

**September 1, 2024**  
**Walking the Roman's Road #33**  
**Romans 13:11-14**  
**"Knowing the Time"**  
**Pastor Donovan Stewart**



Wake up. Join me today in the book of Romans chapter 13, the book of Romans chapter 13. As we continue our walk through the Romans road together, we'll be finishing up Romans chapter 13.

Next Sunday is friend day, so we will take a break from Romans and have a special friendship message. Hope that you've been praying about and working to invite others to friend day next Sunday. So, Romans 13 beginning in verse 11.

Follow as I read God's inspired Word "and do this knowing at the time that now it is high time to wake out of sleep. For now, our salvation is nearer than when we first believed the night is far spent the day is at hand. Therefore, cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts."

May God bless the reading, the hearing and now the proclamation of his word.

A gentleman woke up on a Friday morning and kissed his wife on the cheek and reminded her that that Friday when he was off work, he was going to go spend a couple hours with his friend at the lake fishing. So, he went off to work and finished his day with anticipation and went to the lake with his friends, began fishing with two hours passed quickly, and lost track of time. And before you know it, it was Sunday evening before he came home. You can imagine when he came through the door, the wife was not very happy about that. She was madder than a hornet and she gave him down the road for a couple hours straight. Finally, she took her first real deep breath and said, how would you like it if you didn't see me for two or three days? He said it'd be fine by me. Well, Monday came around, not one glimpse of her. Tuesday didn't see her at all. Wednesday, the same thing. Well, finally that fourth day, he began to see her just a little bit when the swelling of his left eye started to go down.

All right, so there are consequences to not keeping track of time. There are some drawbacks.

We lose track of time, and we get distracted. Today's message is saying, that knowing the time, being spiritually awake, being aware that the time is short and the needs are great. This is a call from God's word for us not to be in a spiritual slumber, not to be distracted with the things of the world and the things that are of lesser value, but to make sure we're making the main thing, the main thing.

To make sure that we're not being apathetic, that we're not being passive, that we are being active and intentional about our spiritual life. To do that, we must know the time.

A story is told about a small village that had a clock tower that had been faithfully marking time for over a century. One day, the clock stopped working. The townspeople, initially worried, soon became used to its silence and they continued their daily routines adjusting to the new normal. Years passed and the clock tower's stillness became a symbol of timelessness. People began to rely more on their own schedule and their internal clocks. Realizing the absence of the clock didn't mean that time had stopped and that they had become more dependent and reliant upon their own time management. Just like the village that adapted to the clock tower's silence, we often fail to know the time, God's time, and our spiritual life.

We begin to do our own thing, have our timelines, have our agendas, and kind of create the game plan for ourselves, and we forget that God has a timing and the timing is urgent. We miss the moments for growth, kindness, or repentance. Not because time has stopped, but because we've become disconnected from God's timing.

Just as the villagers had relied on their internal clocks, we too must seek to understand and align our lives with God's perfect will. That's today's message. It's a wake-up call to know the time to make sure your life is in step with God's plans and God's purposes for you and the world around you.

Inside your worship bulletin, there are three simple points to help us understand this passage of Scripture.

### **Number one, it's time to wake**

Verse 11 says this, knowing the time, then now it is high time to wake out of sleep.

Friends, this is not something new. Back in the first century, the Christians in Rome, the apostle Paul had to remind them to wake up. Even this early round of Christians had already grown a little apathetic, a little spiritually shallow. They had become lukewarm, and Paul had to reach out and proverbially shake them back awake. Saying the time is important.

It's not time to be passive. It's time to be aggressive. It's not time to just sit back and do nothing. It's time to do something for the Lord. He's reminding them to stay awake, and your preacher is doing the same thing today to you and me here at the Mission Church. Let's make sure we are awake.

Let's not be asleep. Let's not be passive. Let's be active about the things of the Lord.

The time is drawing near. The time is urgent. The work is great.

We want to make sure that we are in line and obedient with what God's calling us to do, helping other people take their next step of obedience and glorifying God. We know that the time is now to wake up spiritually.

