

Conquering in Christ Your Armor

Romans 13:12-14

Christians can be very warm to the themes we have seen in Romans 13 so far. Respect for authority; love in all we do; the 2nd Coming of Jesus.

But when it comes to living out the Christian life, many stumble.

We know there is no Christian who never sins and always does right. But we talk of those who have come to Christ and yet there is very little fruit, very little change. How has the Lord changed my life?

This message is for you. The last three verses of Romans 13 is the medicine for we who have this struggle.

Paul announces: “The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” (Rom 13:12 NKJ)

What is it to do so? **How** are we to do so?

We begin in verse 12 with the **right direction** – out of the dark, out of the night. What does this mean but that you are no longer you!

Your time with the dark is drawing near to a close. Soon, no more sin, no more temptations, no more trials, afflictions, hardships.

You are casting aside the old bed-clothes of the old life. But that is not easy. In the Narnia stories, a boy named Eustace Scrubb was turned into a dragon. And to become a boy again, his dragon skin was peeled off over and over and over again. Sinful ways are not easily put off.

This tells us there is a sense of hating the old clothes, the homeless rags. This is a decisive action. You are to shed them once and for all, **cast** them off of you, away and behind you.

Now turning from such ways is only the half of it. Turning toward the day, the light, you put on something in its place. You are clothed, or put on – the same decisive action. It will not do for you to live naked and to go forth in the day wearing nothing.

And what do we put on? We are surprised to hear of armor. Not work clothes for a farmer, or athletic equipment in sports, but a warrior's suit.

This is a little strange to go from night and day to armor and warfare.

But this brings out **our second point**. If we are going to Heaven, to Christ Himself, we do so in no sleepy way but as a march. The Christian life is not sleepwalk. You cannot live in a dreamy state. There are real enemies, real challenges, real battles – and you won't win in your pajamas!

This second point is: **The Christian life is a fight**.

But why do we believe there is? We love to hear of the pleasant parts of the Christian life. We imagine it is a cake walk with little danger.

Many today believe the false health and wealth gospel – that we are never to face hardship or suffer. But do we follow a Christ without a cross? Do we no longer sing the words of Isaac Watts?

Am I a soldier of the cross, a follow'r of the Lamb?

And shall I fear to own His cause, or blush to speak His name?

Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me on to God?

The Christian life is a battle. To arms! is the cry of your Lord who has pulled you out of a night of sin, judgment, and hell! You have a most dangerous enemy in Satan, whom you must resist. Do you not have still the flesh that clings to you?

And you still have a world that wants to conform you to itself, on the way to destruction!

This brings up our next verse and **our next point** – three ugly ogres in the world which are intemperance, impurity and enmity. These stand in the way as enemies of living maturely for the Lord.

They are common sins, aren't they? They certainly were common in Corinth where Paul was writing this letter. These appear to be juvenile sins. It is not that older people can't do these, but that these are especially the sins of our youth.

These are some of the works of darkness put off, grave clothes; so as to do battle with them in the armor of light.

“Let us behave properly” means to behave honestly, openly. It ties in well with living in the day and not in the night, secretly, deceptively, dishonorably.

Paul is saying go forward in your armor of light, your fight, and not back into these sinful ways. We are not just strolling around or wandering. NO! We are to make real progress against these things. And to do so means you must be intentional, putting one foot in front of the other.

Peter writes, Diligently add to your faith virtue, to virtue more knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control, perseverance – stick-to-itiveness, to perseverance godliness, then brotherly kindness and love – the opposite of being quarrelsome or confrontational.

This leads us into the second part of our message. Having seen what the new life is, how are we to live it? What is the dynamic, the power, the ability for all of this? We do not fight the good fight of light with our own flashlight do we? No! Paul takes us to the King of Light Himself in the last verse – put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

To put on Christ is to put on His ways of light and life, to walk as He walked, follow in his footsteps and imitate Him.

This is a wider and taller order than to put on love, or righteousness or knowledge.

We should feel a bit like young David being fitted in the King's armor – it is too big for us!

But while we put on His meekness, humility, love for God and so forth, Jesus is both your mirror and your wardrobe.

We need Him not just set before us to imitate, but we need Him as our power in living the Christian life. He is the vine, we are the branch, and He must be our very life.

See how Paul rolls out his whole title for you – who and what he is – your Lord, your Christ or Messiah, your Jesus/Salvation. You can only live up to this high calling by Him in your sanctification:

- Jesus your Light, whose truth and word is in you.

- Jesus your Lord, your Master, your owner, your protector and provider.
- Jesus your Christ – the Mediator, Prophet, Priest and King.
- Jesus, whose very name means “save” – His grace, His blood, His cross, His righteousness, His resurrection power.

He is your Lord Protector.

Now we have one more thing to say – Paul adds “and make no provision, no forethought, for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”

The same decisive tense is used. You are to be dead set against all the ways of the flesh.

The flesh here is not the physical body. But it is the sinfulness that still clings to us; the darkness that still resides.

On the one hand, you are never to make a truce with it. This is a full war between who you are in Christ, and your sinfulness which wants its own way. Paul says, ‘Do not sin; do not make provisions to sin; take away the fuel for the fire so it goes out; and more – do not make plans for it.’

You choke out sin, lust, living for the world, by forethought – by the battle first in your mind. That is the transformation of our thoughts which began this section in Romans 12:1-2.

On the other hand then, and positively, set your thoughts, your mind in the right path – toward Christ.

Set the Lord before you always.

I leave you with the powerful words of Psalm 16:

I have set the LORD continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. (Psa 16:8)

Set the Lord before you. Do so continually. Plan out following Him. Cry out so as to depend on him for help in your battles.

And you will not be moved – not because of what you do, but because He is with you!