

**Living Pure Lives**  
**Romans 13:11-14 (ESV)**

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Every time we get together and we hear God speak, we have opportunity to receive God's grace. It doesn't just happen because we are together, but when we come in faith, eager to hear what God has to say, God meets us and He gives us grace; strength that we need, to help us. And so today, we're going to be looking at Romans 13:11-14. We're in this series entitled *Radical Worship*.

*11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*

May God encourage us today!

As we mentioned, we're in this series entitled *Radical Worship*. We've been tracking through the logical consequences that Paul draws from a people who have said "Yes. We desire to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God." So we've discussed that that devotion to the Lord leads us to use our spiritual gifts in ministry in the church. It leads us to love one another in God's family. It leads us to not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. It leads us to commit ourselves to good citizenship in this world and that we have a value outside of the walls of the church. It leads us to love our neighbor. And today, the focus is going to be that our devotion to God leads us to live pure lives. And I trust that God will work in this to instruct us, to convict us, and to move us to deeper transformation into the likeness of Jesus.

When I was a little boy, my cousin Kevin was one of my very best friends. He was only one of two cousins that were my age. And he was the only one that lived close to me. So we often played games together. We wrestled. We read books. We swung on swing sets together. Shortly after celebrating my brother's birthday, however, my cousin fell ill and he went into the hospital. He had contracted a disease that had a funny name, named hepatitis. So we as a family prayed for Kevin, but I wasn't too worried. After all, everything turns out. At least in my five year old mind, that's the way things happened. But not long after Kevin went to the hospital, my mom and dad told me that Kevin had died, that he was now with Jesus. It was a time of deep sorrow. It still is, in thinking about it, to me, to his parents, to his brother and sister. And yet, this sorrowful trial strengthened this new faith that God had placed in my soul, this faith in the Gospel, this faith in the resurrection. I thought more deeply and more clearly about heaven than I ever had up to that point in my very young life.

Of course, one of the questions that was discussed after Kevin's funeral was, "How did a little boy that was very healthy, contract a disease like hepatitis?" There was really never a clear answer as to how a virus that was outside in this world entered into his body. But somehow, by some means, there were germs that were floating around in this broken world that had been outside of Kevin, and then at some point, entered into him. And once they did, they accomplished this deadly work.

I share this story as a physical analogy to a spiritual truth that God teaches us right here in Romans 13. This world is full of spiritual viruses, viruses that are deadly. This world is more full of spiritual viruses than it is of biological ones. And this Book is filled with warnings. It tells us that the world in which we live is filled with sin. Satan, a real being, is constantly at work in his sin virus factory, pumping deadly spiritual germs into every place that we live, every surface that we touch, every bit of air that we breathe. And furthermore, every human heart, every one of us has been contaminated. That which was outside of us came into us. By nature, as a result of Adam's sin, we are born contaminated and then we continue to breathe in more and more of this deadly disease into us. And each one of us then acts as a carrier for the sin virus, continuing to affect others.

No one is free from this deadly disease, and it's much, much worse than any physical disease. Because while a virus like hepatitis can kill the body, this virus of sin kills our soul. And this virus has a 100% fatality rate. There's not one person that survives it, left to themselves. Thankfully, and this is the good news. This is why the Gospel is called "good news." God has provided His Son, Jesus, as a full-proof Healer, one who would completely make us well and then protect us after He makes us well, so that we're not re-infected.

Paul uses the first 8 chapters of this great letter to this church in Rome to describe the work of Christ to us. As people who are contaminated with this disease, when we come to Christ in faith, Christ makes us whole. He takes that which is diseased and He fills us with health and He fills us with strength. He takes His perfect life, His healthy life, His strong life, and He imputes it. He places it inside of us so that we now are free from the death that that disease otherwise would definitely bring to our lives. And we're also free from the enslavement, of living a life that is unhealthy, from here all the way up into eternity.

Once we are united to Jesus Christ, we are forever free from the fear of sin or fear of death. And we have a secure hope for heaven. And yet we acknowledge, and Paul does in this letter, that sin viruses still thrive in this world and they still threaten us even as people who have been united to Christ, even as people who have come to the great Healer and been healed. We can't go around careless in this world, a world that is filled with contaminants, filled with devastating viruses. So Paul tells us that we must not become sleepy-eyed. We must be fully alert to the dangers, to the threats of spiritual devastation in our lives. And that's what Romans 13:11-14 is all about. It's a call from God for us to live pure, whole, healthy, strong lives; to live that kind of life in a very contaminated world.

