

Romans 13 v 11-14

Introduction

So far Paul has been dealing with a number of subjects which are part of the consecrated life. Being humble, using gifts, loving one another, being business-like, kind, sympathetic, at peace, being good citizens, paying taxes, not taking vengeance, owing no one anything except love. Now Paul concludes by showing why we should take these things seriously and how we have no time to lose. Concludes by detailing how to live the Christian life.

Sense of urgency which should mark the Christian

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. (13:11-12). Paul sees life on two levels, time and event. C.f. Jesus speaking of Gospel to be preached to all nations. Jesus and Paul see history stretching out before them, with thought of Christ's return in glory. Never know when it will take place, though the event is sure and certain. On His return, our activity and opportunities will come to an abrupt end. Hence sense of urgency, realization that time is short. Be ready. Jesus similarly emphasised the importance of being on the look out with – **Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh** (Matthew 25:13).

Keep clearly in view that the Risen Lord is going to return, personally and gloriously. His coming will be to our infinite joy, for He will gather His people together, those who are living called to meet Him and those buried saints woken from the dead, and He will transfigure us into His own celestial image, for even our very bodies are to be made **like unto His glorious body** (Philippians 3:21). This is Paul's meaning when He speaks of our salvation being nearer than when we first believed.

Three tenses of Salvation. Here we see the future tense. Work to be completed. A time to come when we will live in new body and be new humanity. Transfigured and transformed. Even earth and heaven to become new. Christ will be all in all. We do not know when. Even when Jesus was on earth He did not know when (Mark 13:32). Charts and time-tables are quite out of place. But we have His word that His return is certain. Indeed, without such a prospect, life would be grim indeed. We would be forced to continually have a sense of despair and hopelessness and grim resignation. But rather, when we think of events as foreknown and foretold by God, think of His promise of the Lord's return to wind up history and bring in eternal state – suddenly there is light at the end of the tunnel. Pressure is off. Life becomes bearable.

However, though there is certainty of fact, there is uncertainty of time of Christ's return, and this uncertainty has very real effect on the Christian and on his attitude to duties which are expected of him. Life goes on normally – work in church, pay taxes, sympathize with neighbours, loyalty to civil power. Yet all the time looking for Saviour from heaven, realizing He may come at any time, and to Him they will have to give account of stewardship. Double secret is to make our lives (a) in Christ, the most practical and willing servants of fellow Christians and fellow men, and, at the

same time, (b) detached from the world, because true home is in heaven whence we look for the Saviour.

Every day that passes is one nearer to Christ's return. Live life in expectation of next great crisis in world's history. To any who may be asleep – wake up. The night is almost over. The day is very near. Not to be like the five foolish virgins of Matthew ch. 25 who slumbered and slept.

Therefore cast off the works of darkness (the things which belong to the night) **and let us put on the armour of light** (13:12). We are facing not the night but the morning. Danger is departing; deliverance is dawning. Let us get ready. Like children, tearing off the days on the calendar, in anticipation of going off on holiday, so we should be tearing off the days in anticipation of Christ's return and the blessedness which is laid up for us. Our Salvation is not our destination but our fuller life, which is nearer to us than we believed. Someone once admiring a beautiful garden commented to the gardener that he was keeping it as if he was expecting the owner to come back tomorrow. The gardener replied – “No – as if he may come back today”.

Two ways of preparing for Christ's return

How do we cast off works of darkness and put on armour of light? Negative and positive action required.

- (i) **Walk honestly** (13:13) i.e. decently. In order to do this, Paul names six things to be avoided, falling into three groups of two. The first group involves intemperance, or as Paul puts it **rioting and drunkenness**, i.e. revelry, in which man lowers himself and becomes a nuisance to others. The second group is **chambering and wantonness**, speaking of impurity. Typical heathen sin. Chastity is scarcely known and it is hardly regarded as a virtue. Wantonness suggests shamelessness – people are not only immoral but are lost to shame. Most people try to conceal evil deeds, and sin in secret, but in this particular sin they do not care what public exhibition they make of themselves. Reputation, honour and decency mean nothing to them. The third group of things to be avoided describes social sins of discord – **strife and envying**. Strife and jealousy are not unknown in Christian circles. On same level as licentiousness in God's classification. Strife is motivated by desire for place and power, and an unwillingness to take second place. The desire to put self in the front of the picture. Envy, jealous looks on what others have, equally need to be cast off and quickly be replaced by the good. Not just refuse, deny, turn back on evil, have no time for it, neither feed nor encourage it.
- (ii) **Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh** (13:14). Crowd evil out, fill minds with good so that you have no time to be occupied with the other. This text convicted St. Augustine on the occasion of his conversion. Heart in great distress because of his moral failures. “How long? How long?...Why is there not this hour an end to my uncleanness?” Then he heard the words “tolle lege” (take up and read) and lifting his scriptures he read these verses from Romans. They produced this response - “A light of security infused into my heart, all the gloom of

doubt vanished away. I now with a tranquil countenance made it known to Alypius". We have to apply this to Christian life – to put on Christ to be beauty of daily life. Wear Him as garment of life. Appropriate Him. Look out for Him as the Coming One, but at the same time use Him as the Present One

Go to Him for everything. Having come to Him for pardon, do not go elsewhere for the next thing. **Complete in Him** (Colossians 2:10). Go to Him for example – the model for the saint is the Saviour. What would Jesus do? In every relationship of life, in every task, every place where we go, at work, among friends, at home – to put on Christ's example. When perplexed, what would He do? If He would not act in certain way, or say a certain thing, or write a certain letter – neither must we. But if He would follow a certain course, we must keep to that line.

Go to Him for motive. Not only need example but stimulus and motive. Know what to do, *and* why to do it. Not out of fear but because His love constrains us. Our motive is gratitude. He has put on our cause – we ought to put on His. Act rightly, not because of approbation of fellows, but for the higher consideration of serving the Lord Christ.

Go to Him for strength. No power for heavenly duty except we receive it from above. Go to Him for power. He dwells within – therefore appropriate Him. If we rely on selves, we soon prove to be a broken reed. Failure follows on heel of self-confidence. Make Christ our strength, and not ourselves. Rather than leaning on will power or our own achievements – put on Christ, day by day. Get fresh grace each day. Rely not on resolves, pledges, methods and prayers – put on Christ.

Then His character will be seen in our lives. Become in experience what we are in position. Oh to be wrapped around with Himself – feeling, acting and living as He did. Be covered with Christ from head to toe. Cannot wear too much of Him. Put Him on each day, in every temptation, trial, each decision, every conversation. Quaint Henry Smith said some people wear Christ as a man wears a hat – taken off every time they meet someone, i.e. wear Christ in private, but off with Him in public. Put on Christ intending never to put Him off again. Use Him constantly.

Conclusion

There is an urgency. Christ is coming back. Live life in the expectation of this. Avoid intemperance, impurity and discord. Here is the one adequate secret – Christ in us. Never safe for one moment to dispense of Him. Continual renewal day by day. As we put on clothes each morning – put on Christ.