A pastor approached a lady following a service and remarked, I couldn't help but notice that your husband left Midway during my serving today. To which the lady replied with a shrug, oh, please don't be too offended by that, Reverend. He's been sleepwalking for years.

Many of us are sleepwalking, and we've been doing it for years. We come to church, and we just kind of go through the motions. We read our Bibles just to check it off our spiritual to-do list. We know some of the right things we should do and some of the right things we can say, but we're just going through the motions almost like we are sleepwalking.

It's a wake-up call today to be excited, to be enthusiastic, to be passionate, to be on fire for God. Amen. He is worth our very best.

This is a reminder that we are living in the last days or the last times. We're reminded by Paul that this day of Christ's return is drawing near. So, we need to wake up.

We believe in the imminent return of Christ, that Jesus could return at any moment, and that He could come back today before we pillow our heads tonight. And it's a reminder to stay awake spiritually, that when Christ comes back, we don't want to be found idle. When Christ comes back, we don't want to be found in our sins.

When Christ comes back, we don't want to be found passive. When Christ comes back, or we go to Christ, we want to be said, well done, my faithful servant. We want to be found active about the things of the Lord.

We want to be faithful to God. We do not want to be asleep. Jesus could come at any moment, so we need to be awake spiritually.

Christ spoke to this in Matthew chapter 24. Jesus said, watch therefore, for you do not know the hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready. The Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Jesus spoke about the imminent return of himself. He said, I'm going to go away, but I will come again. That's been 2,000 years ago, but that's just a blink of an eye to God. Amen. It could happen at any moment. It could be another 2,000 years, but I don't think so.

I believe that Christ could come back much sooner than we realize, so we need to wake up. He tells us that no man knows that time. That's intentional. That's God's design. That we don't know exactly when that day will be, because if we did, we would all delay. We would all procrastinate. We just do whatever we want to do in the last moment then we would get serious about God.

We live every day with the reminder that Jesus could come back at any moment. I like to say it this way. We should live our lives as if Jesus died yesterday, and he was raised today, and he could come back tomorrow.

Amen. We live with that passion and that zeal and that gratitude that our salvation is fresh, that the great work of Jesus on the cross was fresh in our minds as if it happened just yesterday. That we never get over our salvation.

That we never yawn in the face of a holy God. That we never take for granted, that we were destined for hell.

I heard a guy on the radio say that before he was before he was saved. He was heading to hell faster than a Ferrari. But Jesus radically saved him!

We should live with that reminder. I got saved in the fall of 1999. My friends, I want to be more excited about today than I was then, and I want to be more excited about that next year than I am today. I want to be more excited every day that Jesus radically and dramatically saved me.

Not only that, but we live today as if Jesus rose from the dead. That Jesus is not dead. He's alive and well. That he's on the throne, the right hand of God the Father. He's praying for us. He's also inside of us. That working of the Holy Spirit, that the Word of God available to us.

We don't have to live a defeated life. We can live a victorious life. We don't have to be beaten down, but we can be built up. We can live on the top side because we are on the winning team. We should have that kind of daily life.

We also live as if Jesus could come back tomorrow. Then we have that anticipation. The Bible calls it the blessed hope.

It's something we hope for. However, I'm afraid many Christians have started to call it the un-blessed discouragement. They don't want it to happen. They don't want Jesus to come back. If he came back and messed up their life and messed up their plans. This should not be our mindset. We are looking for. We're longing for Christ to come back. That we can make things the way they're supposed to be.

A preacher from years gone by. A great man of God who taught at Dallas Theological Seminary. A wonderful name for a preacher. Dwight Pentecost. What a great name that is. Amen. I wish I had that last name. But he would say this. Every time the Bible talks about the second coming of Christ, it is always followed by the charge to holy living. Then every time the Bible talks about Christ in their return, the application is that it impacts your life now. Because Christ can come back today. We should be more serious about our spiritual life. Because Christ can come back.

We don't want to be found slacking. Because Christ can come back. We want to be active about what God has called us to do. That's always the application that Christ could return at any moment. Now this is a wake-up call.

