

**Romans 13:11-14** And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

### **It is a wonderful time**

So the radio told me the other day that this is the most wonderful time of the year. Why is this the most wonderful time of the year? Because Christmas is coming of course. The excitement and anticipation of that day and the activities and celebrations to get ready make the cold and darkness seem festive. But if this is the most wonderful time of the year, why is it the most painful time of the year? Far more suicides happen during December and depression and loneliness and pain are abundant. Well for us the answer is obvious? When Christmas is made only a shallow thing about lights and food and family and you have no family or your family is not full of love but hate or even if your family has much affection but is being torn apart by the cold hands of death, as will happen to all eventually, then suddenly you can see beyond all the tinsel and glimpse that the whole thing is cold and empty. Which is why so many people are depressed and try to ignore, not think

about and sleep through the whole season.

Now for us as Christians, the outward trappings - Christmas trees and lights, retain their joy because their deeper significance in the Christ child remains. Oh yes, because of our sinful nature we can get so caught up in the trappings and in worldly things that we can forget the real significance of Christmas and end up frazzled, but then we are reminded that Christ was born for us whether we got all the cooking we wanted done or not, whether time with family was great or not, whether we got an amazing earthly present or not, whether we had a good Christmas or not. We all did get an out of this world present. Thus the time leading up to Christmas is a wonderful time even when it is dark and cold and alone. I have never heard a believer talk about wanting to sleep through or skip Christmas. January, yeah all the time. I have wished that. But December, no.

Well imagine something for me. Imagine that we didn't know when Christmas was coming. We just knew that it was coming sometime. That some morning we were going to wake up

with God declaring today is Christmas. Oh man and you can't wait for that day. You wake up every morning hoping that day is today. You are constantly preparing for Christmas as if tomorrow will be the day- making Christmas cookies, watering the tree, keeping the house clean for company, defrosting the Christmas goose.

Everyday you do these things and then the next day isn't Christmas. Tell me, would that get exhausting? To maintain that level of excitement and anticipation and joy? To maintain that level of readiness?

To our weak and sinful nature, it sure would. Day after day as Christmas didn't come, we would start to let things slide, maybe not check the water of the tree everyday, maybe let dirty dishes pile up in the sink. We start coasting through the day not really thinking about or preparing like tomorrow might be Christmas. This is exactly what Paul in our text is warning us against.

If you want to let dishes pile up in your sink -fine. You want to not have a Christmas tree in your house, fine. But drifting and coasting through life not really thinking about how tomorrow

might be Christmas - not fine. Paul exhorts himself and us to wake up and realize the time. Awake out of sleep for now our salvation is nearer than we first believed. Tomorrow, today may indeed be Christmas. Yes it could be a thousand years from now but Christmas also could be tomorrow. Not the one where Christ was born to this world but the one when He comes again as God and man to manifest our salvation, to bring us to the Christmas celebration and the victory feast of the lamb that will have no end.

Now as Christians we generally don't just drift and sleep through Christmas preparations. In fact, most of us have probably got a little tired trying to get ready at some time or another. But as Paul points out in our text, we as Christians do tend to drift and sleep through preparations for the world's second Christmas. Why? Because as I pointed out before, our weak and sinful nature finds it exhausting to maintain excitement and readiness that tomorrow could be the day Christ takes us to heaven and then weeks and months and years and decades and centuries pass and Christ hasn't come yet.

Also living with that kind of excitement and readiness of faith exposes us to all kinds of ridicule and persecution from the world. Displaying and sharing our faith that openly make the world laugh at you, and hate you, and persecute you and so the temptation is to hide your joy and readiness; to yield to temptation here and there that you might fit in better with the world. Let the dishes pile up in the sink and the tree go without water. And by that, I don't mean actual dishes or an actual tree. I mean letting your language get a little coarse and dirty just like the world's so they laugh with you instead of at you. I mean not seeing that your faith is well watered because you are too busy doing all the things the world does or not seeing that your faith is well watered with the Word lest the world thinks you weird. Thus we let our faith and hope and excitement sleep and slumber in the darkness of the world, the darkness our text talks about, a darkness that is composed of sin and ignorance of Christ and ignorance that Christ could come at any moment.

Awake to the joys of the season. Christmas, that is Christ,

could come at any moment. Don't be like a bear sleeping through the long dark cold months. Don't be a Christian letting your faith and hope hyphenate so you can more easily drift through the coldness and darkness of this world and age that is its sinful humanistic arrogance. Awake! Why? *Because our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.* <sup>12</sup> *The night is far spent, the day is at hand.*

This is a wonderful time. Yes, getting ready for the true Christmas that we might celebrate in spirit and in truth and be filled with eternal joy, but also getting ready for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Christmas when Christ comes again. It could be tomorrow. And if it is not, we are one day closer to it. It is our weak, sinful nature that grows exhausted being always ready and excited that Jesus could come tomorrow, today to take us from the cold sinful planet. Our new man put in us when we first believed however, is daily renewed by the Water of the Word in the joy of salvation, in anticipation of the things that will come. It never grow weary of being ready and excited. It is a Christmas tree that will not turn brown or drop its needles so long as it is watered.

Awake to the joys of the season. Christ came to this earth .  
God was born to Mary to bring peace to men on earth. Awake to  
the joys of the season. Jesus will come again in His flesh to this  
earth to bring us into eternal peace. Thus you can be filled with  
never ending excitement like a 5 year old waiting for Christmas  
day, for in our flesh we will see our Savior Jesus and all those who  
before us through faith in Christ have come to the house of the  
Lord. And we will be with the Lord forever for He has forgiven  
your sins. How our hearts yearn within us.

Awake to the these joys of the season. Not just the first  
Christmas but the 2<sup>nd</sup> which is coming. How? Put off the works of  
darkness and put on the armor of light. How do you do that? Our  
text explains that later - put on the Lord Jesus Christ. When we  
come to the Word to find in that manger God made man that  
through Jesus' humiliation we might be exalted, when we come to  
the Word to find there Jesus punished for my sin and hear Him  
say "it is finished" and thus know all of my sin were there  
punished and from their guilt I am free, when we come to the Word

and we see Christ coming again in power to raise all the dead and  
taking all that have believed in Him with Him into the new  
heavens and earth and His victory feast, then the works of darkness  
are put off and the lusts of our sinful flesh put away. Then we  
awake to the Joys of the season and we do not grow weary of  
waiting for Christ's advent but are ready and eager as Isaiah  
foretold long ago. **Isaiah 40:31** *But those who wait on the LORD Shall  
renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They  
shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.*

Tomorrow could be Christ's advent. He comes with greater  
gifts than this world can give. Awake, the day is at hand. Awake to  
the joys of the season. He comes. Our salvation is nearer than  
when we first believed.

4. O sweet and blessed country, The home of God's elect!  
O sweet and blessed country, That eager hearts expect!  
Jesus, in mercy bring us, To that dear land of rest,  
Who art, with God the , And Spirit, ever blest.

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