

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson
Romans 13:1-14
"Christian Citizen and the Day"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Returning this morning for our Scripture reading to Romans chapter 13 and I want to read the entire chapter for our Scripture reading for today. Romans chapter 13, verse 1 through verse 14, and while you're finding Romans 13, remember that the apostle is now in that section of the Epistle to the Romans in which he is stressing the ethical issues of the doctrine of justification by faith, which he has expounded in the preceding chapters. And now the application of that teaching to the Christian citizen and his relationship to his government is the apostle's subject.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God and avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues or the things owed: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom (and this is a reference to something like our customs, regulations; custom is not that which is customary, but it's of an indirect form of tax), custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth one another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (The word fulfilling may be rendered fulfillment. Scholars that made it most recent technical commentary on Romans takes the authorized version rendering of fulfilling as being correct. I rather like the term fulfillment, but the difference is not great. And now in verse 11, he says), And do this (my text reads simply "And that," but the original text would support the rendering, I think), And do this knowing the time that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. 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. Let us walk honestly (or decently), as in the day; not in reviling and drunkenness, not in immorality and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

The subject for this morning in the exposition of the Epistle to the Romans is the "Christian Citizen and the Day." You will note that the title is taken from the expression that is given later on in the chapter when the apostle writes, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." If you have been a rather attentive reader of the 13th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, you will have noticed that there is something of a tension between the opening expression, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" and some of the words that are spoken near the end of the chapter, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," the apostle says. There is a bit of tension here and it's not surprising that many have commented upon it.

Occasionally in the messages in the Epistle to the Romans, I have cited from a commentary written by a Swiss pastor from the Reformed church in the city of Bern, Switzerland. Walter Luthi has written a very suggestive little book on Romans. It's a series of sermons that he gave to his congregation and in it I think are some excellent little things. He comments, as he begins this chapter, that there is this tension between the opening of it and the latter part of it, and it reminds him of the fact that when he travels in Switzerland between the little town of Adelboden and Frutigen that there is a house by the side of the road that has a sign painted on the side of its house, and the things that are painted on the house are these. They're in German, but the words that the person has painted on his house are "Time flies. The end is near. Soon the Lord shall appear. Hallelujah!"

But Mr. Luthi says, "The strange thing about it is that the house and the rhyme are newly painted." Evidently the owner is expecting the return of Christ and he is waiting for the end, and yet at the same time, and it seems inconsistent at first thought, he is keeping that house well painted and that sign itself well painted. But he said this is really in keeping with God's logic and it's just what the apostle means when he speaks of reasonable worship. The divine logic that paints a perishable house fresh, although the day is at hand becomes strikingly evident in the 13th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans where he tells us that we are to be subject to the higher powers. So then Mr. Luthi sums up his comments by saying, "To put it in a nutshell, we can say that the Apostle Paul might have lived in the house between Adelboden and Frutigen." That is, that in his theology it's perfectly all right to say, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," but to keep one's house in good condition.

Now the Lord Jesus told us that we were to occupy until he comes. That means that we are to live as if we are busy doing our work here and yet at the same time with the bright hope of the second coming.

Now I don't want to make any application. I am not intended to make any application to those who this past week sold their homes in the light of the fact that the second coming of Jesus Christ was supposed to take place. They weren't too sure of exactly when because they said the figures were a little difficult to marshal up. And so consequently, sometime between 12:00 midnight last Sunday night and 12:00 noon on Monday the Lord was scheduled to appear. Well, he didn't appear, and some sold their homes and others made other provisions for their departure to heaven. They are still with us. The apostle's teaching and the teaching of the New Testament is that we should have this hope and we should have it brightly before us, but at the same time we are to occupy till he comes.

Now there is a problem here and I think that we ought to notice it because the apostle has already said in chapter 12, verse 1, "Be not conformed to this age." Well how can we square "Be not conformed to this age" with "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers"? Does not that mean that we are conformed to this age? That's an important subject that affects every one of us almost everyday of our lives. We are the Lord's people. We have the hope of the second coming. He may come, but at the same time, we are responsible to occupy until he comes. What shall we do when the notice comes from the city of Dallas to the effect that our taxes are just about due and furthermore they're not only just about due, but they've been raised fifty percent this year.

