

Living on Daylight SAINT's Time (part 2). Romans 12:1-2, 13: 7-14

Portions adapted from: Light Living - Being A Person Of Light! by Ernie Arnold @ Sermon Central.Com

There was once a young man who was completely in love with his girlfriend, but had never kissed her. Finally, he gathered up his courage and asked for permission. He said, "Can I kiss you?" ...She said nothing. Then he asked, "May I kiss you?" Still, she said nothing. In frustration he asked, "Are you deaf?" Quickly, she replied, "Are you paralyzed?" It seems that her message to him was "IT'S ABOUT TIME."

It would seem that Paul is giving us the same message as this young lady gave her well-meaning boyfriend. There are times to plan, times to prepare, but there are also times to act. And now is the time for Christians to wake up, realize what time it is, and to put on not only the armor of light but also the very person of Jesus – so we might live in this world as Daylight Saints.

After 11 chapters of explaining why God has provided us with salvation through our faith in the finished work of Christ, now in Chapter 12, Paul begins his application section for how we should be responding to God's amazing love shown to us in Jesus Christ.

- That our only logical response back to God would be to now live a holy God-honoring life; allowing God's spirit to transform our lives and renew our minds.
- That the only way to be renewed is to live within a family of believers, using your God given gifts to nurture and be nurtured.
- That the way to relate to our neighbors – as much as it depends on you – is to live peacefully with all.
- With regard to the government – we must be good citizens, respecting and praying for those in authority and paying our taxes.
- and towards life in this darkened world, Paul tells us to pay our debt of love back to God by loving our neighbor; sharing with them and honestly dealing with them.

Now, here at the end of chapter 13, Paul steps up the pressure on all of us. As a person who has trusted Christ & become a part of His family, we have been called first to believe, then to become, and eventually to do.. Now, Paul says, is the time to start doing.

One of the most asked questions in the church today is "Who really believes in Jesus?" Probably, close to 100% would say, "I do." But, this answer is most troubling.

Why?

- Because if all those who name themselves “Christian” do believe in Jesus, then why is the darkness prevailing in our culture?
- Why is it that the government is on the verge of passing a law which could make it a “hate-crime” to speak out against immorality?
- Why is it that God is continually being kicked out of the public square?

To ask, ‘where is the church’ in all of this is seemingly a moot point, as the bigger question is: **“Where are God’s people in the fray?”** Are we ‘going along’ to ‘get along;’ have we hidden our light under a basket – as Jesus warned us not to?

The key question is, “How can we say we believe in God without doing what He says, without living out His truths, and basing our lives on His word?” The answer is, “We can’t.” The Apostle John also taught, that if a person says they love Christ but don’t keep His word, that person is a liar.

Whoever says, ‘I have come to know him’,
but does not obey his commandments, is a liar,
and in such a person the truth does not exist ...

By this we may be sure that we are in him:
whoever says, ‘I abide in him’, ought to walk
just as he walked. 1 John 2:4-6

So now two Apostles have told us that if we count ourselves among God’s Daylight Saints, then now is the time to wake put on God’s Armor of Light; literally to wear Christ like a cloak draped around our shoulders.

If you have been watching the Olympics, you have noticed that as soon an athlete wins a medal someone hands them their country’s flag which they joyously wrap around their shoulders or run around waving over their head. Thus they proudly declare their citizenship and love for their country. When was the last time you did something like that with Jesus, displaying and celebrating your proud citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven?

While the world slips deeper into spiritual darkness, removing restrictions, stripping off inhibitions, we who follow Christ know that in God’s sight it is always day time; time to live for the Lord. Time to be putting on our armor of light, clothing ourselves in Christ.

Also note, that by using the word "armor" Paul is reminding us that we are still involved in a battle.

- Even though Christ defeated the powers of evil on the cross, Satan has not yet left the field of battle.
- Even though we are born again it does not mean that the war over our souls is won.
- As long as we are in this body on this side of everlasting life we will have to battle against the powers of evil and our flesh. We will have to be both defensively and offensively armed.

The word "armor" here doesn't refer to just a physical covering, but rather the soldier's entire kit; including sword and shield. Soldiers use every bit of their armor both defensively and offensively. Their body armor allows them to thrust themselves into battle knowing that for the most part their heart and their core areas will be protected. They can use their shields to block arrows and blows but also to deliver blows. All one has to think about is how Captain America uses his shield both as a defensive and offensive weapon (of course in ancient times it would not fly back to you when you threw it).

So, when it comes to evil and to darkness we are not to hide but to be proactive. We are to shine forth our light, let our transformed and renewed lives be evident. We are children of light and where the light of Christ is evil is defeated.

If you want the detailed list of what such armor of light looks like, so you can be better equipped, Paul's letter to the Ephesians describes the whole armor of God consisting of truthfulness, righteousness, faith, assurance of your salvation, knowledge of God's word, and your readiness to share the gospel (Ephesians 6:13-17).