Jesus offers grace every day for us to live such healthy, pure lives. Though the world is polluted, our heart does not have to be. God, in His Gospel, has provided a vaccine that guarantees the destruction of this disease. And yet it's not sort of a vaccine that we take once and then we move on from there with no need for more help, more medicine. Rather, God says as long as we live in this world, we need daily doses of His grace so that we can continue to live disease-free. So we continue to live free from the fear of death.

So the main idea that we receive from this incredible paragraph of Scripture is that our radical worship of God leads us to live pure lives through the power of God's Spirit. It actually changes how we behave. It changes our relationship with the world. It changes our relationship with sin. And it brings us into a wholeness, into a health, into a strength. So we're going to learn about the grace that God provides for us in this passage, grace that enables us to live pure lives. And as we look at these verses bit by bit, we're going to discover five principles that God gives us to live a life that is uncontaminated, that is free from disease, that is unstained by this world, by sin itself. To live healthy, pure lives we must...

### **1. Understand the hour in which we live.**

So this is the call of the Apostle Paul that if we mistake the time in which we live, we will become vulnerable to the diseases that are around us, the disease of sin itself. So this is what Paul says in verses 11 and 12.

*11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand.*

He says, "You understand the times in which you live. You know it!" So Paul says the hour has come. Now is this time. The hour has come for us to wake from sleep.

When I was a freshman in high school, I went from a grade school that was only a half mile away, and that I walked to every morning, to a high school that was six miles away. So a bus would come to pick us up. And that bus would come actually right to my mailbox. And I could hear it rumbling down the street as it was shifting gears and braking. Our house was kind of on a Y on the street, and it would pull in to the right part of the Y. It would stop, and you'd hear the brakes. And then it would back up into this other part of the Y. Then it would pull forward and would stop right at our mailbox. This was a beautiful thing for me, especially in the winter months. Everyone else had to gather there around the mailbox. If the bus was late, they just had to stand out there for ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes in the cold, while I got to look out my window in the nice warmth. We occasionally would offer people an opportunity to come in and get warm. But it was a sweet thing to have it right at your door.

So as a teenager, I loved my sleep and I didn't want to waste any time that could be sleeping, in some other activity. And so I'd often go to bed pretty late and then the time would come. It was 7:10 when the bus would typically come to the mailbox, and I'd have to be out there. And so gradually, over my freshman year, I began to realize, "Well, I don't need this much time. I think I can do it in this." And then I would say, "I don't even think I need that much time. I can do it in this." And it kept getting pinched until I had this down to such an extent that I could wait until I heard the bus coming down the street. (Laughter!) And that moment I'd know that I have no more time. If I don't do it now, I'm going to miss the bus and have to walk six miles. And so I'd flash out of bed. I'd put my clothes on a chair right near my bed. I'd throw my clothes on. I'd run to the bathroom. I'd dunk my head under some water, comb my hair, grab my books, and then out. And by the time it had pulled around and the other people got on the bus, I was able to fly onto the bus just at the last minute. My sister and brothers were all amazed at this gift that I had. (Laughter!) But I knew that that was the moment. If I waited five more seconds, then I wasn't going to make the bus at that point. It was now!

What the Apostle Paul is saying when he says "the hour is come," he's saying this is urgent! You don't have five more seconds to wait. You have to wake up and you have to wake up right now! The principle that Paul is teaching us is if you snooze, you lose. And you lose big time!

This was a little phrase that some college friends of mine and I would say to each other. We'd specifically say it in reference to asking out girls that we were interested in, on a date. And especially, Moody had this banquet every year and so you wanted to try and go to the banquet. You had to ask somebody to the banquet. We were all really shy and it was scary to ask a girl out. But we would set our eyes on a specific person and invariably we'd wait. "Maybe tomorrow I'll do that or maybe the next day." And then somebody else would ask the girl that we wanted to ask, and then it was too late. And we would say, "If you snooze, you lose." You have one opportunity and if you don't take that opportunity when it presents itself, you might never ever have that opportunity at all.

