

11 And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. 14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Don't Hit Snooze!

I have this bad habit of hitting the snooze button and interrupting my sleep pattern. Science says that the more you snooze the more confused your body and mind get. Hitting the snooze tends to leave me more tired than if I would have been just gotten up in the first place. There are benefits to getting up earlier, such as more time to work, a sense of accomplishment, and even the added benefit of quiet time before the house turns into a ball of chaos from the kids. So why risk running late for another nine minutes of glorious sleep? It doesn't make much sense – but I love sleep and the long winter nights and cool weather are proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy.

But then Paul steps in telling us to, “Wake up. Don't hit the snooze!” And I'm not so sure I want to listen. He's not telling us, “You can't sleep in or enjoy sleep.” Paul uses sleep as a metaphor for reverting back to a lifestyle outside of Christ, of pulling the blanket of sin back over us, setting God aside for another 9 minutes.

Sometimes, we would rather honestly sleep. The obligations of life can be exhausting. We struggle with the tough decisions that have to be made and they often leave us with no desire to get out of bed. The same can happen in Christianity. With life calling for more of our time Sunday mornings may be the only day we find rest. There may even be moments where life would be easier if we could just set aside God's Word and hit snooze for a few moments.

Paul however warns, “You might not wake back up. Don’t hit snooze.” It’s not worth it. The night is almost over. Your king is adventing. He’s coming and you don’t want to be caught asleep. Our King comes at an unexpected time and in an unexpected way. Don’t hit snooze.

Paul prepares us, ¹¹ *And do this, understanding the present time: What is the, “This”? To what is Paul referring? If we jump back to the beginning of chapter 13 we’ll see the command to obey government and pay taxes. I’m not willing to go back that far, nor do I want another command to obey government. But in verses 8-10 Paul lays out the obligation to love according to the law – “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law...Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Do this! Show love to your neighbor as you understand what time it is. I suppose there always has to be that one person who gets up in the morning to make coffee but is sleep all he’s worried about? Paul writes ¹² *The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.*” It’s not one does while sleeping that is sinful. It’s what one does when they are awake and trying to hide under the cover of darkness. Paul mentions the deeds of the darkness. *“Carousing and drunkenness, sexual immorality and debauchery, dissension and jealousy.”*

Everything Paul lists goes against love for others. But there are excuses. It’s my body. It doesn’t matter what I do in private as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone else. Who cares if I go *carousing* or participate in *revelry* NIV 84 had *orgies* and KJV mentioned *rioting*? What all these terms have in common is that they fail to connect. I’m not quite sure what carousing and revelry is and I haven’t participated in orgies or rioting so I’m doing fine. I’m fulfilling the law of love, right? No - no one is righteous, not even one (Romans 3:10). If someone thinks they are fulfilling the law, they’re only fooling themselves. The law always accuses, always condemns.

The idea behind carousing is *excessive feasting* and just having celebrated Thanksgiving, I already feel foolish. This excessive feasting was a ritualistic drunken procession. That excessive feasting often led to excessive drinking (μέθη) which leads to the bed (κοίτη), and the problem isn't sleep but what you do when you're awake in bed. The sexual immorality is the lack of self-control that violates acceptable behavior leads to dissension, fighting, and jealousy.

But it doesn't hurt anyone else. We're just living together. We aren't doing anything. It's just a little porn. She's not a prostitute just a friend. You hit the snooze. Put Christianity on hold for another 5 minutes. These sins really do affect others. The children conceived out of wedlock, if they aren't killed, are raised without a father. A relationship outside of any commitment isn't only looking for what I can get. There are plenty of other selfish self serving sins out there that demonstrate I'm only interested in me and what I want. Too often we have not put off the deeds of darkness and but instead have cozied up to them and hit snooze for a few more minutes of sleep thinking all will be fine. But can you imagine what a king coming home would do upon finding his bride in bed with someone else?

That's why Paul warns, "Don't hit snooze." Your King comes. He comes to judge. He is coming soon.

Understand the present time. Jesus could come at any time. The signs have been fulfilled. The Christ has already come. The Holy Spirit had been poured out on all people at Pentecost. The Gospel had advanced throughout the world.

Now is not the time to head back to sleep. It's game time. That's why Paul was writing to the Romans. He had in mind to use them as a stopping point on his way west toward Spain. Paul was eager to do the work of the Lord wherever he could. He was the kind of guy who was up before the rooster crowed making coffee for the rest of us, ready to reach more for Jesus.

But Paul needed encouragement. He too needed to hear the same words he spoke to the Romans. That's why he includes himself when he

says, *“let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime.* and in Romans 7 where recounts his struggle with the snooze button. At which point he arrives at the conclusion, *“who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Paul knows he is awake only because Jesus knocked him off a horse headed to Damascus. Paul is awake and clothed in in Christ and in love for others he wants the same for them. Paul commands, *“Be clothed in the Lord Christ Jesus and do not give opportunity to gratify the desires of the flesh.”* Paul uses baptismal language. Galatians 3:27 – *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* Paul calls them back to their baptism. At baptism we are clothed in the robe of forgiveness. It is a gift that goes with us through our worst nights and darkest days and leads us to live for Christ and love others.

When we realize that the righteous robe we wear is not our own we live differently. When we see how God woke us up and dressed us in his robes, that he has personally prepared us for his return, forgiven and made ready then life is different. It's different in the same way that I don't walk into the garage after I put my suit on because I know I'll get dirty. When we remember the spotless robes of the one who lived and died for us we are less likely to go carousing or join in revelry. We have a Savior who didn't sleep in, who didn't participate in carousing, revelry, sexual immorality and debauchery - not so we can but to forgive us for the times that we have.

Now he tells us he is preparing a place for us and he will return to take us to be with him forever. He is coming, like a groom for his bride. The night is long. We are nearer now that when we first believed. The alarm is sounding. The dawn is about to break. Don't hit snooze. And as much as I hate to get out of bed there is a reason I love that alarm. It tells me, “It's time for coffee.” Like children looking forward to Christmas morning we look forward to salvation. Wake up not with coffee but with the words of forgiveness given in his body and blood at the Sacrament. Realize that alarm, those signs signal the start of a new day.

Until then, do this. Love. Put on Christ Jesus. Demonstrate a thankful heart. Don't be jealous. Don't be divisive. Get along with family these holidays. Maybe the feasting and drinking won't be excessive but it will still be fun.

And finally turn off the alarm clock and rest assured that you are forgiven and prepared for the unexpected Advent. You've been made ready by the one who suffered, died, and rose for you. He's clothed us in his righteousness at baptism. So can sleep well at night and even hit snooze in the morning. All this because his coming is unexpected. We don't get what we deserve instead we receive rest, robes of righteousness, and salvation. Amen.