

DATE June 27, 2010

TEXT: ROMANS 13:8-14

TITLE: "TODAY'S OPPORTUNITY"

SERIES: "HOW THEN SHOULD WE LIVE?"

Number one in series.

INTRODUCTION:

Some 25 years ago, I watched the ten-week video series by theologian, Francis A. Schaeffer, based on his book, How Should We Then Live: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture, first published in 1976. The book traces Western history from Ancient Rome until the time of writing (1976), along three lines of thinking: the philosophic, scientific, and religious. Schaeffer's central premise is this: "when we base society on the Bible, (the infinite-personal God who is there and has spoken), this provides an absolute by which we can conduct our lives and by which we can judge society." This leads to what Schaeffer calls "Freedom without chaos." When we base society on humanism, which he defines as "a value system rooted in the belief that man is his own measure, that man is autonomous, totally independent," all values are relative and we have no way to distinguish right from wrong except for utilitarianism. Because we disagree on what is best for which group, this leads to fragmentation of thought, which has led us to the despair and alienation so prevalent in society today.

The question, *how then should we live?* is very relevant for us today. In the light of the Ten Commandments, *how then should we live?* In light of what is taking place in our world, in our nation and in our very lives, *how then should we live?* Knowing what we know, *how then should we live?* How do people who are called to be holy live in a world that is unholy? For the Apostle Paul, time was running out. He shows us how use the time we have and make the most of today's opportunity.

I. (V.8-11) IT IS TIME TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AND WAKE UP TO THE OPPORTUNITIES AROUND US.

1. These verses bring to a conclusion the exhortation to practical Christianity that was begun in Romans 12:1-2, with the admonition to offer our bodies as living sacrifices and not conform any longer to the pattern of this world.
2. Chapter 13, verses 8-10 set the stage for what Paul says in verse 11 and following.
3. Condemning the looseness with which we contract debts and the indifference so often displayed in the discharging of them, Paul tells us that Christians in submission to authority are to pay their debts in full and fulfill their obligations.
4. There is, however, one exception, one debt of which we can never get rid of and that is the debt of love.

5. Highlighting the exception, he tells us in verse 8, we continually have a debt to love one another.

ILLUSTRATION: (*Origen, early Christian scholar and theologian, born in the year 185, said: “The debt of love remains with us permanently and never leaves us; this is a debt which we both discharge every day and forever owe.” (Origen – b. 185)

6. All believers are indebted to God, who is love.

7. Out of love for God and our relationship with a loving God, we are to love one another in fulfilling the law.

8. From the Ten Commandments, Paul lists four of the six commandments that directly relate to our relationship with others.

9. Paul says they can all be summed up in the one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

10. Love is the motive and constitutes the essence of the matter.

11. When love is being exercised, then all the commandments receive their fulfillment and so they can all be reduced to this demand.

12. Paul spoke on the preeminence of love to the Galatians, saying, **“The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Galatians 5:14)**

13. Paul recommended love rather than obligation as the basis for Christian community.

ILLUSTRATION: **John Wooden, Former Coach of UCLA Basketball fame said, “Love is the greatest word in our language... We can give without loving, but we can’t love without giving. In fact, love is nothing unless we give it to someone.”

14. Love that fulfills the law of God means loving one’s neighbor as oneself.

15. Love does good and the doing of good rules out the doing of evil or harming our neighbor and, therefore, fulfills the law.

16. No part of Christian life stands apart from the core command to love.

17. We are to be governed in all we do and say by love.

18. God is the source of love.

***“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” (Romans 5:5)**

19. It is His Love in us that enables us to love our neighbor as ourselves and fulfill the law.

ILLUSTRATION: (picture of this if possible) In Western Colorado, there is a road called the Million Dollar Highway. My guess is that both tourists and even most of the people who live on the western slope don’t know how this road got its name. They probably assume it got its name because it was expensive to build. That’s not correct—although it probably was expensive to build because it runs through very difficult terrain and at a high altitude. The real reason it’s called The Million Dollar Highway is because waste material from the ore in gold mines was used as the bed for that highway, and not all the gold dust and nuggets were removed by the mining processes available at the time.**

As a result, there is a partial roadbed of gold that is probably worth a lot more than a million dollars. It isn't the cost that gave it its name, but rather what is inside it. (Leith Anderson, in the sermon How to Treat People, PreachingToday.com)

20. The same is true for the royal law of love, which is "Love your neighbor as yourself".

21. It is the love within us that gives it its name.

22. It is made up of God, the God who is love.

23. Paul makes it clear to us that it is time to love others, as we seek to understand the present time.

"And do this, understanding the present time..." (Romans 13:11)

EXAMPLE: In the Old Testament we are told of the men of Issachar. The scripture says of them that they understood the times and knew what Israel should do. (I Chronicles 12:32)

24. Paul calls attention to the *now* in which believers stand.

25. The present time is not clock time, but the unique moment of time in which began in God's sending His son in which we now live.