What shall we do? Shall we go down and say well we're citizens of heaven? The apostle says our citizenship is in heaven from whence also we look for the Savior. I have no doubt in my mind that there have been many who've gone down and have sought to make that appeal. Shall a Christian vote? Are we really citizens of this society and therefore, should we vote? This question has been a rather serious question among many, many Christian bodies down through the years. Are Christians subject to the laws of the land? If we should have a selective service program, should our young men register in such a program? There are many who have not registered, who did not register. They did [not] so far as I know use this excuse, but I'm sure that some have. When April the 15th comes around shall we really pay up because we're citizens of heaven and not citizens of the United States of America? Can we say to the IRS, we've come to Mount Zion? The city of the living God? To the heavenly Jerusalem? Where the angels and the saints fellowship together? And we belong there and so therefore, we're sorry we won't be able to pay that which we owe. You see, the believer lives in different spheres. There is a sphere in which you alone live before God.

The apostle writes of that in Galatians chapter 6 when he says that "Every man shall bear his own burden," so that when we stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ and our life is reviewed as believers, no one will be able to stand for us; we stand alone. "Every man shall bear his own burden," there the apostle says. Just before that he had said, "Let us bear one another's burdens," those are the daily burdens of life, but when it comes to responsibility for the life that we've lived, "Every man shall bear his own burden," Paul says.

So we're responsible before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ for the life that we have lived. No one else lives in that life with us, not even our wife or husband. We are responsible before God ourselves. That's one sphere of life. Let's call it personal.

Then there's another sphere of life, the family sphere. We all live in the family, and so there are certain responsibilities in the family that we have. The husband is the one who is responsible for the leadership in his family and consequently, he is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. That means the prince is to love Diana as Christ loved the church. And then the wife, she is to be in submission to her husband and consequently, it's perfectly all right to say "obey" in the marriage ceremony. I feel sorry for the prince because he's got a wife who won't say "obey." Well let's hope that she really is in submission to him when the time comes for them to unite. She says she's not going to say "obey" to him even if he is a prince and when he comes to be king, if he comes to be king, well I presume that will still be her response. But in the Scriptures, we are told that the husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church and she is to render to him the submission proper for that. But he is to love her as Christ loved

the church. Someone has said he has the divine responsibility; she has the human. All of us men recognize that our responsibility is greater and more difficult.

Then there is another sphere of life; the civil sphere. And in this sphere, we are responsible to obey the laws of the land. In that case, Paul says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." And finally, there is the ecclesiastical sphere in which we render certain obedience and give certain deference to certain men who are our heads in the local church.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the last chapter of his epistle speaks of our responsibilities to the elders. He says, "Remember them who have the rule over you," verse 7. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable to you," verse 17. And then again in verse 24, "Greet all them who have the rule over you, and all the saints." So in the church of Jesus Christ, there are certain men who have been appointed by the Holy Spirit to the office of elder and they have the rule over us, and we are to render them obedience in the Lord. Our responsibility is to them. Our responsibility is to them so significantly that we are warned by the apostle that we are not to bring an accusation against an elder except before two or three witnesses. When people criticize the elders—I'm not an elder incidently here, so I can say this—when people criticize the elders and do not do it in accordance with Scripture it is they who bear the judgement of God. We are responsible to yield submission and obedience to the elders in the church.

So the apostle speaks of different spheres of life: personal, family, the civil responsibility that we have, and then the church responsibility for those who belong to the local church through faith in Jesus Christ.

Now Paul is speaking about the civil sphere of life in Romans 13. It's very appropriate because the Romans were living in the Roman Empire and after speaking to them of these many duties in chapter 12, undoubtedly someone would have raised their hands in an apostolic meeting and said, "But Paul, it's nice you've given us all of these exhortations, but how are we going to live with the Romans? How are we going to respond to the Roman imperium, which is above us?" And I can imagine that this chapter here is one of the most significant chapters for Russian Christians or others who live in autocratic forms of government. It probably is a question that they discuss over and over again, the limits of their submission to the authority. And the apostle's words, therefore, have a great deal of relevance for them. And it's conceivable that ultimately it might have some relevance for some of you too.