Now many people face life differently. Some people are morning people and some people are night owls. If you're a morning person, raise your hand. I don't like you guys... I used to be a morning person when I got older. It's harder than turning the mattress off my back. There are two ways to face the morning.

Some people say, "Good morning, Lord!" while others say "Good Lord, it's morning...". When it comes to things like God, we should be in that first camp. We should make some good, Lord, it's morning. It's time. There are opportunities before me. I get to live my daily life for the glory of God. I get to have breath in my lungs. I get to have life. I get to have friends. I get to experience things for your glory, for the good of others' friends. There's no greater life to live than the Christian life.

Some people think that being a Christian is a drudgery. It is a bore. I'm sorry you're a Christian. Hey, don't be sorry for me. I'm having the time of my life. Amen. If I had a thousand lives to live, I'd give everyone to Jesus. Amen. There's no better way to live our lives for the glory of God and kingdom purposes.

Let's wake up. There are many sleeping Christians. But I can assure you, my friends, the devil is not asleep. The devil is alive and well. The Bible says he's like a roaring lion that he is prowling about, looking for whom he can devour. He's looking for Christians who are spiritually asleep.

He's looking for Christians who are too lazy to read their Bibles. He's looking for Christians who are too passive to pray. He's looking for Christians who do not make it a priority to be with other believers in Christ.

He's looking for Christians who know Christ, but they're spiritually lazy. When he finds them, he makes them easy prey. However, he cannot steal their salvation. No, my friends, that's secure in Jesus, but he will steal your joy. He'll steal your usefulness. He'll take away your testimony. He can make your life miserable. The most miserable people around are not unbelievers who are living like unbelievers. The most miserable people around are not Christians who are on fire for God. The most miserable people around are Christians who know better but don't do better. They know the truth of God. But they try to live in both worlds. That will tear you apart spiritually. And that's a recipe for misery. Let's wake up.

This story reminds me of a biblical account. You may remember Jesus before he went to the cross in the Garden of Gethsemane where he had a time of prayer with sweat drops like blood, and he brought three of his closest companions, Peter, James, and John. He thought they were prayer warriors and brought them and said, Pray for me. But while he was off praying and came back, he found them asleep. They were asleep on the job, and he said, could you not watch him pray with me for one hour? The time is near. He knew the cross stood before him. He needed prayer. He needed support. He needed their vengeance. He needed them awake, but they were found asleep. And friends, it may be today that Jesus is looking upon you and looking up on me and looking up on this church and saying, Could you not watch him pray one hour? Could you not be faithful to me? You're asleep. You're passive. You're really thinking about yourself. Your spirit may be willing, but your flesh is weak. Wake up. Be focused.

Be on fire for God. While we're waiting for Jesus to return, let's be busy worshiping and working. Can I get an amen there? And we all need some wake-up calls.

I remember as a young boy going to hotels and motels with my parents, you know, a Holiday Inn or something, and you would call a front desk and say, I'd like to get up tomorrow at 8 a.m. Can I get a wake-up call? Can you remember that? I don't think they do that anymore. Now we have cell phones.

We need those wake-up calls and life tends to be full of wake-up calls, and I don't mean like ones from a front desk of a hotel. How about a health problem? When the doctor calls and says, hey, you got cancer, when you get a report that your blood pressure is too high and you're at risk of a heart attack or a stroke, or you hear there is some other kind of disease or ailment or chronic pain, that's often a wake-up call to start eating better and exercise him and taking better care of our life.

Why don't we be more proactive about that? Before we get the bad news we must get the wake-up call, let's take some preventative measures, amen? But life works this way. We take things for granted. We eat badly and do not exercise. We sit on the couch. We don't do what we need to do. The wake-up call happens, and now we try to scurry to make some changes.

Hey, how about our relationship problems? A spouse says, hey, you neglected me for far too long. I'm checking out where you got a child who says, hey, I don't love you anymore. You've been too busy with your work, and now there's relational stress, or there's a friend that you've been thickness thieves and now there's been gossip and there's been a hurt, there's been backbiting.