26. We are to understand the present time in the context of Christ.

27. The alarm clock has sounded and now is the time to be awake to the opportunities around us.

"The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed." (Romans 13:11)

28. The imagery is that of a person awaking from sleep at dawn.

29. In these present times, there is a need to wake up spiritually to what is taking place and to the opportunities before us.

30. The imagery of slumber under a variety of terms is common among NT authors.

"So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breast plate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet." (I Thessalonians 5:6-8)

31. It is time for the people of God to wake up and be alert.

ILLUSTRATION: Christian Speaker, Tony Campolo tells that in Graduate School, I took a course in Chinese philosophy. The Buddhist Monk who taught the course said to me, "As a Christian, you teach your children to pray all wrong. You teach them to pray, 'If I should die before I wake.' It would be better if you taught them to pray 'If I should wake before I die.' The monk went on to point out that most of the people he knew were half awake when they ought to be asleep. But even worse, when they were asleep, they were half awake. No one seemed to be totally alive. Nobody seemed to be turned on to what was going on around them."

32. Christians are to be alert and awake to what is taking place spiritually.

33. Have you ever known someone who did some sleep walking? Perhaps you.

34. They were asleep but moving around.

ILLUSTRATION: (John draw a cartoon - A man walking out of church – looking sleepy-sleep walking - second copy with these words, “ Ralph has been walking in his sleep ever since he was a child.”)**

I am reminded of a story I read of a lady who said to the preacher, “I hope you won’t take it personally that my husband walked out in the middle of your sermon. Ralph has been walking in his sleep ever since he was a child.”

35. I wonder how many are moving around but are spiritually asleep.

36. The inference in the text is that the people have been spiritually asleep.

37. A person who is asleep is not awake to the truths of Christ and not applying them to their daily life.

38. There are many arms of the world that seek to lull us to sleep spiritually.

39. We must not be lulled to sleep by indulgence in pleasure or self-centeredness.

40. Paul did not want the people to be influenced by the words of those who suggest that the Lord delays His coming or may not return at all.

41. There is a day when Jesus will come and we must be awake and alert for that day.

42. It is time for Christians to awaken from the slumber of indifference, complacency, and slothfulness.

43. Paul is calling us to awake from spiritual “unconsciousness, unresponsiveness, and inactivity concerning the things of God.”

44. We must not be asleep to the opportunities we now have, for we never know how long we will have it.

ILLUSTRATION: Yogi Berra, the famous catcher said that one day while sleeping, he was awakened by a phone call. He sleepily answered. It was Max Nicholas, then head of Yankee Public Relations, who had called. When he realized that he may have woke him up, he said “Sorry, Yogi.” Yogi Berra answered, “Nah, its okay. I had to get up to answer the phone anyway.”

45. There is a reason for the church to wake up, and the reason is that our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

46. As elsewhere in Paul’s writings, salvation refers to the final rescue of believers from God’s wrath at the time of judgment, as well as full entrance into all the blessings in store for the eschatological people of God.

47. The salvation of everyone who believes has a point of beginning, and that point is when we first truly believe.

48. Paul uses "salvation" language to refer to the final accomplishment of God’s plan in history.

49. The idea is that we were saved, are saved, and will be saved.

50. This concept is further explained in Philippians 1:6, where we are told that God, who began a good work in us, will bring it to completion on the day of Christ’s return.

51. The concept here is, God is at work in our lives today, as we are in spiritual process towards eternity.

52. There is urgency, for there is still time to do the work of the Lord.

ILLUSTRATION: In 1540, forty-nine year-old Ignatius Loyola founded the Jesuit order, which grew rapidly. Loyola often described the ideal Jesuit as “Living with one foot raised” – always ready to respond to emerging opportunities by taking the next step.

