

TIME FOR HOLINESS
Romans 13:11-14
By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. You can know what time it is and not know what time it is at the same time.
2. Many people know what time it is right now, but they don't know that now is the time for church.
3. Many parents with children in the home know what time it is, but they don't know that now is the time to disciple their kids.
4. Many people in their thirties know what time it is, but they don't know that now is the time to get serious about preparing for retirement.
5. This summer we had a big election for United States senator, and many people didn't participate. They knew the date; they were aware of the time; but they didn't know that on June 28, it was time to vote.
6. You can know what time it is and not know what time it is at the same time.
7. In other words, you can know the date, the hour, and the minute, but not understand the significance of the time that you are in. You can know the time, but not know the nature and the character of the time period you are in.
8. People today have more access to time-keeping devices than ever before. They have the time on their smart phones and smart watches. They have the time on the stove, the microwave, the coffee pot, the alarm clock, the computer. And yet many people have no idea what time it is. They don't understand the significance of the time period they are in.
9. Today we are going to look at a passage that is going to help us understand the time. It's not going to tell us the day, hour, and minute. That's easy. It's going to tell us the significance of the time period we now live in, and what we are supposed to be doing right now as a result.

II. TEXT

1. Romans 13:11-14

11 Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us

discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

2. This passage is about the connection between time and holiness. It gives us four insights about holiness.

III. **FOUR INSIGHTS ABOUT HOLINESS**

1. The time for holiness is now.

- i. **Romans 13:11** Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep.
- ii. Notice the phrase, “Since you know the time”.
- iii. Paul is not talking about the day, hour and minute, but the significance of the present time period. Since you know the significance of the current time period that you are living in; since you know the nature and the character of the season that you are in.
- iv. Because of time – the season; the period – that you are in, it is time “for you to wake up from sleep”.
- v. “To wake up from sleep” means to pursue holiness. In the Bible, sleep can be a metaphor for sin, and being awake can be a metaphor for pursuing holiness (see 1 Thess 5:6).
- vi. Notice Paul said, “It is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep.”
- vii. Right now it is time to get serious about holiness.
- viii. What is holiness? This passage doesn’t use the word holiness, but that’s what it is talking about. Holiness is conformity to the character of God and obedience to the will God (Jerry Bridges).
- ix. The Bible commands this over and over.
- x. **1 Peter 1:15** But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct.
- xi. **2 Corinthians 7:1** So then, dear friends, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.
- xii. **Romans 12:1** Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.

- xiii. But Paul's emphasis in this passage is not merely that you are commanded to be holy, but that now is the time.
- xiv. No more procrastinating. No more excuses. No more riding the fence. No more casual Christianity. Now is the time to get serious about your relationship with God. Now is the time to surrender your life completely to Jesus Christ. Now is the time to repent of sin. Now is the time to be obedient. Not when you grow up, now. Not next week, now. Not tomorrow, now. Not tonight, now.
- xv. Some of are not where you need to be with God. You know you need to repent, but you keep putting it off. "Tomorrow," you say. But tomorrow turns into six months, and six months turns into six years, and six years turns into sixty years, and then you have lived your entire life missing out on God's best. You went your entire life without experiencing God's full power working in and through you. You have gone your entire live without experiencing God's full blessing.
- xvi. Now is not the time for sin. It's not time for drugs and alcohol. It's not time for pre-marital sex. It's not time for adultery. It's not time for pornography. It's not time to cheat on your taxes. It's not time for dirty language. It's not time for stealing and lying. It's not time for fighting, violence, and revenge. It's time for holiness.
- xvii. In the 1990s the Chicago Bulls, led by Michael Jordan, were the best team in basketball. They won six championships. Before every game in their pre-game huddle one of the players would yell out, "What time is it?" and the rest of the team would yell back, "Game time!" When he said, "What time is it?" he wasn't asking for the hour and minute, he was asking about the significance of the time, the nature and character of the time. It was game time. It was time to compete at the highest level. It was time to go to battle. It was time for war. It was time to do whatever it takes to win. It was game time. In this passage Paul is saying that if you are a Christian, it's "holy-time." It's time to get serious about holiness. To go all out for holiness.
- xviii. Why is now the time for holiness?

2. The reason for holiness is that you will soon go to heaven.

- i. **Romans 13:11-12** 11 Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our

salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

- ii. Paul uses two phrases to say the same thing:
 - 1. “Our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.”
 - 2. “The night is nearly over, and the day is near.”
- iii. What did Paul mean? There are three leading interpretations (Charles Hodge):
 - 1. The day of Christ’s return is near.
 - 2. The day of Jerusalem’s destruction is near.
 - 3. The day of eternity is near.
- iv. Let’s take a closer look at each of these.
- v. First, day of Christ’s return is near.
 - 1. Some think that Paul was referring to the second coming of Christ, and that He was saying that Christ’s return was near.
 - 2. The problem is if that’s what Paul meant, then he was wrong, and it casts doubt on his credibility. Christ didn’t return in the first century, or in the fifth century, or in the twentieth century. And if Paul was wrong about that, then can he be trusted about anything else?
 - 3. Some people say that Paul meant “near” according to God’s timetable, because to God a thousand years is like a day. But Paul wasn’t talking to God, he was talking to people. If someone asked you where you lived, would you say “near Russia”? No. You might say that if you were talking to God, because God is omnipresent – distance means nothing to Him. But you wouldn’t say that a person.
 - 4. Some people say that Paul was referring to the second coming, but he wasn’t predicting a soon return of Christ. Instead, what he meant by “near” was that the second coming was the next great event in God’s redemptive plan. Christ had already been born, crucified, risen, exalted, and the next big thing is the second coming. But the word “near” doesn’t mean “next.” It means “near” – close in time or distance.
 - 5. Therefore, I don’t think Paul was referring to the second coming.

- vi. Second, day of Jerusalem's destruction is near.
 - 1. In the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24, Lk 21, Mk 13), Jesus predicted His coming in judgment (not a physical coming) upon Jerusalem in that current generation.
 - 2. This interpretation is better than the first because it preserves Paul's integrity. Christ's prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70, about twenty years after Romans was written. But I'm not sure how that is a motivation for holiness. Why does that mean that the time for holiness is now?
- vii. Third, the day of eternity is near.
 - 1. When you die, you will enter eternity.
 - 2. Each day that passes gets you closer to the day of eternity. In fact, today could be the day of eternity for you.
 - 3. Therefore, now is the time for holiness.
 - 4. Why? Holiness increases your assurance, and holiness increases your rewards.
 - a. Holiness increases your assurance of salvation. Holiness is a mark of genuine salvation. The more effort and progress you make in holiness, the more assurance you will have that you will go to heaven.
 - b. Holiness increases your reward. Your eternal destination is determined by faith, not works. But the size of your eternal reward is determined by your works, your conduct, your behavior. The more effort and progress you make in holiness, the bigger your eternal reward will be.
 - 5. I believe this is what Paul meant.
 - 6. The time for holiness is now because the day of eternity is near, and holiness will increase your assurance and rewards.
- viii. What about you?
 - 1. Are you sure about your eternal destination?
 - a. Do you struggle with doubts?
 - b. Could it be that you have not been serious about holiness?
 - 2. What about your eternal reward?
 - a. Do you want a small reward or a huge reward?

- b. In America we are so wealthy. When I look at the houses some people live in, and the cars they drive, and trips they take, I'm afraid they will be disappointed in heaven. I'm afraid they will get to heaven and say, "This is it? I had it this good on earth." And God will say, "This is what you earned."
 - c. If you want a big reward, then get serious about holiness.
- ix. So, the first insight about holiness is that now is the time. The second insight is that now is the time because you will soon die and meet Christ in heaven. Let's look at the third insight about holiness.

3. The pursuit of holiness begins with discarding vice.

- i. **Romans 13:12** The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.
- ii. Next, Paul gives us two steps for pursuing holiness. Discard, and put on. The first step is to discard – cast off, put aside, remove, throw off, throw away. In Mk 10:50 the same word is used for throwing off a garment.
- iii. What are you supposed to discard, or throw off? The deeds of darkness. In other words, vice, or sin.
- iv. Sin is often associated with darkness because people are most comfortable committing sin in the dark, in secret.
- v. The first thing to do in your pursuit of holiness is repent of sin. Clean the sin out of your life.
- vi. What is sin? Sin is any failure to obey God's commands, either by commission or omission.
- vii. There are sins of commission and sins of omission. Sins of commission are when you do what God said don't do – murder, stealing, lying, adultery, etc. Sins of omission are when you when fail to do what God said to do – love your neighbor as yourself, forgive, be kind, be generous to the needy, tithing, loving your wife, obeying your parents, etc.
- viii. In verse 13 Paul provides six examples of sin, or six deeds of darkness.

ix. **Romans 13:13** Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy.

1. Carousing can mean wild partying that becomes a nuisance to others. The word reminds me of the popular “teen takeovers” that have been popping up all over the country lately. There’s nothing wrong with a party, but these “teen takeovers” are causing all kinds of problems – violence, destruction of property, etc.
2. Drunkenness. Drunkenness is a sin (Eph 5:18). This would also include recreational drug use, such as marijuana, because they have the same effect. The problem with drugs and alcohol is that they cause you to lose control of your mind and body, which leads to all sorts of problems. This is why God wants you to be self-controlled (Gal 5:23). You cannot be at your best spiritually if you are not in full control of yourself. You cannot love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength if you are intoxicated. You cannot love your neighbor as yourself if you are under the influence.
3. Sexual impurity. This is not the normal Greek word for sexual immorality (i.e., *porneia*), but it appears to mean the same thing. It stands for any forbidden sexual activity. God is not anti-sex, but He has created boundaries to help us enjoy sex to the fullest. Sex is powerful, and like anything powerful if you use it in the wrong way it can be destructive. Your car is powerful; if you misuse it can cause great damage. Sex is very powerful – it can create new life; it can bond people emotionally like nothing else; it can also destroy marriages and careers and churches and transmit diseases. So God put boundaries on sex so we can enjoy it and not be destroyed by it. And His boundaries are so limited: no sex before marriage, no sex outside of marriage, and no sex with the same sex. You can have all the sex you want; just keep it in the marriage bed.
4. Promiscuity. This is another word that has to do with sexual sin. Different Bible versions translate it promiscuity,

debauchery, immoral living, sensuality, and licentiousness. William Barclay says that it describes not only sexual immorality, but the person who has lost their sense of shame and no longer tries to hide it. It's the person who does not care what people think and does in the public what most people would try to hide. It is flaunting your sin; bragging about it; openly declaring it and celebrating it.

