

Living in Two States

Romans 13:11-14, December 1, 2010

Advent Evening I

Beloved of the Lord.....The season of Advent is a time of penitence and prayer. At this time we prepare for the coming of the Lord by repenting of our sins and praying for His help and mercy. Just as the John the Baptist preached repentance and remission of sins by the Lord Jesus Christ, we as Christians daily repent, and daily put on Christ. Every Christian then lives in two states at once. We are constantly in a state of repentance, experiencing sorrow of heart over our sin, yet we do not despair for daily by faith we live in a state of grace. Christ through the Gospel has shined the light of His grace into our hearts, so we daily know we possess His forgiveness by faith. This faith however is a living, and not dead, faith. It is active in everything we do. Thus when our flesh gets the best of us, we find grief and sorrow in heart. But when we think of Christ we "put on" Christ and we do not despair. "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

I. Let us cast off our works of darkness. Our text begins, "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." This is God's way of saying, "Be ready to go at any time, for the end is far nearer than what you believe." To be awake and not sleeping is to repent and believe the Gospel. Remember the foolish virgins who were sleeping and not awake when the Bridegroom arrived? Their lamps were not trimmed and filled with oil. They had no faith, and were not sorry in their heart for their sinful deeds. In the Bible sleep and unbelief go hand in hand. Someone who is sleeping cannot be prepared for the enemy, nor can they be fruitful in every good work.

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." God doesn't ask us, but He commands us to cast off

EVERY work of darkness. Every kind and type of sin should be abhorred as a trap Satan has set for our own destruction. When the Lord returns to judge the good and evil works of men, Jesus expects and desires with all His loving heart that His children be prepared and found waiting. He doesn't want to find His Virgin Bride sleeping or caught in the act, but awake, faithful, and ready.

How do we cast off our works of darkness? First, all works of darkness are revealed in the Ten Commandments. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart....and thy neighbor as thyself." If you truly want to do a good work in the sight of God, stop doing evil works! It is a good work to repent of your evil works, and dress yourself with Christ, His forgiveness of sins. In this way you will wear His holy armor, the armor of light. Notice also that the specific sins of our lesson are listed AFTER this reference to the armor of light. This is because Jesus first reminds you that He is your Light, for then you will have the needed strength to cast off those works of darkness.

"Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." To walk honestly is to always speak the truth in love, and NEVER lie. This is God's eighth commandment. We should never lie or say anything dishonest to our neighbor, nor should we speak behind his back or slander his good reputation. It is a sin to listen to gossip. To walk honestly is to use our tongue for the good and benefit of our neighbor. We should defend our neighbor from false accusations, defend the poor and those who cannot speak for themselves: unborn children, the disabled, the widows, the weak.

As for rioting and drunkenness, this is the "party" mentality which cuts loose, letting the flesh indulge to its own damnation. Those who give themselves over to the sinful appetites of the body literally have hell to pay. Our bodies are gifts from God. Our talents are on loan, to be used for His glory alone. We are not to be in "chambering and wantonness." Chambering is to be doing evil things in the bed chamber. It is to defile one's own body with another.

Wantonness is to continually want and lust after all God has forbidden. If we open the first door to sin, there will be a second and a third behind it. Where will it end? The Bible says, "Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied."

The last works of darkness are strife and envy. To strive is to fight, to do and say evil things to our neighbor. To envy is to be jealous of what our neighbor has, and bear malice of heart. Proverbs 30:33 says, "Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife." When we are not careful and loving with our words we lose control of our words and force our neighbor to be angry. When our conscience plagues us after words of anger are spoken, it is because we crossed a line and fell into sin. The Bible says, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Proverbs 15 says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness."

II. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. When we hear the Word of God like this, when the law smites our conscience over and over again like a taskmaster, Christ alone is the cure. While God through the law reveals our deeds of darkness, the Lord has only one purpose in mind when He does so, He only wants us to receive Jesus. Galatians 3 says it perfectly. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." When the Spirit of God teaches our hearts that our Heavenly Father sent us His heavenly Son ONLY for our salvation, we need not be afraid of confessing even our deepest and darkest of sins! In Jesus dear sinner, you will find this sin also has been forgiven. Because He was her Savior, Jesus did not turn away the adulterous woman caught in the very act.

Because He was his Savior, Jesus did not turn away the murderous Paul. Because He was his Savior, Jesus did not turn away murderous and adulterous King David. In winter we rejoice "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

Finally, "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." What does this mean? When our children reach a certain age, we teach them how to dress themselves. In like manner when our heavenly Father says "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" or "let us put on the armour of light", He is saying "Dear child, dress yourself with Jesus' forgiveness of sins. Put upon you HIS righteousness, HIS holiness, HIS innocence and blessedness, like a white wedding gown, and you will know and rejoice that heaven is your home. This is the very thing faith does dear believer. It receives Christ, accepts and applies His work on the cross to himself, and inwardly understands, "God will not condemn me, for He has justified and declared me righteous by the blood of His only-begotten Son! Through Jesus I am in a state of grace! Come quickly Lord Jesus!"

Therefore beloved, make no provision for the flesh. Again and again close the door to sin, so that you will be ready in faith for when the Bridegroom returns. By faith put on the Lord Jesus Christ, as a happy child getting dressed for the day, and be active and fruitful in God's kingdom, for though we live in two states at once, God has promised us one country above, a heavenly home, that new Jerusalem. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." Amen.