Paul's command to put on that armor also reminds us that we need outside help doing so. Our armor is not something that just grows out of our bodies like a turtle's shell, or we develop by some means of spiritual osmosis. It's not something that will merely attach to us – like barnacles on a ship's hull – as we come to worship on Sunday morning. Instead, armor must be intentionally put on. It is something that we have to decide to cover ourselves with and submit ourselves to; and it has to fit us. We have to have our own armor - while we can be protected somewhat by someone else's shield or armor the only way to be fully protected is to possess your own individualized armor and be able to use it effectively.

Once again, to wear Christ, to put on God's armor of light, requires the decision to do so on our part, the effort to acquire it, and the discipline to live in it and use it as you do battle for your faith.

Paul continues

So let us live honorably as in the day,
not in reveling and drunkenness, ...
Instead, **put on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and make no provision for the flesh,
to gratify its desires**

Romans 13: 13-14

Here, we see both physical actions and mental attitudes – both are important as we put on the armor of light: **clothe yourself with Christ**, and **do not think about how to gratify the flesh**.

To “**put on Christ**” means to give Him control of our decisions and lives, to be conscious of His presence, and to grow in our walk with Him. The word Paul used for “put on Christ” means literally “to put within an envelope,” “to hide within,” In other words we are to wrap Christ around us like our favorite bathrobe, or our most comfortable warm overcoat.

As we physically put on fresh clothes in the morning, so also we should wrapping Jesus around our life. Remember, the Bible tells us that we are hidden in Christ, and when the Father looks at us He sees His Son – thus we need to daily wrap ourselves in the Lord so that our character and actions and attitudes mirror His – not by our own power, but by the Spirit’s power in us.

Thus having put on Christ, we are next to – “make no provision for the flesh.” The idea is of forethought. We need to mentally prepare ourselves for the temptations that come our way daily. We must decide what we will not look at or dwell upon; where we will not mentally go this day. In his letter to the churches, James warns us ...

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (1:13-15)

Sin, most of the time, doesn’t just pounce on us like a leopard in the jungle – rather it sneaks up on us gradually – we see an image, we feel an emotion, we hear a familiar set of words – and sin begins to act on us – we start thinking in certain ways, temptation comes along and entices us to sin – we feed it, little by little, until we decide to act in a way we know we shouldn’t.

Instead – we need to put temptation on a diet. We do that by crushing it in its early stages – crush it with prayer, worship, repeating God’s Word, getting help from a brother or sister – and cutting ourselves off from the supply.

Both St. Augustine and Martin Luther, when they felt temptation creeping up on them would loudly declare, “**I have been baptized;**” Luther even suggested then running away from the temptation.

make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. Paul here addresses our human propensity to **self-Sabotage**....to set ourselves up for failure while making it look like we put up a good fight. In the book, “Losing Control,” Roy Baumeister states that people who struggle controlling themselves “*appear to seek out settings....that encourage the relinquishment of self-control.*”

If you have ever read the tale of “Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde,” at first the kindly Dr. Jekyll avows that he is afraid of those times when he loses control and transforms into Mr. Hyde. But by the end of the tale, he actually confesses that he enjoys being Mr. Hyde; he craves those times when he is at his most bestial. Why? Because the pleasure of sin is powerfully addictive.

make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires

Sin is like any other addiction (alcohol, tobacco, pornography) Once we have sinned – and gotten away with it – then the next time it is much easier to do, and after that even easier, until we are fully hooked. We can no longer fight such sins on willpower alone. We must get in the habit of putting up barriers and learning attitudes that help us avert sin. If that means we avoid certain places or people or activities – so be it.

Ray Stedman tells this story: “I had a friend who was a printer, and one day a man brought to him a pinup to be copied, one of those filthy, lewd things, which he wanted for his personal use and to send out to associates. He handed it to my friend, the printer, and he said, “I would like you to print this for me. I will pay you extra well for it.” The man looked at the card, saw the nature of it, and handed it back, and said, “No, thank you. I don’t print this kind of stuff.” The other fellow said, “Oh, come on now. Don’t try to pull this pious stuff with me. You know that you really enjoy this kind of thing. Just be honest.” And the printer looked at him, and said, “You’re right. I do. I have a nature which likes to feed upon this kind of thing, but I don’t feed it!”

So how do we put on the armor of light, how do we wear Christ, making no provision for our flesh?

First, **we must learn to pray**. Before there was a Bible there was prayer. Before the Law was written down by Moses there was prayer. Prayer is the greatest experience, the greatest gift and the greatest weapon any disciple of Jesus can possess and experience.

Why? Because prayer is being in the very presence and power of the Lord God Almighty. Prayer is sharing sacred and holy space with God. Prayer is the beginning of our relationship with the LORD, the continuing of our relationship with the LORD and the all in all of our relationship with the LORD. As you read the Word, as you sing, as you worship and as you live you begin to realize how important talking to the LORD truly is for our lives. Talking, obeying, listening to the LORD is the foundational stone of our Christian life.