There's a wake-up call relationally, and it caused you now to think deeper to do some self-evaluation, and you begin to want to be more thoughtful and more kind instead of being selfish and self-oriented, and they take a wake-up call to do that.

What about a job wake-up call? That your company starts laying people off and everybody else is getting a pink slip, and you've got a sense in your spirit you're probably going to be next. What if you have a demotion, or you get a rejection, or you don't get the job that you want? There's a wake-up call and you say, hey, maybe I should work a little harder. Maybe I should show up on time. Maybe I should not leave early. Maybe you need to be reminded that your boss isn't your human boss, but your boss is a Jewish carpenter, amen? That you're working for Jesus.

Maybe a bad evaluation. Maybe a demotion was put up on you because of some poor work ethic. It becomes a wake-up call for you. Life is full of wake-up calls. What today is a wake-up call spiritually. It's a reminder to wake up.

Don't be passive about the things of God. Be active in the word of God. Be active in prayer. Be active in sharing your faith. Be active in your tithes and offerings. Be active in worship.

We learned this in the second part of that first verse. Now it's time to wake up, but it says, our salvation is nearer than we first believed. That's where I was going to be talking about the return of Jesus.

Salvation is nearer than we first believed. How could that be? I thought the moment we were saved; we got all the salvation we need. In a sense, we do.

The moment you're saved, your sins are forgiven. You're guaranteed a home in heaven. The Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you. You're made right before a holy God. You get a fresh start, a new beginning. He declares you righteous, amen. All these things happen the moment you trust Jesus. But we talk a lot here at the Mission Church about the three tenses of salvation. We've been talking more about that, because book of Romans allude to it quite often.

We learn about the past tense. We're being saved from the penalty of sin. That's called justification. I was saved in the fall of 1999. At that moment, all my sins were forgiven, past, present, and future. It happened at a specific time. But since then, my salvation has continued, known as sanctification, becoming more like Jesus on the journey with him. That we don't get saved, and that's the end of the race. That's the beginning of the race, amen.

That's the beginning of the journey, not the end. We should be able to grow. Second Peter 3:18 says, grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

But there's a future salvation, known as glorification. Whether we die and go to be with the Lord, or he comes back for us. Notice glorification. Whether we die and go to be with the Lord, or he comes back for us at that moment when we are with Jesus face to face, our salvation is complete. That's what this verse is talking about.

Life can be hard. Life can be overwhelming. Life can be scary. Life is uncertain, but we know that with God we already know the result. Amen. We have read the last chapter.

We know that we are on the winning team on the winning side. Illustration. Football season is back. Can I get it? Amen. Hallelujah. Praise God. Amen. I'm glad football season's back. Let's say you watch a football game of your favorite team. It is a nail lighter. It's a close competition. The referees are making bad calls. You're cussing off the quarterback. Now don't do that. You guys are Baptists. No cussing at the TV, all right? But it's a close game. It's a fearful game. But your team wins with a last-second miraculous play. You celebrate. You recorded that on your TiVo. Or back in my day, the VHS tape. And you watch it later. But guess what? You're not so anxious. You're not so fearful. You're biting your nails. You know how the game turns out.

Hey, this life comes hard and fast. That's overwhelming to us. It exceeds our capacities. But we can always realize that God already knows the end. That God's return will set things right. Romans 8:28 is still in my copy of God's word. And I hope it's still in your's. This verse says that God works all things together for those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

Hey, when Christ comes, it'll be too late to get your prayer life right. Now's the time to do that. When Christ comes, it'll be too late to share your faith with a coworker, a friend, or a neighbor. Now is the time to do that. When Christ comes back, it'll be too late to get serious about the things of God, to start serving him and living for him. It'll be too late. Now is the time to wake up and be active about walking with the Lord.

**That takes us to point number two, it's time to walk.**

Verse 13 says, let us walk properly as in the day, not in revelry or drunkenness, not in lewdness, but in lust, not in strife and envy.

When the Bible talks about our walk, it's talking about our conduct. It's talking about our life that God expects us to walk differently because he saved us. Amen.