Now notice how the apostle begins the 13th chapter. He says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." As he begins his discussion of public obligations to the state, he uses a term that suggests that. In chapter 12, he has talked about our obligations because we're in the body of Christ that is spiritual, the spiritual relationship that we bear to Christ. But now he speaks of obligations because we are part of the human race, and so he doesn't speak about "let every saint," but he says "let every soul." "Every soul." That encompasses every human being. He doesn't even say "let every believer," but "every soul." "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." And by the way, "every" includes even the pope, so that the pope himself is to be subject to the higher authorities.

Now he uses the term to submit. That's a term that he uses in a number of different ways. He speaks of submission to the elders; he speaks of submission to God; he speaks of the wife's submission to her husband; he speaks of other forms of submission, but here it's submission to the higher powers. One might ask why? Why Paul? Since we're citizens of heaven, we're not citizens of the United States of America. Primarily our citizenship is in heaven. For it's Paul who said that. For our citizenship is in heaven from whence also we look for the savior who shall transform this body of humiliation into a body like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why should we therefore be subject to the higher powers? Well the apostle says first of all, the higher powers, or these higher powers specifically here, they've been ordained of God. He says, "The powers that be are ordained of God." And then in the second verse, "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God and they that resist shall receive to themselves judgment." So the powers that be are ordained by God.

Now this is an interesting thing and raises the questions that we're taking about. Remembering these other spheres of life, we have parents over children and children are to obey parents. Wives submit to the husbands. Husbands love their wives. Children obey their parents in that sphere of life.

Now we all have known unfaithful parents, but still the word of God obtains. Even if the parents are unfaithful, the children are to obey the parents. Even though the husband does not fulfill his responsibility, the wife is to submit to the husband. And even though the wife does not respond to hers, the husband is to love his wife, as Christ loved the church.

And the same thing is true in the governmental sphere. In our government, we have constant failure, but our responsibility as believers is to submit to the higher authorities. Even bad government, one Bible teacher said, is better than no government at all. And God has granted, to human beings, government in order that total chaos may not exist. Furthermore, Paul goes on to say that the powers that God gives approve the good and punish the evil. That is generally true, in some governments more than others of course. Listen to what he says. "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same." If a man pays his taxes as they should be paid, he has peace of conscious. If a man does not pay his taxes as he should, he has annoying sense of anxiety, disturbance. He fears,

"For he is the minister of God to thee for good, but if thou do that which is evil be afraid for he beareth not the sword in vein for he is the minister of God, avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing."

So the powers approve the good; they punish the evil. You'll notice, by the way, the progression here. We have authority and then we have the ordinance of God or law. We have justice in judgement and finally the ruler bears the sword. That finally is justification for capital punishment, taught more fully elsewhere, but here by implication in the apostle's writing. He says, "They bear not the sword in vein." So that finally, divinely approved is capital punishment. I've always liked that statement that Paul made

at the end of verse 6. He says, "For this cause pay ye taxes tribute: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing." I don't think there's ever been any minister of God who ever fulfilled his task more successfully than tax collectors. [Laughter] And it's rather striking and somewhat humorous I think that the apostle uses the very same word attending constantly or continually upon this very thing that he used in the preceding chapter for prayer, and which also Luke uses when he describes the early church as continuing steadfastly in prayer. Tax collectors continuing steadfastly in tax collecting. The apostle must have written that with a tongue in cheek. And finally he concludes in verse 7 by saying,

"Render therefore to all the things that are owed them: tribute to whom tribute is due (that is taxes, then); custom (and I mention this only because the word custom is somewhat ambiguous in English, but this is the custom that is associated with the custom house. It's an indirect form of tax or duty), custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."

So believers are not to forsake a sinking ship of state like rats, but they are to stay at their posts and they are to be obedient.

Now this is the general principle. We, as Christians, are to be subject to the authority of our state. You can find this illustrated in the Bible. Do you remember in the Old Testament when Saul was seeking to capture David in order to put him to death? And finally one night David and Abishai drew near to Saul's camp and there was Saul lying on the ground and the other soldiers about him lying on the ground. They were all asleep. And Saul had taken his spear, that great, tall, strong man, the King of Israel, he had taken that spear and he had plunged it into the ground right by his head. And then he had fallen asleep with all of his armor and his other personal belongings thereby and as Abishai and David drew nearer to the camp, Abishai looked over and he saw the spear there and he said, "Now David just let me do one thing. Let me go over and take that spear and let me plunge it into Saul and I'll do it just once. That's all I'll have to do. And then your troubles will be over." And David said, "No. No Abishai. Remember you are not to touch the Lord's anointed." God had put his hand upon Saul and had anointed him as King of Israel. And he was to be King of Israel as God's anointed until it was clear that God had taken the kingdom away from him. But he said, "I'll let you do this. I'll let you go over and steal the spear and get a couple of other personal belongings, so we can then later communicate to Saul that we did have him in our power and we did nothing about it. Perhaps that will change his heart toward me." And that, of course, is what happened. "But don't touch the Lord's anointed," David said.