Now, what is at stake here in Romans 13 is much, much, much, much, much more serious than the loss of a date. What is at stake here is our eternal joy. And if we snooze as God is telling us to wake up, then we lose. So we ask: What is the hour? Why has it arrived right now? Paul explains. Here's the reason.

*11...For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand.*

Paul is pointing us to the day when Jesus returns to the earth as He promised, in power and glory. Paul is not referencing the salvation that brought justification, the salvation that brought forgiveness, the salvation that secured a home in heaven. That salvation has already taken place. He's talking to people in the church who have trusted in Jesus Christ. So what kind of salvation is the Apostle Paul referencing if he is not referencing that initial act of salvation, of justification? Paul is referencing that final stage of our salvation. It is our glorification. It is our perfection. It is when we are fully transformed

into the image of Jesus. Jesus says that when He returns we're going to see Him and we will be instantly transformed. At that point, we will have no more opportunity to worship God in a world in which we're tempted to not worship Him. That day of our future glory is right at hand. Jesus could return at any moment and complete His work. So Paul is saying now is the hour. Do not sleep one moment longer! Use the time, whatever time you have, to prepare for Jesus' return. This is the way John would say it. John teaches the exact same truth.

**1 John 3:2-3** Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

God has a future work of salvation in every one of us. When He appears, we'll be transformed. This is the work that God is ultimately going to complete. Seeing God's glory in such a pure, unfiltered sense will have an impact upon us. It will be an impact of glory itself.

John is making the same point that when we have an eagerness, an expectation, a readiness for Jesus' return, everyone who has this hope that is yet future, right now they live differently as a result of that hope. They say, "Now is not the time to horse around with sin. Now is the time for us to receive all the sanctifying work that God is offering to do inside our soul so that on that day, we don't need to be ashamed about how we worship God or how we failed to worship Him." Our hope is our eager expectation of Jesus' next action on this earth. And that action is His return and the completion of this work of salvation in our lives.

And we ask the question: When will this happen? We don't have a date, but what Paul says is absolutely true. The day is at hand. We should expect it without delay. We should be hearing the bus rumbling down the street right now. Yes, the bus isn't at the mailbox, but it's approaching. We should know it's going to happen and have that expectation that now is the time to rouse ourselves, to waken up from our sleep.

*11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand.*

God hasn't left us in the dark about the time in which we live. The hour has come! It is right now! The moment has arrived for you to wake from sleep! The dawning of this new age is right at hand. So do not waste any more time. Here's the application. Let us live our lives with the conscious expectation of Jesus' return and of our future perfection. This has a sanctifying effect. If we live this way, it'll help us to resist sin, to be immune to sin's power to seduce us and to draw us away.

The great American theologian, Jonathan Edwards, perhaps the greatest theologian that the United States has ever produced, made a habit every morning to dwell on heaven and that theme of heaven, for 20 minutes. Every morning! He says, "I want to think about that

day. I want to think about the Lord's return. I want to think about what my life will be then." And he did so because he recognized that thinking about that future day and thinking about the hastening of that future day changed the way he thought about this present world that is passing away. It changed the way he lived. It changed the way he behaved. He wanted to live life right now with a view that that future day is present, so that he would have the most joy, the most gladness in that future day for how he worshiped God in this age, an age that is filled with the contaminants of sin.

Paul referenced the importance of "hope" earlier in this letter.

**Romans 5:2** ...we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

**Romans 12:12** Rejoice in hope...

In other words, think often about the second coming of Christ. Think often about what will happen and about the glorification you will receive. Rejoice in that as though it's already here because it's certain to be here. God promised it to be so. Understand the hour in which we live. It's vital for us to understand the time in God's kingdom program in order for us to live pure lives.

## **2. Awaken from spiritual sleep.**

*11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand.*

Wake up! Wake up! Wake up, O church!

What does it mean to wake from sleep? Clearly, Paul is concerned that some believers in the church are sleeping spiritually and that they need to rouse themselves. If they don't arouse themselves, they'll be caught at this time of Jesus' return, sleeping. And that would be disastrous! "Sleep" describes the Christian who is passive, who is uninvolved in the mission of Christ and His church, who is indifferent really, to the things of God, who is unfazed by sins that enter into his or her soul. "Sleep" describes the believer who lacks any earnestness, any zeal, any enthusiasm, any passion, any resolve to live for Christ. In order to understand what it means to be asleep spiritually, we look at some examples that God gives us in Scripture of people who slept. And these are physical examples again, pointing to a spiritual problem.