And the Christian life is a walk with the Lord. I remember as a kid taking walks with my grandma. My grandma and I walked the hills of Ohio and the hills of West Virginia, having conversations, holding hands, talking, and building relationship during the walk.

That's what the Christian life is. You say yes to God, you begin a walk with him at your salvation, and the rest of your life is walking with him, relating with him, talking with him, doing life with him. The question is, when you're walking with Jesus, are you inviting other people to walk with you? Amen. You want others to walk with you as you are walking with Jesus. That is the Christian life. Walk properly.

So, it reminds me of a man in the Old Testament named Enoch. You can read about him in the book of Genesis. However, not much is known about him, but it says this, Enoch walked with God, and he was not for God took him.

Not a bad testimony. We could be known by a lot of things, but there's no higher testimony to your life than someone to say about you than you walk with God. That you fellowship with God, that you are in a relationship with God, that you are pursuing the heart of God.

I love how an old preacher would illustrate Enoch and God's walking together. He said, every day they get up and they take a walk together. They would walk and they would talk, and they would be in communion, and they'd be in fellowship, and it was always beautiful. It was always sweet, and he always hated it when the walk had to come to an end, and he had to go back home. But the next day always came around and the walk continued. Well, one day they were walking along and it got dark, and Enoch said, well, it's getting late. I guess I better go back home. And God says, well, you know, we've had such fun walking together. We're closer to my house and yours, just come home with me. Amen. That's the way the Christian life should be.

We're walking with the Lord. And one day, whether it's our death or Christ's return, God's going to say, you're closer to my house than yours. Just come to my home with me because that should motivate us. If that doesn't light your fire, your spiritual wood is wet!

That should get you excited about the things of the Lord that we can walk with God, that he welcomes us into a walking and talking and relating relationship with him. He's not just a distant deity that holds us at arm's length. He wants to be a personal Savior, Lord, and friend in your life.

This verse says that when we walk, we should walk properly. That means that there are some things that we should do and some things we should not do.



Several years ago, there was a sports incident where a catcher named Sandy Alomar spit in the face of an umpire. I don't know if you remember that or not, but all the commentators and all the pundits, they would all at that time were just all over Sandy Alomar, and they would say that's not the right kind of behavior for a baseball player. That's not a way a baseball player should act. Don't spit in the umpire's face.

My friends are some things today as a Christian who you'll say that's not what a Christian does. That's out of bounds. That's a poor testimony. You shouldn't do that. And there are some things that Christians should do. There should be some things we're known for. There are some things we stand for because we love Jesus.

Now we're always worried and fearful. We don't want to ever add anything to God's word, but I'm not talking about legalism here. Legalism with someone else imposes something upon you, but when you impose something upon yourself, a high standard, that's wisdom. Amen. There are some things that you should not do. Some places you should not go. Some people you should not spend time with. Some thoughts you shouldn't allow in your mind. Some drinks you should not put in your mouth. There are some things you should do. Sometimes you should get into God.

The way you use your money. The way you lead your relationships. How you talk. There are some things that a Christian should do and shouldn't do. Are you walking with the Lord?

Back in 1960, during his presidential campaign, JFK said this. He'd often close his speeches with the story of Colonel Davenport, the Speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives.

One day in 1789, the sky of Hartford darkened ominously, and some of the representatives glancing out the window, feared to the end was at hand. Quelling a clamor for imminent adjournment, Davenport rose and said these words. The day of judgment is either approaching or it's not. If it's not, there's no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. Therefore, I wish that candles be brought.

Hey, I like what he said. Amen. There's a fear that the day of judgment is coming. Paul says the day of Christ's return is coming. It could be today. It could be 100 years from now. And Davenport said, if it's not today, we're going to stay about our work. And if Christ comes back today, I want him to find me busy with my work. Amen. Busy about serving him. Busy living for him.

Can you say that today?

**Number three is time to wear.**

Verse 12 says, therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light.

Verse 14 says, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lust. Putting on something. We're to take off the old nature and put on the new nature.

That happens at salvation. You've been given a new nature. You made a new creature the moment you were saved.

