

## Romans 13:11-14 A new Day is dawning

Romans 1-11 and especially Romans 9-11 provide the background to the practical application part of Romans in 12-15. Paul is concerned for the behaviour of Gentiles who have come to faith in the God of Israel through Jesus Christ, especially in relation to unbelieving Jews, for whom Christ died.

*Let us **behave decently**, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy* (Romans 13:13, NIV)

Some Gentile believers may still have had links with the sinful behaviour as described here (cf Romans 1), and this would have been a sure sign to unbelieving Jews that Jesus was not the true Messiah (cf Romans 2:24). In Romans 13:13 (KJV) it says, *let us **walk honestly**, as I the day*. This is our Christian walk (Romans 6:4). Our confession of faith of yesteryear is not unimportant, but God is concerned with our walk today. We are not to be involved with carousing, drunkenness, sexual immorality and debauchery, which are often the outcome of strife and jealousy, as we attempt to fill the empty void in our lives created by our own selfishness. These are the works of darkness. But the better way is the way of the Spirit whereby we are filled with Christ and His glory day by day. This way is to *walk in love* (Ephesians 5:2) – the theme of Romans 12-13. Paul is addressing this issue because there was a problem: Gentile Christians were not walking in love, especially in regard to their Jewish neighbours. As we have already seen, there was arrogance (Romans 11:18) and conceit (Romans 11:25, 12:3). As we will see in chapter 14, this was working out in very practical ways: *For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died* (Romans 14:15).

There are some words from the Hebrew language we are very familiar with such as *Amen* and *Hallelujah*. But there are two other Hebrew words which are helpful to know. The first is *Torah* translated from the Greek *nómos* as *Law* in the New Testament, and which means *instruction*. The second is *Halacha*. Wikipedia says, *Halacha is often translated as "Jewish Law," although a more literal translation might be "the way to **behave**" or "the way of **walking**."* Halacha were the community rules (usually oral rules, known as the Oral Law) to enable the community to live out the requirements of the Torah (Word of God) in the way they thought best. It seems to me that the Jewish Halacha (Jewish Law) of the synagogues got in the way of Christian fellowship between Jews and Gentile believers (Romans 14). Furthermore, Jesus, on occasions severely critiqued the Jewish Halacha (calling it the *traditions of men*) when it usurped the commandments of God (Torah) (e.g. Mark 7:9ff).

But in Romans 13:13 Paul is concerned with the halacha, or walk, of the Gentile believers. It is interesting the same word is used in Genesis 3:8 (LXX 3:9) *And they heard the voice of the Lord God **walking** in the garden in the afternoon; and both Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of the Lord God in the midst of the trees of the garden*. God was walking in the garden and He wants us to walk with Him! We are not called to follow a set of doctrines or even a Book but to walk with God (even though doctrine has its place and the Book is essential.) Our first parents were not *walking honestly*, but had twisted God's Word, disobeyed, and were found hiding behind a bush. To walk honestly I believe is to accept what God has revealed as true, about Himself in Christ, and about ourselves as sinners, even when it is painful, rather than pursuing a life of selfish gain. This is probably our deepest personal struggle, and the greatest wider struggle in society. The call of God is to *walk in love*, not as we define love, but as God defines it, which is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:10-12).

But there is something else, Romans 13:11 (ESV), **Besides this, you know the time ...** . What is the time? There are two Greek words for time, *chronos* (chronological time), and *kairos* (a season, or moment of time). What *kairos* time is it? Paul has already given us some clues in Romans: 1) For Paul it is the time of eschatological fulfilment of prophecy, in God sending his Son, the promised Seed of Abraham, to bring salvation not only for Israel but for all nations (Romans 3:21-26; Genesis 12:3). The coming of Jesus was this time of fulfilment (Mark 1:14). 2) For Paul we live in this present world and we should *not be conformed to this world* – or age (Romans 12:2). *World* or *Age* is a time word. The evil nature of this present world should motivate us not to conform to it. 3) But positively, in Romans 13:11, Paul tells us, *the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed*. It is morning time! It is time to wake up from our sleep! Because a new day has dawned, and the light of the glory of Christ has risen over the horizon! *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising* (Isaiah 60:1-3).

It's time to take our pyjamas off and get dressed: *The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light* (Romans 13:12). *The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining* (1John 2:8). We are living in the time between His first and second comings, in overlapping times, living between two ages. We are new creatures in Christ, forgiven and empowered for service; yet we continue to struggle in this present age with the world, the flesh and the devil. But the light has already dawned – He is risen!

We are to *put off* our night clothes, and to *put on* our best suit. Actually no! We are to *put on the armour of light*, because we continue to live in this present evil age. The armour of light is the same as the full armour of God in Ephesians 6:14-17. Each piece is like an aspect of the Person or Work of the Lord Jesus, which is why Paul says, *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh* [don't even think about how], *to gratify its desires* (Romans 13:14). Let's look at the different parts of the armour of God.

*The belt of truth*: Pilate said, "What is truth?" But Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." (John 14:6) *Breastplate of righteousness*: *And this is the Name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.'* (Jeremiah 23:6). To be clothed in Christ is to be clothed in His righteousness; to be clothed is to be covered; the atonement of Christ covers a multitude of sins. *Feet shod with the gospel of peace*: Jesus is the prince of peace. *Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ* (Romans 5:1). *The shield of faith*: *The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoices; and with my song will I praise him* (Psalm 28:7) There is a battle raging for truth and righteousness, but sometimes we aren't even aware of it because the Lord is our shield and he is deflecting the arrows before they even reach us. *The helmet of salvation*: Jesus is to all those who obey him the source of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9). His Name means *salvation*. *The sword of the Spirit*: *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword* (Hebrews 4:12) – Jesus is the Word who became flesh (John 1:14).

But we need to remember, even as clothed with the *armour of light*, the battle belongs to the Lord. Ultimately, "No weapon formed, or army or king shall be able to stand against the Lord and His anointed. All principalities and powers shall crumble before the Lord; and men's hearts shall be released, and they shall come the Lord."