5. Quarreling. This is the person who is always causing conflict and strife with others.
 6. Jealousy. This is when you feel angry or unhappy because somebody has something that you want, or when you feel resentful when someone else prospers.
- x. But this list is representative rather than comprehensive. The point is not to discard only these six sins, but to discard all sin.
 - xi. What about you? Do you have any sin to discard? Do you need to take a bath. Are your moral clothes soiled, dirty, stinky?
 - xii. In the next verse, verse 14, Paul gets into how to discard the deeds of darkness.
 - xiii. **Romans 13:14** But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.
 - xiv. Notice the phrase "make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires."
 - xv. The "flesh" is your sinful nature; it is your inherited inclination to sin. It never goes away until you die. When you get saved, God gives you new desires (2 Cor 5:17; Phil 2:13). But the old desires are still there. How do you conquer the flesh?
 - xvi. "Make no provision for the flesh". This has two possible connotations:
 1. Don't feed the flesh.
 - a. Don't feed your sinful desires. Starve your sinful nature.
 - b. I've heard someone explain it like this. When you get saved, God gives you a new nature with the desire to please God. But you still have your old nature that desires sin. These two natures are constantly at war, both wanting to take over your life. The one the will

win is the one that you feed the most. Don't feed the flesh.

- c. I heard someone say that sin is the deliberate suicide of the will. It's the intentional murder of your willpower. Every time you sin, you weaken your willpower against sin. You make it easier to sin, and harder to say no to sin. But each time you resist sin, you strengthen your willpower, making it easier to resist the next time.
- d. If you want to overcome sin, you must starve your sinful nature completely; no exceptions; no compromise.

2. Don't think about how to sin.

- a. The old NIV Bible version (1984) put it like this: "Do not think about how to gratify the desires of your sinful nature."
- b. In other words, don't meditate on sin, and fantasize about sin, and daydream about sin. Why? Sin begins in the mind. If you keep fantasizing about sin, eventually you will engage in sin.
- c. When the thought of sin enters your mind, press delete. Get rid of it. Meditate on Scripture. Divert your attention.

3. Don't make plans to fulfill your sinful desires. The word if you can defeat sin at the thought-level it will never mature into a behavior.

- xvii. The pursuit of holiness begins with discarding vice, but that's not the whole picture. Let's look at the last insight.

4. The pursuit of holiness continues with putting on virtue.

- i. **Romans 13:12** The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.
- ii. First, take off the deeds of darkness. Second, put on the armor of light. Just as darkness is a metaphor for sin, light is a metaphor for holiness. Take off sinful clothing, and put on holy armor.
- iii. What does Paul mean by the "armor of light"? He explains it in verse 14.
- iv. **Romans 13:14** But put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

- v. The **NIV** says to “clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- vi. To put on the “armor of light” is to cultivate Christ-like virtue – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – to name a few.
- vii. In other words, to put on the armor of light is to act like Jesus. Imitate Jesus. This is what holiness is. In a nutshell holiness is imitating the character, conduct, and convictions of Jesus Christ.
- viii. Back in the 90s the WWJD movement was popular. “What would Jesus do?” Christians had bracelets, and shirts, and bumper stickers that said WWJD, but then it went out of style. I don’t think that should have gone out of style, because that’s the mindset you need to have to pursue holiness. Every moment, in every situation, ask yourself, “What would Jesus do?” That’s holiness.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. Paul’s point in this passage is that it is time for holiness. Right now. Not tomorrow. Not next week. Not when you grow up. It’s time to get serious about living for Christ right now.
2. Your sins grieve the Holy Spirit; quench the Holy Spirit; put Jesus on the cross; prevent you from enjoying God’s full blessing and serving God fruitfully; and they invite God’s discipline. Sin leads to suffering, and shame, and sorrow, and regret. No more! The time for holiness is now.
3. If you are a Christian living in sin, would you repent today? Would you rededicate your life to the pursuit of holiness – no excuses, no compromise, no more procrastinating?
4. But the Bible doesn’t just say that now is the time for holiness; it says that “now is the day of salvation (2 Cor 6:2).” Today is the day of salvation. You eventually die and face eternity, and you will either go to heaven or hell. How can you make sure that you go to heaven? It’s as simple as A, B, C. Admit that you are a sinner in need of a Savior. Believe in Jesus – that He died and rose again for you. Call on Jesus to be your Savior and Lord, committing your life to Him.