But for the rest of your life, it's not trying just to resist doing sinful things. It's replacing those with the beauties of Christ. Amen.

Where Jesus comes in and takes up the rightful place on the throne of your life, and now your life is a great big thank you letter back to God. Amen. You're not obeying God and serving God and working for God so that he will love you. But because he loves you.

Ray Steadman said it this way. When I get up in the morning, I put on my clothes, intending them to be part of me all day long, to go where I go and do what I do. They cover me and make me presentable to others. That is the purpose of clothes. In the same way, the apostle is saying to us, put on Jesus when you get up in the morning. Make him a part of your life that day. Intend that he go with you everywhere you go. He acts through you and everything you do. Call upon his resources. Live your life for Christ.

Hey, I wonder if that would change anything for you. Would you act differently? Would you speak differently? Would you go to the same places? Would you look at the same things on your computer? Would you put the same things in your mouth or your lungs? Would you choose the same friendships if you really believed and understood that Jesus was with you everywhere you go? That you have put on Christ and wherever you go, you carry Christ with you.

Friends, that should have a practical impact on your choices in life. We need to take off the old night clothes of sin and put on the day clothes of righteousness. It says here that it is an armor of light.

It doesn't say a jacket, doesn't say a sweater, doesn't say a suit. It says armor of light. It's a reminder that the Christian life is spiritual warfare. Amen. When you enter a relationship with Christ, you raise the white flag of surrender to God. You are declaring war on the devil.

When you declare war on the devil, I guarantee you he does not give up his claimed territory easily. He will fight you tooth and nail. He will have a bigger target upon you because you name the claim of Christ. The devil knows he cannot hurt God the Father because he can't get to God the Father. He's going to go after his children. Amen. He's going to go after you. Don't be surprised by that. The Christian life is more Omaha Beach than Miami Beach.

All right. That's what I call the armor of light, the armor of truth, the armor of God. We've got to be clothed in Jesus, wrap him around us, allow him to be our shield and our vindicator, and allow him to be our protector and our defender. We learn about that in Ephesians chapter 6, that great armor of God chapter. Put these pieces of armor on and they're all gifts and they're all armaments given by Jesus himself.

Let me give you one last quote from Amos in the Old Testament. I'd ask you to turn there, but if I did, plumes of dust would come up because it has been such a long time since you have had your Bible open to that OT book.

Amos 4:12 says this, prepare to meet your God.

Well, we need to hear that message. It needs to be proclaimed with holy boldness today as it was in Amos's day to the nation of Israel. Paul was giving that claim to the Romans 2000 years ago and your preacher is giving it to you today. Prepare to meet your God, Christian.

Be awake, be active, be intentional. Don't be passive. Don't be lazy.

Be about the things of the Lord. Again, this has been a charge to believers, but this is also a warning and a wake-up call for those who are not yet believers. If you're sitting here today and you do not yet have a personal saving relationship with Jesus Christ, may this serve as a wake-up call to you!

The Bible is clear. There's a heaven, there's a hell, and there's a hurry.

The Bible says that apart from Christ, we are all sinners under the rightful judgment of God, and that we are missing out on God's plans and purposes for our lives. And if we end this life in that spiritual condition, we go to a very real place called hell. Friends, if that doesn't wake you up, nothing will.

It's a wake-up call today. If you're living your life, whether you're actively rebelling against God or just passively indifferent to Him, it's time to wake up by faith, receive Jesus as your Savior, and begin to live for Him as your Lord.

The gospel is that Jesus lived a perfect life. He died for us. He was buried and rose again to show His dominance over sin and sorrow and death, and He did that for us so that we could have our sins forgiven and be made right with the Holy God. He then ascended back into heaven, and He is there right now praying for us, praying for you.

He's praying if you're not a follower of Jesus today, that you'll become one today. He's praying that if you are a follower of Jesus, He's praying that you'll be a sold-out, committed, fully on board, totally committed, and devoted follower of Him. He doesn't want to share your loyalty with anything else.

He wants to be not just a place of prominence in your life, but the place of preeminence, the center and the circumference of all that you are. If that's not you today, this is the time to take your next step.