Remember the Lord Jesus was approached by some of the men of his day who were anxious to catch him in some word and they thought well perhaps we can arrange to ask him some question that will be the kind of question that he cannot possibly answer without getting himself in trouble. As all the chief priests and scribes approached him and as they came to him they said, "Master we know that you speak and teach that which is right. And you don't accept the person of any man, but you teach the way of God truly. Now we have a question for you. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar or not?" And they had him on the horns of a dilemma, they thought. Because if he said, "We give tribute to Caesar," then they would say, "Ah, he's a traitor to Israel." But if he said, "No,

we don't give tribute to Caesar," then they would go to Caesar and say, "Here's a man who doesn't pay his taxes." So they had him they thought. And he replied, "Show me denario." They brought the coin to him. He said, "Whose image and superscription is upon it?" They said, "Well, Caesar's." And then he said, "Render, therefore, unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and the things that are God's to God." And the difference in the two philosophies is summed up in two different conjunctions. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar or not? "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." It's not an either/or; it's a both/and our Lord says. And they couldn't take hold of his words before the people, and they marveled at his answer, and they shut their mouths.

Now suppose someone says, "Well I believe in obeying the government as long as the Democrats win the election. What happens when the Republicans win? Suppose my party did lose the election?" Well the word of God still stands. We know. We've suffered. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." It's still in Scripture. But suppose our government is a despotic government? Suppose we live in a government which is a government that persecutes Christians and says that we cannot preach the gospel of Jesus Christ? What do we do then? Do we shut up? No, we don't shut up. We preach the gospel. That's evident from the New Testament. That means that we must obey God rather than man.

And you know the story of how the apostles preach the gospel in Jerusalem. They were dragged in before the authorities and they were told not to preach the gospel. Do not stand up and preach the gospel. They were imprisoned. An angel came, released them from prison; they were out preaching again. Word came, those fellows that you told not to preach, they're out in the temple preaching again. And so they were dragged in again before the authorities, and finally Peter uttered the word, "We cannot help but preach what we've seen and heard. We must obey God, rather than man." Well then we must suffer, someone might say. Yes, we must suffer. We must be faithful to God. We must be faithful in the preaching of the Word. The Scriptures are plain. "Let every man obey the higher powers," but as Peter puts it, "Fear God first, then honor the king." The responsibilities to God supersede all other responsibilities.

And ordinarily there is no conflict. It is God who assures us of that as we study human history. At times when there is conflict, we must obey God. And we must suffer the consequences. The apostles did not find that an impossible thing. In fact, when they were thrown in jail, they were released from jail and they rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me read and will you listen to what Luke says in their experience. "Gamaliel stood up and he said listen we better let these fellows alone. If God is with them, we'll be fighting against God. If he's not with them, then, of course, their movement will come to naught." And so finally they agreed with Gamaliel. And when they've called the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple and in every house they cease not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. They disobeyed the authorities. "For we must fear God first, and then honor the king."

The apostle then, in verse 6 through verse 10 of chapter 13, speaks of some private obligations within the state. The argument passes naturally from authority to all

men. In verse 7, he had said, "Render therefore to all their debts. Owe no man anything but to love one another. For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." And Paul cites from the second table of the law the responsibilities that we have to our neighbors and says that we have the responsibility of love toward the people about us. The Spirit rules in the church. The moral law rules in the world. And the apostle speaks of our responsibility, just as the responsibility that the Good Samaritan meant. They are responsible for the law. And further, love is the fulfilling of the law. So the private obligations within the state are meant as the provisions of the law are carried out in love toward our neighbor. That's the responsibility of a Christian. The Spirit, I say, rules in the church; the moral law in the world.