Every athlete knows the importance of listening to their coach. Every student knows the importance of listening to their teacher. Every child knows the importance of listening to their parent. Every sheep knows the importance of listening to their shepherd. Every follower of Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior of the World, the King of Kings knows that the most important thing is to be open to obeying and hearing God.

WE don't live in ancient times, when the Word of God was scarce. We live in the days when God has poured out His Holy Spirit into the hearts, minds and souls of His people. We live in the day when the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit can speak to us at any time of the day or night. The only thing we must do is to make sure that our ears, our hearts and our minds are not being clogged up by evil words, thoughts and actions. The only thing we need to do is to make sure that that we are listening.

And along with prayer we must not "just read" but learn God's Holy Word.

The Bible is not only God's love letter to us, it is one of our most basic necessities for spiritual growth. It has been described as the spiritual sword, among our armament pieces. As 1 Timothy 3:16-17 plainly states

All scripture is inspired by God
and is useful for teaching, for reproof,
for correction, and for training in righteousness,
**so that everyone who belongs to God
may be proficient, equipped
for every good work.**
2 Timothy 3:16-17

If we take that scripture seriously then we will fully understand the value of dedicating ourselves to reading, to meditating and to studying God's Word. How else are we going to learn? How else are we going to know when we need a course correction? How else

are we going to know how to be a righteous people? How else are we going to know how to be a complete follower of Christ ready to do His work?

I've often heard people say, "I try to be a good Christian, I read my Bible every night." **But you don't just "read your Bible" to be reading your Bible. You read your Bible in order to hear from God. When we pick up our Bible we are in effect asking the LORD to breathe into us His Holy Presence.** Here's a novel thought, why don't you begin each Bible reading with prayer, asking God to speak to you through his word.

Prayer and Biblical knowledge are two of our most basic pieces of spiritual armament. **And to these, I would add a third: Praise and Worship**

It is not by accident that we have music in our worship services. It is not merely to take up some time before we collect the offering, share a communal prayer and listen to God's Holy Word. There is something mystical and supernatural about music. Jewish Rabbis liked to read the opening verses of the Book of Genesis - "*And God sang, 'Let there be light,' and there was light.*" What we read as God speaking the creation into existence was in fact God singing creation into existence.

I don't know if they are right but I do know this - in the book of Zephaniah chapter 3:17 we read: *The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.*

Music along with art can uplift and soothe our souls. Music and art can take us to higher dimensions that we could ever think possible. Music and art can heal us along with inspiring us. Music and art can lead us to growing deeper in the LORD. Music and art can touch parts of our souls that nothing else can touch.

There are times when we are down and depressed that we can hear a song or see a certain picture and suddenly our souls are lifted up. There are times when we are getting tired and we hear a certain chorus or see a picture of God's creation and our strength is renewed, like eagle's wings.

There are many other spiritual disciplines that we can add to our spiritual armor – such as fasting, meditation, contemplation, solitude, worship, simplicity, celebration and service. But these three are the basics and if we will allow them, wearing them daily, they will provide for us a strong armor of God's Light: Prayer, God's Word and Worship/Praise.

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Romans 13: 13-14

As we close this morning the Apostle Paul would want us to ask ourselves these questions -

Do we put on Jesus every morning?

What would our life look like if we wore Jesus through our day?

Are we people of prayer or mere people who voice little sentence prayers now and then? Are we doing our best to become prayer warriors - people who intercede and who allow the Holy Spirit to pray through and in us? Are we doing our best to cover our families and our loved ones and even our enemies in prayer? Do we faithfully gather with the LORD as individuals and as a group seeking God's direction, guidance and protection through prayer?

Are we people of the Word? Have we read the Bible through from cover to cover? Do we spend time in the Word daily asking the Holy Spirit to teach us and show us new revelations leading us further on to thinking with the mind of Christ?

Do we lift up our hearts in praise and worship or do we merely sit like bumps on a log?? Do we live our days as an act of worship? Do we daily thank the Lord for His grace, mercy and love?

Let us close with the same prayer we used last week; opening up our hearts and minds to the leading of the Holy Spirit; asking the LORD to convict us, forgive us, cleanse us and empower us; asking the LORD to infill us with His Holy Spirit so that we might be the People of Light He needs in this world to be His witnesses.

Lord, forgive me for what I have done yesterday that was not in concert with Your character; cleanse me from all that I saw or heard or experienced that drew me towards the world instead of towards You.

Father, fill me with your Spirit today, make me strong and able to withstand the temptations I will face today. Fill me with wisdom to know what You want me to say and do, place angels in my path and Your Word in my mouth to do battle against the enemy and persuade others to make You their Lord.