The first person I think about is Samson. Do you remember Samson? He was disobedient to God, yet God was using him as a judge of Israel. But he joins up with Delilah and he falls asleep in her lap. While he is asleep in her lap, of course Delilah has conspired with the enemies of Samson. They come in and cut off his hair. And he doesn't even know it when he awakens, that he has lost his power. He has lost the blessing of God upon his life. Spiritual sleep sometimes means that we compromise God's calling upon our life to enjoy the pleasures of sin. There's only one reason why Samson is asleep in Delilah's

lap. And that's because he loved Delilah's pleasures. That's it! And he lost his sense of his calling, his purpose, the whole meaning of his life. He was spiritually asleep.

I think also of Jonah. Remember, Jonah was given the call to go to Nineveh and he decides to get in a boat and go the opposite direction, fleeing from the presence of God. And even in the midst of a storm, he is found asleep in the middle of that ship. It was a sleep of disobedience, a sleep of defiance, a sleep of rebellion. Spiritual sleep sometimes means that we have grown hardened to God, resistant to Him, wanting really nothing to do with Him. And we are totally unconcerned about our disobedience. "Surely nothing bad is going to happen to me as I flee from God. In fact, I think that's the place where I'll find my joy in life." It's a spiritual sleep.

And then I think of the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was the hour in which Satan was most active throughout the history of the world. And Jesus told His disciples that. Three times He went to His disciples and He said, "Watch and pray with me." Three times! And each time, Jesus went back and He found His disciples asleep instead of praying. And He told them, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." And each time, they didn't sense that this night was anything really more dangerous, that there was any real threat to them other than that it was ordinary in the Garden. It just seemed to them like another night. They were unaware of the hour even though Jesus had told them of this hour of darkness. So they were asleep through it. Spiritual sleep sometimes means that we are unconcerned about the danger that Satan poses to our lives and thus we open ourselves to his assault.

And finally, I think of the ten virgins in Jesus' parable. They were all sleeping when the bridegroom came, but five of them prepared for their sleep. Five of them were foolish. They thought, "Oh, there will surely be some time for me to catch the bus after we wake up, for me to get the oil." And so they woke up. The Bridegroom said, "We're going to go to the marriage feast right now." They said, "Wait a minute! We don't have oil." There's no time to get some oil now. And they go to the other five. "Could you lend us...?" "No, we only have enough for ourselves." And so they completely missed out on all the joy of the marriage feast. They missed out on that privilege. It's terrible what their sleep did to them! Spiritual sleep sometimes means that we think we have ample time to get serious about our worship of God. "I know there's going to be another time tomorrow, next week, next month, next year. I'll be able to really focus on my worship of God at some other time, after this takes place." And so we don't use the time that God gives to us, the present, to prepare for Jesus' arrival. So He arrives at a time we don't expect and we miss out on His blessing.

So we have to ask the question: Am I spiritually sleeping? Am I compromising my worship of God by continuing to enjoy some passing pleasure of sin? Am I like Samson? Is my conscience hardened to some specific act of disobedience, some specific willfulness in which I'm resenting God and moving away from Him and have grown comfortable with that rebellion? Am I like Jonah? Am I careless about Satan's prowling? Am I unaware that he is like a lion and he wants to devour me? He just wants to tear me to pieces and eat me up, destroy my life. Am I like the disciples in the Garden? Am I

believing that there will be some time in the future when I'll be able to make right with God, that I'll be able to enter into that blessing of salvation? I know I want God and I know I don't want to live life completely without Him, but right now is just not the time. There's too many other things happening that I want to experience.

If any of these things are true, it's time to wake up! And we need to be decisive about that. We need to say, "I'm not going to hit the Snooze button one more time. Today is the day. Now is the time. I will become fully alert to the eternal. Today is the day that I'm going to connect every part of my life as a spiritual act of worship to God." So if we want to live pure lives, we have to understand the hour in which we live, we have to awaken from spiritual sleep and then we must

### **3. Get dressed for a major fight.**

*12...So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

It's the analogy of taking some clothes off and putting other clothes on. You are entering into a fight! If you want to live pure lives, it's not going to be easy. You're not just going to float into that kind of life. You're going to have to fight for it. It's going to be a battle.