53. What could happen if you and I lived with one foot of faith raised, ready to take every opportunity God gives us?

54. We are to move forward in our faith, for there is no time for spiritual laziness or spiritual sleeping.

55. Every day, we are presented with another 86,400 seconds to use, and the question is, how will we spend it?

56. We are called to be wise stewards of the time God gives us and the opportunities we have during that time.

ILLUSTRATION: ** H.B. London Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, in one of their books said, “Yesterday is a canceled check, tomorrow is a promissory note and today is cash in hand. Spend it wisely.” (The Heart of a Great Pastor)

57. Today is the day of opportunity for every Christian who will take it.

ILLUSTRATION: One biographer of John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, said, “he looked at the same miserable conditions (as others) and saw a situation which was ripe for evangelism.”

58. Today is the day of opportunity for the church, if we will take it.

Jesus said, **“Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” (John 4:35)**

59. There is urgency to opportunities of now when we understand the present time.

60. If you really only had a month left to live, how would your priorities change?

61. How would you spend the last 30 days or 720 hours on this planet?”

62. Live with urgency and seize the day God has given you.

63. We need to do the work while we can.

ILLUSTRATION: Thomas Edison reminded us, “Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”

64. Let us wake up to the work God has for us today, in the day in which we live.

65. Opportunities don’t always present themselves in ideal circumstances, but they must be seized.

ILLUSTRATION: **Someone said “If you wait for all the lights to turn green you will never leave your driveway.”

66. It is the hour to be awake to the opportunity we have

“Be very careful, then, how you live-not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” (Ephesians 5:15)

67. Wake up to the opportunities that each day brings.

ILLUSTRATION: Years ago, there was a television program called, “Queen for a Day.” It was just a show. But, what would you do if you could be “President for a day”? One of the great presidential stories in US American history was during the time that Zachary Taylor was to be the next president. However, since inauguration day fell on the Sabbath, Taylor didn’t want to be sworn in until Monday.” President James K. Polk officially concluded his duties on Saturday, which left Sunday, March 4, 1849, as a day without a president. To fill the vacancy, the next in line, President Pro Tem of the Senate David Atchison, became president for a day. How did Senator Atchison spend his day as president? He spent it asleep. Exhausted from concluding the affairs of Congress on President Polk’s last day, Atchison arrived home late on Saturday night and went to bed. He slept. And, slept. And, slept . . .right through his once-in a lifetime, one day in office as President of the United States.

68. We have a day, a season of opportunity.

69. An opportunity to love our neighbor as our self.

70. An opportunity to work while there is harvest.

71. An opportunity to pray, to worship, to serve, to share Christ, to use what God has given us to use for Him.

72. An opportunity through His Spirit to live holy lives in an unholy world.

73. How then will you live?

74. Let us not sleep through the opportunities.

75. Let us love one another and wake up to the opportunities around us.

II. (v.12-13) IT IS TIME TO PUT ASIDE DEEDS OF DARKNESS AND PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT

“The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.” (Romans 13:12)

1. The message is again one of imminence, as the night is nearly over and the day is almost here

2. The night is often a metaphor for the time of darkness or sin and the day is the day of the Lord.

3. The phrase, ‘is nearly over’ refers to time that has advanced to the point of being far gone, for it is now later than it has ever been!

4. You and I have less time than we have ever had to put off deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

5. Time is limited for all of us, for apart from the second coming of Christ in one’s lifetime, the death rate is 100%.

6. It is a call for action now, for today is the day of opportunity.

ILLUSTRATION: **American Author, Philosopher, speaker and motivational writer, Napoleon Hill said, “It’s not what you are going to do, but it’s what you are doing now that counts.” (1883-1970)

7. The call to action cannot be ignored.

8. Darkness in the thinking of the Romans was thought to cloak activities understood to be shameful or unlawful.

9. The works of darkness is to be understood in the ethical sense.

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.” (Ephesians 5:8)

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.” (Ephesians 5:11)

10. The present, dark as it was, is an opportune and favorable time for making progress.

11. The deeds of darkness are to be put aside.

12. We must get serious about sin, take sin seriously, and stop messing around with it.

13. Deeds of darkness do not match children of light and they must be put aside.

14. Instead of holding onto the deeds of darkness, we are to put on armor of light.

15. Paul calls upon Christians to live their lives as if in the open light of God’s coming day.

16. They were to put on that which identifies them as they really are, a people transformed by God.

17. We have been enlisted as soldiers of the Lord in the Battle of Truth.

18. To be children of light, it involves a warfare with the power of darkness.

“So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.” (Philippians 2:15-16)

19. We must be armed with light, for without armor, we are unprotected.

20. We must be equipped for the spiritual battles we face in this present age so we can be victorious over the deeds of darkness.