Finally, the apostle concludes the chapter with some personal incentive for the fulfillment of the things of these responsibilities. And so he says in verse 11, "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." High time. This is an exhortation to drowsy believers. Some of you are smiling. This morning as I was preaching there were a couple whose eyes were closed. And when I said, "This is the exhortation to drowsy believers," their eyes opened. [Laughter] So the apostle says, "It's high time to wake out of your sleep." The wasted opportunities.

As we look back as our lives, our young life, our young Christian life, and we think of the wasted opportunities; the life of middle age; the prime of life when all of our faculties are at their mature best; or when we're aged and the shadows are lengthening. The apostle exhorts us to spend our scanty evenings for him. "It's high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

There are all kinds of sleep into which believers fall, some selfish sleep. That is, "Everything's all right with me. Dr. Johnson must be speaking about someone else." Or doctrinal sleep, there are certain people who think, "Why the Bible is a collection of very difficult propositions, but if I know just a few of them, if I know the gospel, if I know how to get the help, then everything is all right. God wrote 66 books through the prophets and the apostles, but really if you sum it all up, if you know just a few things and are sure you're going to heaven, then everything is all right. We don't really have to study the Scriptures." In effect, we say God has wasted all of his time in the calling of prophets and apostles to offer the Scriptures. But we're asleep; we're in our doctrinal sleep. We don't understand the importance of the word of God and the importance to us of knowing Scripture. Then there's a nodding kind of sleep, in which you fitfully are awake. Some Sunday school teachers are in that. That is, they actually have responsibilities, but they don't really live up to their responsibilities. They're not faithful in the teaching of the word of God. They have responsibilities to teach young children, but they don't prepare. "It's high time for us to awake out of our sleep" because now Paul says, "Our salvation is nearer than when we believed." And then there are those somnambulists. They walk in their sleep. Our churches, our Evangelical churches, are full of people like this. They're going through the motions. Have you ever seen anybody walk in their sleep? They're walking. They actually have motor power, but they don't know what's going on.

In Charleston, I was a friend of a family in which they had some people in their family who walked in their sleep. One walked out of the second story and walked out on the street below. He had a rude awakening, to say the least. [Laughter]

But there are many somnambulists in the churches and somnambulists in Believers Chapel too. They're sitting in our meetings. They bow their heads when prayer is made. They actually read, but they don't pay any attention to what they read. They're inwardly asleep. "It's high time to awake." "For," Paul says, "our salvation is nearer." Why we should be awake. Or shall we cite the New Jerusalem with drowsy eyes? Heaven's not the dormitory of the unconscious. You notice the apostle says our salvation is nearer. There are different tenses in salvation.

In the New Testament we read, "We have been saved for thy grace. Have you been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." We can say if we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ that we have been saved from the penalty of sin. But the Bible also speaks of us as being saved. The apostle says, "The word of the cross is to those that are perishing foolishness, but unto us who are being saved it is the power of God under salvation."

Now in the one case, we have been saved from the guilt of sin, but through the Holy Spirit we are being saved through the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit from the power of sin in our lives.

Now Paul looks to the future here and he says, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed," and he's speaking about the ultimate salvation when we shall be saved not only from the penalty of sin and the power of sin in our daily lives, but saved even from the presence of sin into the presence of the Lord God.

Now having said that, the apostle gives us some exhortations. He says we need to rub the sleep from our eyes. We need to take off our pajamas and put on our day clothes.

Now I know some have said no that's not pajamas and I'm inclined to agree. Believe it or not, there is some support from a contemporary scholarship to the effect that people didn't wear pajamas in those days. Really I think what Paul had in mind was another figure. The apostle had often been in prison. He knew what it was for a Roman soldier to be assigned to him and he knew that the Roman soldiers were assigned to them for a certain time, and then when the night came, they would lay aside their armor and they would go out and they often would have a riotous good time. And then the next morning they would hastily get up, put on their armor again, clean it up and then go to work. And they would come to the apostle. And I think that's probably what Paul is talking about because he says, "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 armor of light." And so he's using the picture of a Roman soldier. And he says that first of all, "We're to cast off those works of darkness, and we are to put on the armour of light, and then we are to walk decently, as in the day; not in reviling and drunkenness, not in immorality and wantonness, not in strife and envying." But the thing that's interesting, isn't it, is that he likens the present day to the nighttime. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," and therefore, we ought to change our clothes and get ready.

