

Romans 13:11-14

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We should live righteously, harmoniously together through faith because we will soon be with God. Paul has shown us how we should live and is now telling us to live this way because the day is approaching—the day of our glorification when we come to the presence of God.

When Paul says *Do this* (v 11), he is referring to the actions that demonstrate righteous, harmonious living through faith, and loving others, about which he instructed us in chapters 12 and 13. *Knowing the time, it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep* and practice this righteous living (v. 11).

Paul desires that each believer love one another, live peacefully with each other, serve one another with the gifts we have been given, live sacrificially for God and others, to live by faith in God and Christ. Now, Paul is going to answer why we should *do this*, why we should live harmoniously and righteously. One of the answers is because *salvation is nearer to us than when we believed* (v 11).

Paul says that *salvation*, or deliverance, is *nearer to us* than when we first believed in Christ. The Greek word translated *salvation* is “soteria.” It speaks of a state where something has been delivered from something. The verb form is “sozo” and refers to the action of something being delivered. “Sozo” is sometimes translated “get well” as when the woman touched the hem of Jesus’s garment because she believed she would be delivered from her sickness (Matthew 9:21). So when we see “save” or “salvation” in context, we always want to determine what is being delivered from what.

Here Paul is talking about glorification salvation, when we are called to heaven, to God’s presence. It is then that we will be delivered from the presence of sin. There we will be given new bodies and will be delivered/freed from our fleshly body of death (Romans 7:24). *When we believed* refers to when we first came to faith in Christ’s death and resurrection.

But Paul tells us that the further in time we get from that point when we first believed, the closer we are getting to *salvation*. That can be confusing, because we tend to think of our point of salvation as the point in time when we first believed.

But again it is important to remember that *salvation* just means “something is being delivered from something” and we must always look at the context to see what is being delivered from what. When we first believe, we are “saved” because we are delivered from separation from God through the death and resurrection of Jesus. But this speaks of a future deliverance, a future *salvation*.

In this case, each day we live we are coming closer to the future time we will leave this earth and go to be with Jesus. Then we will experience a different kind of salvation, a deliverance from the toils of this life, a deliverance from our sinful flesh.

Paul refers to the *night* as a picture that describes our present, sinful world, and assures us that it will pass away. In its place will be the *day* when we are taken up into the light of God and Jesus. *The night is almost gone, and the day is near* (v 12). Every day that passes is one day closer to this glorious event.

Therefore, we should be ready, we should have this mindset that we are awake from sleeping and we are waiting for the sunrise. Paul is telling us to *lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light* (v 12), to live righteously and harmoniously with each other.

He showed us what this looks like in chapters 12 and 13. There Paul encouraged us to live a life of love, peace, and service. He encouraged us to live as a living sacrifice, seeking to please God in all we do (Romans 12:1-2).

Paul uses this example of night and day to show that we should live as people who *behave properly as in the day* (v 13), compared to how people tend to carouse and stir up mischief in the night. At night and in darkness people are more likely to engage in sinful desires than in the day, when their actions are more on display.

We should live *not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy* (v 13). We believers should behave always like we do in the day, properly, with love, harmoniously existing with one another.

Sexual sin is particularly to be avoided because it is the most self-destructive of all sins (1 Corinthians 6:18). But as Paul noted in Chapter 1, all sin is self-destructive. There Paul showed us the destructive progression of sin, degrading from lust, to addiction, then to loss of mental health (Romans 1:24, 26, 28).

Since the time of Adam, mankind has lived in depravity: we fight one another, we are jealous of one another, we use our bodies in ways they were not designed to be used. Paul says instead of living as the world does we should put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and live in faith and harmony together. One way that we do this is by not placing ourselves in circumstances that strengthen the desires of our flesh.

Just like if someone were addicted to a certain drug or action, he should remove himself from situations that may involve that particular substance and struggle. If there is a potential situation that could provide a chance for us to indulge in our sinful and fleshly desires, we should not engage or go near that situation. Instead, we should *put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts* (v 14).

The Greek word translated to English as *its lusts* is also found in Romans 1:24. Romans 1:24 marks the first stage of the three-part progression of sin's spiral into self-destruction. The way to avoid this negative spiral is to never get into it in the first place. Once we engage with sin, our *lusts* suck us in, and start us in a downward spiral. The way to avoid this loss is to *make no provision*, to stay completely away. To avoid engaging altogether.

This basic idea of making *no provision for the flesh* is echoed elsewhere in scripture where we are exhorted to stay far away from sexual temptation (1 Corinthians 6:18; Proverbs 7:25).

In this chapter, Paul has shown us further what living harmoniously together through faith looks like and why we should do it. Chapter 13 has shown us that some aspects of harmonious living include obeying authority, loving one another, and not engaging or going near sin and fleshly desires, all because we know that glorification is coming and soon we will be in the presence of God.

Biblical Text

¹¹ Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. ¹² The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.