21. It is not our armor we need, but the armor of His light.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” (To equip ourselves for battle in this present age) (Ephesians 6:10-11)

22. Christians cannot afford to remain in the unprotected condition of sleepers when the situation calls for armor.

23. Putting on the armor of God is an intentional act of faith.

ILLUSTRATION: History records that during the time of the twelve Caesars, the Roman army would conduct morning inspections. As the inspecting Centurion would come in front of each legionnaire, the soldier would strike with his right fist the armor breastplate that covered his heart. The armor had to be strongest there in order to protect the heart from the sword thrusts and from arrow strikes. As the soldier struck his armor, he would shout "integritas" [in-teg-ri-tas], which, in Latin means ‘material wholeness, completeness, and entirety’. The inspecting Centurion would listen closely for this affirmation and also for the ring that well kept armor would give off. Satisfied that the armor was sound and that the soldier beneath it was protected, he would then move on to the next man. At about the same time, the Praetorians or Imperial

bodyguards were ascending into power and influence; drawn from the best "politically correct" soldiers of the legions, they received the finest equipment and armor. They no longer had to shout "integritas" to signify that their armor was sound. Instead, as they struck their breastplate, they would shout "Hail Caesar," to signify that their heart belonged to the Imperial personage—not to their unit—not to an institution—not to a code of ideals. They armored themselves to serve the cause of a single man. A century passed and the rift between the legion and the imperial bodyguard and its excesses grew larger. To signify the difference between the two organizations, the legionnaire, upon striking his armor, would no longer shout, "integritas," but, instead, would shout "integer" [in-te-ger]. Integer means 'undiminished—complete—perfect'. It not only indicated that the armor was sound, it also indicated that the soldier wearing the armor was sound of character. He was complete in his integrity...his heart was in the right place...his standards and morals were high. He was not associated with the immoral conduct that was rapidly becoming the signature of the Praetorian Guards. The armor of integrity continued to serve the legion well. For over four centuries, they held the line against the marauding Goths and Vandals, but, by 383 A.D., the social decline that infected the republic and the Praetorian Guard had its effects upon the legion.

As a 4th century Roman general wrote, "When, because of negligence and laziness, parade ground drills were abandoned, the customary armor began to feel heavy, since the soldiers rarely, if ever, wore it. Therefore, they first asked the emperor to set aside the breastplates and mail and then the helmets. So, our soldiers fought the Goths without any protection for the heart or head and were often beaten by archers. Although there were many disasters, which led to the loss of great cities, no one tried to restore the armor to the infantry. They took their armor off, and when the armor came off—so, too, came their integrity. It was only a matter of a few years until the legion rotted from within and was unable to hold the frontiers. The barbarians were at the gates. (John Di Frances, *Reclaiming the Ethical High Ground* (Reliance Books, 2002)

24. We must not put aside the armor of light but, rather, put aside the deeds of darkness.
25. We must continually renew our commitment to the Lord and make sure the armor is sound so that we can be victorious.
26. The point is that we cannot be neutral, for each of us must make our stand clear.
27. We are not merely to be spectators in the struggle between the forces of light and darkness, but to get into the battle by putting on the armor of light.
28. Choose your side and get in the battle.
29. Paul is calling for a wartime attitude of sacrifice and single-minded focus; there is no time for lazy, ineffectual soldiers.
30. Paul explains what it means to put on the armor of light, in practical terms.
31. It will impact your behavior.

“Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.” (Romans 13:13)

32. Paul expects all believers to conduct themselves in an ethically appropriate manner.

33. Christians are not to be out of the character of Christ

34. Through Christ, you have been changed – so live like changed people.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (II Corinthians 5:17)

35. Paul is calling the church in Rome to walk properly.

36. He is calling them to a righteous lifestyle.

37. Paul wrote, **“For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.” (Ephesians 5:9)**

ILLUSTRATION: **Pastor and author, John Mac Arthur says, “We should live a life pleasing to God, manifesting in our outward behavior the inner reality of a redeemed life.”