When we wake up in the morning, one of the actions we typically take to get ready for our day is we take off our pajamas and put on our day clothes. Some people, on the days that they have completely free, they don't have to go into work, they don't have any responsibilities, they say, "I just want to sit in my pajamas a little longer." And so they stay in their pajamas. They get that second cup of coffee. They have that book. They listen to some music. There's nothing wrong with that in order to sort of de-stress in our life. But what God is saying here spiritually is that we must not let that happen. Yes, it's much more comfortable to stay in the pajamas. Yes, it even feels good to do that. But don't do that! Get dressed. There's a battle right now. There's an enemy that is coming in against your church. There's an enemy coming in against your life. Armor up! Get the clothes on that you need to succeed in the midst of that kind of battle. It's a call to conscious, decisive action regarding the clothes that we wear today.

Paul uses this idea of clothes to talk about some commitments, some behaviors. It's a mindset that we have. He's going to specifically identify some of these works of darkness that we need to cast off. He's going to call them carousing, and drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, sensuality, quarreling and strife. He's going to say it's not enough to just sort of generally wake up, but we have to specifically take off some specific clothes that are weighing us down and that will keep us from fighting the good fight. You have to take these clothes off. They're just like lead weights. You're not going to be able to overcome this enemy that wants to attack you with sin and with alienation and separation from God and separation from your purpose. You have to take those clothes off and put on these garments that are fit for warfare. Put on the armor of light.

The principle is that many people will wake up too late to do anything about the Day of Judgment, when we stand before God to give an account of our lives. So it's vital for us

to wake up! And it's vital that once we do wake up, we begin to take some conscious action. And one of those issues of conscious action is to put on this thing called the armor of light.

That word "armor" is elsewhere translated "weapons." So put on the weapons of light. There's a kingdom of darkness. It's the kingdom in which we are born into. But when we connected our life to Jesus, He delivered us out of this kingdom of darkness and He placed us in the kingdom of light. The Father placed us in the kingdom of His very own Son. And so now we're citizens over here. This kingdom is an enemy of the kingdom of light and it's going to place it under siege. It's going to attack it constantly from enemies both outside the church, as well as enemies inside the church. And here's what Paul is saying. He's saying what John Owen said after Paul when John Owen said we must "be killing sin, or sin will be killing you."

So we have to prepare to kill sin, to do battle. It's a great struggle to kill sin. But if we don't prepare with this armor, with these weapons of warfare that God has provided for us, then sin will be killing us. We can't escape the battle. Sin takes the battle to us and either we will be victorious in that battle or we will be conquered in that battle. But be dressed like a soldier so that you can win through Christ, who strengthens us. Here's what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10. He uses the same word "armor" here when he writes this.

**2 Corinthians 10:3-6** For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

It's not a physical fight. That word "weapons" is the same word that Paul uses that is translated "armor of light." God has given us in this armor, in this weaponry, everything we need to succeed; everything we need to win the battle. So if we lose the battle, it's not because we weren't equipped by God. If we lose the battle, it's because we failed to receive by faith the equipment that God had provided. The primary purpose of this enemy is to attack the knowledge of God, the glory of God, the goodness of God.

So what are these weapons? What is this armor? It's the Gospel. The Gospel is the weaponry that is divinely powerful for the tearing down of strongholds. It tears apart false doctrine. It tears apart sins that would seek to woo us and to seduce us away from God. To put on the armor of light simply means that we adorn ourselves every day with God's Gospel. The Gospel that represents God's grace, the Gospel that communicates God's love, the Gospel that communicates God's righteousness, God's truth, God's peace, His reconciliation, His joy, indeed, the Gospel that reveals God's very glory. So understand the hour in which we live. Awaken from our spiritual slumber. Get dressed. Get ready for a fight. It's coming! You can't escape it. So get ready.

