

Romans: Verse-by-Verse

Romans 13:11-14

Study Notes

Paul's continuing instructions on how Christians should live in a fallen world. He's dealt with our relationships to other believers, to non-Christians, and to the State.

Briefly moving to eschatological matters, meaning the "end times".

There is no exact continuity between verses 8–10 and 11–14, but it still falls within the context of our relationships to this world. Paul is about to remind us that there is another world we ought to be considering.

Why should we love our neighbors, practice transparency in our business relationships, and pay taxes? Paul's argument is connected to the "End Times".

- **Understanding The "Time": v. 11**

"And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

Paul uses the word, "Kairos" (season), rather than "Chronos" (time). He's asking us, "What season is it in God's time-table?"

Kairos is a way of expressing time in the context of God's implementation of salvation's history. It's often described by the phrases the "right time", or the "appointed season". See: Mark 1:14; Romans 5:6; Titus 1:2-3; Matthew 13:30

Paul's meaning in verse 11: "Do this, understanding the current season

of God's plan. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

Paul references the Kairos three times in this passage: 1. "The hour has already come for us to wake up from our slumber." 2. "Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed." 3. "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here."

Verse 12: "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here."

The night-the old age of spiritual darkness is ending. We anticipate a New Day ... marked by light and freedom. We are on the threshold of the Day when Christ returns, and the New Kairos is revealed.

Paul and the other apostles never set a date for Christ's coming: 1. They knew that even Jesus, as the Son of Man, did not know what date the Father had set for that event. 2. They had a panoramic view of the end times: Worldwide evangelization, The restoration of Israel, and A season of "falling away".

Many corroborating events had already taken place including Jesus' Incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation. The pouring out of the Spirit of God on the Day of Pentecost, ("birth" of the Church), all indicated that the New Kingdom had begun.

Consider this: There is nothing left on God's End Times Calendar that must occur before Christ's Next Revelation – which is the culminating event so anticipated by the apostles.

"Now Already" And The "Not Yet".

Paul presents the oft-noted tension between what has been called the "now already" and the "not yet". He tells us what else we should be doing in light of this revelation.

Verses 12-14:

“So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. 14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

Five things the believer ought to be doing, since the darkness is passing away and the light is dawning:

1. Put aside the deeds of darkness.
2. Put on the armor of light.
3. Let us behave decently.
4. Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. Do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

These five instructions could cover our entire attention as Christians. Like the Ten Commandments, they would be enough to keep us awake and active as we await the fullest measure of salvation.

Now notice how the word, “so” (found in verse 12) ties what Paul said previously. It marks the transition from his statements about the Kairos to the practical outworking of a theology of end times’ preparedness.

In these verses Paul gives positive commands for people who have awoken out of slumber and are fully awake to the times they live in.

1. Put aside the deeds of darkness.
2. Put on the armor of light.
3. Let us behave decently.
4. Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. Do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

The first metaphor Paul uses is darkness and light. He tells us, “Put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.” Paul is carrying

through on his statement in verse 12, "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here."

The Bible often describes humans as cloaking themselves in darkness or living in darkness. See: Matthew 4:16; John 3:19; Ephesians 6:13

If we are aware of the times, it makes sense that we want to align ourselves with the age that is coming, not the one that is slowly passing away. We want to wake up, get up, and dress in the armor of light.

Paul is speaking to a consistency between our spiritual uniform and our practical behavior. He continues his metaphor in verse 13:

"Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy."

If we are part of the darkness, we have both clothing and behavior that reflects our participation in the old age. If we are part of the coming age, we are to have clothes and behavior that agree with it.

"Nighttime behavior" often includes a sense of license that is not acceptable in the light of day: Sexual orgies, drunkenness, sexual immorality, debauchery, dissension, and jealousy.

Three of these nighttime behaviors are associated with sexuality: orgies, immorality, and debauchery. (Roman culture readily accepted these things). Paul says these things do not belong in the believer's life – because they have put on the armor of light.

Dissension and jealousy also belong to night people, not day people: While the first three behaviors are sexual, the last two are relational.

- **Verse 14 - The Third Antithesis:** "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

Paul is zeroing in on our potential preoccupations – what captures our day-to-day attention. In some cases, that preoccupation is “how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

Are we more concerned about taking care of our spiritual lives, or meeting the desires of our carnal nature? Paul only gives us two options.

Paul uses Jesus’ fullest title when he tells us to clothe ourselves with “The Lord Jesus Christ”. That is Paul’s most often used title for Jesus. It speaks to His human nature, his divine nature, and his exalted position as “Lord”.

It is as if Paul is saying, “If you are going to put off the clothes of darkness and put on Christ- then put Him on in his fullest, most powerful person. Don’t just put on his human nature, or just his divine nature, put his whole nature on.

If we do this, it will oppose everything that is part of our ugly, self-centered natures. Those natures may still exist within us, but we are not feeding their desires. We are curbing their influence over us.

Conclusion:

Paul began Romans 13 with an important teaching about how we can be good citizens and good neighbors, and he ends it with practical points towards doing so.

If we have a true grasp of God’s Kairos, we expect this present dark age to end and a new kingdom to emerge. We should align our day-to-day lives with that expectation.

Our calling is to live as though that day had already dawned, to do our best to live as those who are between the “now already” of Christ’s completed work and the “not yet” of its full implementation.