38. There is some behavior that does not belong in the life of the Christian.

39. Christian morality is not always counter cultural but there are times that it is.

40. Paul does not give a complete list, but definitely points out a variety of things that gives us a picture of that which does not belong to people who have put on the armor of light.

41. We are not to participate in those things related to the darkness.

42. Our behavior as Christians matters.

43. Young people – your behavior as a Christian matters.

ILLUSTRATION: Augustine, in 4th century, was a wild, carousing young man with evil companions. One day, he was with a friend in the garden, walking up and down and bemoaning his inability to change, ‘O, tomorrow, tomorrow! How can I free myself from these terrible urges within me that drive me to the things that hurt me!’ Suddenly, he heard what he thought was the voice of a child in the garden next door saying, ‘Take and read, take and read’. No children games had had those words. The words stuck: he went back to the table and found lying there a copy of Paul’s letter to the Romans. He flipped it open and read from Romans 13:13-14, ‘Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ..’ He said, “I had no wish to read more and no need to do so. For, in an instant, as I came to the end of the sentence, it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled.” At that moment, he opened his life to Christ. He had known about Him but had never surrendered to Him. He felt the healing touch from Christ cleansing his life. He was never the same man again.

44. It is time to put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light through surrender to Christ.

III. (v.14) **IT IS TIME TO CHANGE FOCUS AND EMBRACE CHRIST IN TOTAL SURRENDER.**

“Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” (Romans 13:14)

1. There is an alternative to improper behavior.
2. They were to abandon the wardrobe of their pre-Christian lives.
3. Faith requires a deliberate choice of spiritual wardrobe.

ILLUSTRATION: One is reminded of a dry-cleaning establishment which advertised its services with the words, “If your clothes aren’t becoming to you, they should be coming to us!”

4. Is our conduct becoming to us as believers and followers of Christ?
5. To put on Christ is the deliberate, conscious acceptance of the Lordship of the Master so that all is under His control motives, desires, and deeds.
6. It is embracing Christ with all that we are.
7. It is not giving Him a pat on the back or a gentle light arm around His shoulder.
8. It is embracing Christ in response to His love for us demonstrated on the cross.
9. To put on Christ is to discover that Christ’s character and behavior become our own.
10. It means embracing Christ’s identity as our identity, His way as our way, His path as our path, His heart as our heart, His purpose as our purpose, and His love as our love.

ILLUSTRATION: A tribal chief once came to Missionary, David Livingstone with this request. He said: “Please give me some medicine to change my heart; it’s so proud and often angry.” He had seen what the missionary had done for those who were sick in body and had mistakenly concluded that medication would do the same thing for his soul. Livingstone then tried to explain that the Lord Jesus alone could bring about the needed transformation in his life.

11. Only in Christ and through Christ can we conquer our sinful tendencies.
12. To put on Christ is to be transformed by Christ.
13. It is embracing Christ with faith and expressing that faith.

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” (Galatians 3:26-27)

14. Baptism is a public declaration of faith in Christ.
15. It does not mean that you have it all together or that you are perfect but that you have began the journey of faith by believing in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.
16. It is the public testimony you give in obedience to God’s word that you are a follower of Christ.

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from

the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

(Romans 6:3-4)

17. It is the public declaration that through Christ we are made new and have responded to the call to live a new life in Christ.
18. Have you been baptized as a declaration of faith in obedience to the Lord?
19. I encourage you to pick up a pamphlet on baptism, mark a card or attend a class on baptism.
20. It is the public declaration that you have embraced Christ.
21. Clothing oneself with the Lord Jesus Christ requires taking a firm stance against the flesh.
22. There is a fundamental difference between life dominated by the Spirit and life dominated by sin.
23. To put on Christ is to be identified with Him not only in His death but also in His resurrection.
24. It is embracing Christ through total surrender to Him and, therefore, staying away from that which is not Christ-like

“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.” (I Peter 2:11)

25. From the top of our head to the bottom of our feet, we are to be clothed with Christ.
26. The Apostle Paul told the church in Colossae that as God's chosen people we must dress "head-to-toe" in Christ's wardrobe.

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Colossians 3:12).