**4. Behave consistently as one who has already chosen sides.**

We're not torn between whether we want to be members of this kingdom or that kingdom. We've already said we are a people united to Christ by faith. Now we're in the kingdom of light. We're adopted into God's family. And that kingdom now is our enemy. We want nothing to do with it. We don't want to aid it. We don't want to strengthen it. We don't want to participate in it. We recognize that it's going to come to attack us in the kingdom of light. We want to be ready to defend this kingdom, a kingdom filled with righteousness, peace, love and truth. And a major part of our defense is our behavior. It's conscious decisions regarding what we decide to do or not do. So here's what Paul says.

*13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.*

Live your life as though you're living in the light of God Himself. And then he gives three negations, three sets of negations. So as people who have already decided who we're going to live for, we now must make decisions about daily behaviors. It's not just this big "present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God." It's not just that general call. Now it gets down to very specific decisions, choices we make that either place us over here in this kingdom of darkness and strengthening that kingdom, or place us squarely in the kingdom of light where we enjoy who God is. We enjoy His glory and enjoy His goodness and grace and His fellowship.

We cannot live in devotion to God without changing our behavior! And that's a message I believe that believers need to hear today because there are many times when people fool themselves. They deceive themselves into thinking "I can be committed to God. But over here, I do this, but God forgives me. And then I do that, and I know that's not right, but God forgives me." And Paul is saying, No! You will be destroyed by the enemy if you think that way. You have to put off these specific behaviors. Devotion to God is primarily a connection to Jesus that is real and that is life-altering. It changes our behaviors. It changes our mindset so that we want to live in ways that we reflect who Jesus is, not who this kingdom of darkness is. We desire to live and behave in ways that reflect Jesus' love, Jesus' goodness, Jesus' joy, Jesus' peace, Jesus' hope, His righteousness, His holiness, His obedience to the Father, His generosity of spirit, His humility and His patience.

There are three categories of behaviors that Paul specifically identifies. He says we have to put these things off. Cast these things off. Wherever we're tempted, we have to cast these things off.

Category #1: A social life of sinful indulgence.

It's the orgies, the carousing and the drunkenness. Those words describe a life whose relationships and whose friendships are not controlled by the Spirit. These relationships revolve around what this kingdom, the kingdom of darkness, says is exciting, is fun, is meaningful. This describes a social life that is dependent upon something other than God in order to bind friendships together, in order to bind purpose and meaning of those friendships together. So Paul says don't have anything to do with that. Cast that off. If

you evaluate your life and say, “There’s a lot of my social relationships that are bound up in the kind of parties and the social events that reflect the kingdom of this world, you have to cast that off.” You might say, “If I do that, I’ll lose some good friends.” Well, you might. You might actually win them to Christ, though. But if it means that you have to lose friendships because those friends are only friends with you as long as you participate in these activities and these events, you have to cast those events off. And it might destroy some friendships, but that’s the call of Jesus. Jesus is the one who does separate among family and friendships because He is the source of life.

Category #2: A sexual life of sinful pleasures.

“Sexual promiscuity and sensuality” describes a life whose sexual expression follows the body’s cravings. Sensuality and sexual promiscuity describe sexual activity between boyfriends and girlfriends outside the covenant of marriage. Sensuality and sexual promiscuity describes the viewing of pornography. These describe homosexual behaviors. These describe online or texting conversations that are sexual in nature. These describe watching movies that are filled with images that excite lustful passions. These describe reading books that are filled with descriptions that excite sexual lusts. And we have to ask ourselves the question: Am I opening my heart to sensuality and sexual promiscuity? And what God’s Word says is, cast these off! Take care of them now, once and for all. Have nothing to do with any of those things.

Category #3: A self-centered life of unnecessary conflict.

“Quarreling and jealousy” describe a life that is not dominated by love and forgiveness, but rather is dominated by our own expectations that we place upon others that others would submit to our expectations and serve us. Such a self-centered life holds on to grudges. It nurses resentments. It feeds bitterness. God says, “Cast off these attitudes and behaviors that keep you from being whole in your relationships with one another in the church.” It causes fracturing of these relationships. Cast off attitudes that keep you from loving like Jesus loves. So we have to ask ourselves: Am I acting in ways that fuel strife between me and any other person? And again, our flesh gives all kinds of justifications and rationalizations. But God says to all of that, cast it off. There is no justification. And if you live that way, you live outside of purity, of a life that pleases God. You won’t be ready for the hour when Jesus returns. Let us walk properly as in the day! Let us take care how we behave.