This particular passage is noted above all as being the passage that Augustine, the great Early Church Father, was exposed to and came to faith in Jesus Christ through. Augustine had a mother by the name of Monica who was a Christian and she had prayed often for him, and when he was in his 30s he was a learned municipal teacher of rhetoric in the city of Milano in Italy. And he was very troubled and disturbed over the condition of his soul. He speaks of, as he describes his conversion in his confession, as pouring out a mighty rain of tears. He was living in a house with a man by the name of Olympius and

very much concerned over his soul. He said that one day he went off from Olympius, he left the Bible, the apostle as he called it, back where Olympius was and he went off by himself and he got down before the Lord God and he just poured out his soul before the Lord God.

And he said, "O, and thou O Lord, how long, how long O Lord wilt thou be angry? Unto the end? Remember not our former iniquities." And while he was weeping and praying, he said off in the distance in a neighboring house he heard a little child cry out, "*Tolle, lege. Tolle, lege,*" which if you remember your Latin means take, read, take, read. He afterward said he never remembered any game in which anyone ever shouted out these words, but it was obvious what was meant. Take it. Read it. Take it. Read it. And so he got up and he went back to where Olympius was he said, and he opened up the Bible believing that wherever he opened up the apostle he was to read it. So he opened it up and as he read it this is what he read. "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk decently, as in the day; and put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts." This is the passage that the great Augustine came to faith reading.

Now I want you to notice in the last moment or two here verse 14. He says positively, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, of course, he must be in us before he can be on us and so the apostle is speaking to believers here, and he's saying that we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at those words for a moment. Put on the Lord. All the faculties belong to him. Put on the Lord Jesus. He's the savior, the sanctifier, the preserver from sin and Christ, the anointed one, the prophet who teaches how we may be accepted before God, the priest who is offered the offering through whom we may approach God and the king under whose sway all things will ultimately be. "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Those are the clothes that make a man. And he adds the negative side, "Don't make provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts."

I have a friend, well two friends; they're both with the Lord now. They were missionaries to China many, many years ago, very godly people; I knew them when I was going through seminary. Later on, when they were relatively old they had a child. They used to write back letters and tell us about their activities in China and one of those letters had a very interesting little story about their little boy whose name was Danny. He's probably 40 years of age now, or 35. And when he was just a little kid, one morning she was the wife who was a missionary, was explaining some of their daily experiences and they were getting him ready to go off to the school. And so he got down upon his knees, as they customarily did, and prayed. And this was his prayer, "Dear Lord, keep me from evil today and help me to have hardly any fights. In Jesus' name. Amen. Bye mom." And with that, he was out of the house. [Laughter]

Well, she said that she thought something was wrong with that prayer, help me to have hardly any fights. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, that evening he burst in through the door and he said, "Mommy I beat up Johnny P.," didn't name the last name, just Johnny, his last name again with a P. Why pray at all she went on to say if you don't intend to let him answer it fully. Well, it just so happened she said that many times thereafter he came home with his tail between his legs trying to avoid Johnny P. and the revenge that Johnny was trying to give. Well, when the Scriptures say to us that we are

to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and stop making provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts, that's the negative side. And, of course, it's extremely important.

May I say just one final word because our time is up? The kingdoms come and go, but the kingdom is going to come and when it comes it's permanent. Today is the only day in which we have an opportunity to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. It's nighttime, really, because the unfruitful works of darkness abound, but we are to serve him in this. I haven't been speaking to the unconverted today. If I were to speak to the unconverted, this is the way I would read verse 11, "And that, knowing the time, that now it's high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our damnation nearer than when you first heard the gospel and rejected it." If there are any in this audience who have heard the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and have been constantly rejecting it, your judgement is nearer than when you first heard it and first rejected it. May God help you to realize that Jesus Christ has offered an atoning sacrifice for sinners and that forgiveness of sins is available for those who, by the Holy Spirit, are nudged to faith in Jesus Christ. May God so touch your heart that you come to him and experience the forgiveness of sins and justification of life. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for the way in which through the Scriptures we have guidance and direction for our daily life. Enable us to be subject to the higher powers, but especially to the highest power of all, our great triune God in Heaven. And, O Father, if there be some here without Christ, we again appeal to Thee through the Holy Spirit, bring conviction of sin and conversion, for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And for us who are Christians, enable us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, the sovereign, savior of men who has offered the priestly sacrifice by which we are justified and enable us to stop...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]