27. To put on Christ means to put off the desires of the sinful nature.
- ILLUSTRATION: In December, 2006, Chuck Colson had an article in *Breakpoint Newsletter* that asked, “Is change possible?” The issue was, can alcoholics overcome their addiction? He said at the time that Seattle's Downtown Emergency Services Center doesn't seem to think so. They were spending \$11 million on permanent housing for homeless alcoholics. 1811 Eastlake would have a housing complex that could accommodate 75 alcoholics. They could drink all they want and they won't have to be in a recovery program as long as they are not on the streets. Bill Hobson, the program's Executive Director, believes most alcoholics can't change. Hobson and his group reject the transforming power of Jesus Christ and believe some people are beyond hope and help. (Chuck Colson, "Bottoms Up: Is Change Possible?" *Breakpoint Newsletter* (12-15-06))**

28. The good news is that there is power in Christ.
29. There is power to set us free from the bondage of sin.
30. There is power to change our behavior.
31. There is power not to gratify the desired of the sinful.
32. There is power to change focus from the things of the world to the things of Christ.

33. There is power to change our thoughts from the desires of the sinful nature to the things of Christ.

“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:13)

34. Our thoughts are not to be focused any longer on how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

35. Change your focus, embrace Christ, and don't let the thought of the desires of sinful nature linger in the mind.

36. For your lifestyle to change, your thought-life must change.

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:2)

37. We must be attuned to the Savior.

38. Set your minds and your focus on Christ and things above.

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:2-3)

39. To be clothed with Christ is to be hidden with Christ.

40. This happens as we embrace Him by faith through total surrender.

41. To embrace Christ is to clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ.

ILLUSTRATION: Apologist and author, Ravi Zacharias recounts a story found in Marie Chapien's book, Of Whom the World Was Not Worthy (Bethany House, 1980). The book follows the Yugoslavian Christian Church's suffering under a corrupt church hierarchy:

One day, an evangelist by the name of Jakov arrived in a certain village. He commiserated with an elderly man named Cimmerman on the tragedies he had experienced and talked to him of the love of Christ. Cimmerman abruptly interrupted Jakov and told him that he wished to have nothing to do with Christianity. He reminded Jakov of the dreadful history of the church in his town, a history replete with plundering, exploiting, and indeed, with killing innocent people.

"My own nephew was killed by them," he said, and angrily rebuffed any effort on Jakov's part to talk about Christ. "They wear those elaborate coats and crosses," he said, "signifying a heavenly commission, but their evil designs and lives I cannot ignore."

Jakov, looking for an occasion to get Cimmerman to change his line of thinking, said, "Cimmerman, can I ask you a question? Suppose I were to steal your coat, put it on, and break into a bank. Suppose further that the police sighted me running in the distance but could not catch up with me. One clue, however, put them onto your track: they recognize your coat. What would you say to them if they came to your house and accused you of breaking into the bank?"

"I would deny it," said Cimmerman.

"Ah, but we saw your coat,' they would say," retorted Jakov. This analogy quite annoyed Cimmerman, who ordered Jakov to leave his home. Jakov continued to return to the village periodically just to befriend Cimmerman, encourage him, and share the love of Christ with him. Finally, one day, Cimmerman asked, "How does one become a

Christian?" Jakov taught him the simple steps of repentance for sin and of trust in the work of Jesus Christ and gently pointed him to the Shepherd of his soul. Cimmerman bent his knee on the soil with his head bowed and surrendered his life to Christ. As he rose to his feet, wiping his tears, he embraced Jakov and said, "Thank you for being in my life." And then he pointed to the heavens and whispered, "You wear His coat very well." Ravi Zacharias, Can Man Live Without God? (Word, 1994);

42. WE are called to wear His coat and wear it well.

43. It is time to change focus and embrace Christ in total surrender.

CONCLUSION: How then should we live? "The clock is ticking. You don't get a second opportunity to do today over. Live every day so you have no regrets. It is time to make the most of today's opportunity.

- I. (v. 8-11) **IT IS TIME TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AND WAKE UP TO THE OPPORTUNITIES AROUND US.**
- II. (v.12-13) **IT IS TIME TO PUT ASIDE DEEDS OF DARKNESS AND PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT**
- III. (v.14) **IT IS TIME TO CHANGE FOCUS AND EMBRACE CHRIST IN TOTAL SURRENDER.**

L:\Pastor David\Sermons\NT-Romans\Romans 13-8-14 How than shall we live
June 27.doc