## **5. Depend consciously and constantly upon Jesus Christ.**

*14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*

This is sort of the capstone of the whole paragraph. It’s not about just self-improvement. It’s about leaning deeply into Christ, about fellowshiping with Him, about drawing life from Him, about being joined to Him in a constant, daily, life-nourishing way.

Our transformation doesn't depend upon our own inner strength to make something different of ourselves, to live the best version of me. That's not what the Gospel calls us to. The Gospel doesn't call us to live the best version of me. That would be terrible! The Gospel calls me to live according to the likeness of Jesus. Now that's something really great! How can I do that? I don't have any power in myself to do that. But Jesus offers Himself. He offers to connect with us in a transforming union. Our union with Jesus enables us to be free of enslavement to our own sins, our own passions, our own lusts, our own self, so that we indeed, have the power to cast off these deeds of darkness and so that then we have the power to walk properly as in the day.

Well, how do I do this practically? There are just two commands here that we observe. There are two calls to action.

### 1. Put on Christ.

It means we depend upon Jesus daily, moment-by-moment, to give us grace to live the lives that reflect His Person. Jesus, in John 15 is saying we're like branches that are connecting to a vine. And if we connect in a vital union, in a way that we're constantly drawing grace, constantly drawing strength from Jesus, that's what He offers to be for us. If we do that and join ourselves like branches of a vine, then we bear much fruit. So put on the Lord Jesus. Make Jesus the very center of your day, not just of your Sunday morning, but every day. We cannot live like Jesus without vital union to Jesus. That's the principle.

### 2. Make no provision for the flesh to gratify its lusts.

Separate yourself completely from the life of the flesh. Our flesh says "feed me" every moment of every day. The only way to defeat the flesh that is so powerful, is through our union with Jesus and through a conscious negation of any provision to feed it. Our flesh says, "It doesn't hurt to be tempted. It's okay to walk in that sphere where you're tempted." God says, "No! You do that, and you'll be stepping into a current so strong that you'll be swooped down the falls to your death." Don't step in that current. Make no provision whatsoever to the flesh.

Practically, what does this mean? To the person whose heart is filled with bitterness, it means refusing to rehearse any part of the wrongs that we suffered in our minds and our hearts. "I'm not going to go there. I'm not going to think about that. I'm not going to make any provision for my flesh, to feed bitterness.

To the person who succumbs to the sensuality of pornography, it means cutting off the internet completely. It means ridding ourselves of any devices in which we have access. It means cutting off cable television.

To the person in adultery, it means no more communication whatsoever with that person who we are connecting with in a sexually immoral way.

To the person in materialism, it means cutting up the credit cards.

To the person in gluttony, it means “I’m not going to buy any more food and stock it up in my refrigerator, that is unhealthy, that would contribute to this loss of control.”

To the person who loves participating in carousing parties, who loves being there...”I just want to go. I’m not going to participate. After all, somebody’s gotta be the designated driver.” It means as soon as you get that invitation, toss it in the trash. “I’m not even going to think about going there because I know my flesh and I’m not going to make any provision for it.”

To the alcoholic, it means “I’m not going to go into places where there’s alcohol. I’m not going to have it in my home, in my car, any place it’s easily accessible. I’m not going to keep it for an emergency. I’m going to cut it off completely.”

To the engaged couple who are sexually sinning with each other, it means “We’re going to move out. We’re not going to live together anymore. We’re not going to try to be pure while we’re living in the same apartment together. In fact, even more than that, we’re not going to spend any time alone where opportunity to sin abounds. We just can’t trust ourselves. And this issue of living righteously, of living right before the Lord and pleasing to the Lord is too important to us.”

You might say, “Gee, Pastor. Those examples sound kind of radical.” And yes, they are! But eternity is at stake! Listen to Jesus’ words.

**Mark 9:43-47** And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,

This is Jesus; gentle Jesus, loving Jesus. He’s giving us a warning about unquenchable fire. He’s using a metaphor to say, “Make no provision for your flesh.” Don’t give it any room to grow. Our radical worship of God leads us to live pure lives through the power of God’s Spirit. In this way, we find life. In this way we find joy in God forever.

Do you hear that? The bus is rumbling down the street right now toward our house. There’s no more time to wait! Church, let’s wake up for the glory of God!