Christ have been re-created. It is said of them, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). Their situation is stated most precisely: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Tit 3:5-7). That is not an ideal situation, but an actual and factual one. Every single person that is “in Christ” (Rom 8:1), or “saved” (Eph 2:5; Tit 3:5), began this way in all of its ordained details. What they were before is behind them – altogether behind them, for “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things ARE passed away; behold, all things ARE become new” (2 Cor 5:17). If these things did not take place, then salvation was not experienced and sins were not remitted.

How, then, do we account for the staggering level of sin that is found in the modern church? If what God declares takes place in conversion, actually does occur, then either the church-sinners have not been saved, or they have gone backwards, returning to their old ways. If that seems too hard, how are such people going to account for their wayward conduct when they stand before God – and they will stand before Him (Rom 14:10; Rev 10:12). How will they explain getting in such a deplorable state when they began newness of life with the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 2 Cor 5:5), a clean slate (Acts 13:39), access to the throne of all grace (Heb 4:15-16), all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet 1:4), and all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph 1:4)? Let the church of our time have done with providing insipid explanations for the presence of sin, and take seriously the admonition of God: “Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame” (1 Cor 16:34-35). Let the church get out of the business of normalizing sin by filling its halls with counselors and advisors, as though God had not given sufficient advantages to live “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit 2:12). A large percentage of the professing church has been hijacked by charlatans and opportunists, and the effects of their efforts are painfully evident.

When Satan throws the “fiery darts” of allurements at us, tempting us to plot out what we can do for our flesh, we are to resist him, “steadfast in the faith” (1 Pet 5:8-9). When looking toward the future, our dominant consideration is to be **READY** to die, **READY** for the end of the world, **READY** for the return of Christ, and **READY** for the day of judgment. Our labors are to be devoted to being **READY** to leave the world, and **READY** to reign with Jesus. We are

determined to be READY for the grave and READY for glory.

The “desires” of the flesh are distracting ones. They throw up a distracting cloud between us and the will of the Lord. They move us to forget what God has prepared for those who love Him, and provoke us to think of what we can do for ourselves in this present evil world. “The flesh” desires the pleasures that last only for “a season” (Heb 11:25), and shuns those which are at the Father’s right hand, and last “forevermore” (Psa 16:11).

Our commission is clear. We are NOT to live in such a manner as to make sin easy to erupt. Our path must not lead us into an area where the lusts of the flesh awaken. Our associates are not to be such as cause our “old man” to become vibrant and alert. It is possible to have “the flesh” awakened by what we hear, and given the advantage by what we see. In our thinking, as our minds survey certain bastions of thought, we can give the advantage to our flesh. The summons from the Throne is, “make NO provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts” (NASB).

May you, dear child of God, be given grace to see the seriousness of the exhortation, and be persuaded of the availability of all the heavenly resources you require to fulfill it. Your faith is fully capable of doing these things. Not only that, your life depends upon your involvement in, and use of, what God has given you.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Lesson 45 of 45

CONCLUSION

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Romans 13:11-14)

It is at once apparent that life in Christ requires the consistent involvement of the child of God. One cannot be passive and obtain the victory. It is not possible to be indolent, of a slow heart, or conveyed about with the cares of this world, and live pleasingly to the Lord. The blessings and benefits you require can only be obtained in close proximity to God – when your faith is strong, and you are engaged in a fervent quest to obtain the prize set before you. If you are not “looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith,” you will not finish your race successfully – all contradicting theology notwithstanding. When you are “baptized into Christ” (Gal 3:27), it is imperative that you consciously and intently “abide in Him” (1 John 2:28). You cannot walk like a swine, with your eyes slanted toward the earth, and end up in heaven! You cannot be self-centered and be saved. You cannot love the world and be favored by God.

There are a vast number of professing “Christians” that are living in stark contradiction of these realities. They all MUST “put on the Lord Jesus Christ!” This is not a convenient option, but a

Divine requirement. If you do not live for Him, He will not speak up for you on the day of judgment. He will not receive half-hearted and unproductive service – He will not! Your salvation cost Him something, and it is going to cost you something as well.

Putting on Christ requires a hearty effort, but that effort will not be in vain. The necessity for putting on Christ has been produced by the effects of sin. Our entire person was impacted by Adam's transgression, into which we fully and heartily entered. There are still patches of carnality that are upon our persons, even though we have been washed, sanctified, and justified. They are the remnants of the old man that have remained for us to drive out, like Israel drove the heathen out of the promised land. If we fail to do this, those Adamic remnants will prove to be our undoing.

Concerning the enemies that remained in the promised land, it was said to Israel, "But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you LET REMAIN of them will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land in which you live. And it shall come about that as I plan to do to them, so I will do to you" (Num 33:55-56). Just as surely as Israel needed to heed those words, we do well to take heed to what our text has declared.

The reason for mortifying the deeds of the body is so that we may obtain the benefits Jesus procured for us and distributes to us. The reason for putting off the old man, is in order that we might put on the new man. The reason for making no provision for the flesh, is that we might make a place in which the Holy Spirit of God may work. In all of this effort, we will be sustained by Divine power and upheld by the grace of God. We will not be disappointed.
– Given O. Blakely