

What's in *Your* Wardrobe?

Livin' Like You're Leavin' – Part III

Romans 13:14

Introduction

Today, we come to the end of the series that I have entitled, "Livin' Like You're Leavin'".

Last Sunday, I showed my vase filled with green marbles. Each marble represented one month of the rest of my life. There were supposed to be over three hundred marbles in the vase, representing the months I would have left if I lived to be seventy-five years of age. I revealed that I was missing seventy-nine of them. I can only assume that someone wants me out of here sooner rather than later!

I want you to know that a man in our church had delivered to my office this week, a jar of the same type of green marbles. On the lid of the jar, he had written, "God spoke to me and told me to give you those years back."

Thank you so much. They are already in my vase, sitting on the windowsill in my office here at the church. I have since installed a video surveillance camera, so I do not lose my marbles faster than I have to!!

I was also contacted by a singer-songwriter, who happened to be visiting our services last Sunday. She sent the lyrics to a song that she wrote this past week, based on the theme of this series. I was informed by two others that they have written poems with the thought of, "Livin' Like You're Leavin'".

Our Student Ministries pastor gave me, this past week, the lyrics to a Christian song with a slightly different title. The theme, however, is the same as that of our study in Romans 13. Sung by a Christian

artist, the song is entitled, "Live Like I'm Leaving". The lyrics of the chorus are:

*Live like I'm leaving,
Like heaven is in view;
I want to live like I'm leaving,
I will be evidence of You.
Through the shadows of my past,
Through tomorrow come what may;
I want to live like I'm leaving,
Just like I'm leaving today.ⁱ*

The poems I have received and the song lyrics I have been sent, like this one, put it well.

This is the perspective of Paul on life. It is this perspective that leads us to pursue purity in life.

Let us go back once more, to Romans 13, as we wrap up this series. We will get a running start with Romans 13:11-14.

Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

This paragraph could easily be outlined with these three exhortations to the believer:

- Wake up!
- Clean up!
- Dress up!ⁱⁱ

The believer is challenged to *wake up* – do not be complacent in your living, for any day, the Lord is going to return!

In light of that, *clean up your act* – Christian, live a pure life!

The only way to do this is to *dress for battle!*

So:

- Wake up!
- Clean up!
- Dress up!

I want to focus on the last exhortation.

Principle of a Lifestyle

Paul writes in Romans 13:14a, using again the thought of telling us to put something on and put something away,

. . . put on the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

This is an imperative, which means an exclamation point could be placed at the end.

Look at the difference in our lives as a result. Look at Romans 13:13,

. . . carousing and drunkenness, . . . sexual promiscuity and sensuality, . . . strife and jealousy.

Now, however, we, as believers, are robed in Jesus Christ.

Verse 13 is who we were. Verse 14 is who we are.

What does Paul mean when he says,

. . . put on the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

The Roman believers would have immediately understood the metaphor of putting on Christ to be a comparison to putting on a robe.

The rabbis were currently teaching, and had been teaching using this same metaphor. They used the illustration of putting on clothing as symbolic of moral and spiritual behavior. The rabbis taught that true worshipers were to put on the cloak of the Shekinah glory – the glory of God.ⁱⁱⁱ

In other words, the true worshiper of God was to live in a way that would reflect the God they worshiped.

Now understand that the believer is already robed with Christ. That occurred at the moment of salvation – the believer was robed with the righteousness of Christ.

Paul wrote to the believers, in Galatians 3:27, about this truth, as he told them that all,

. . . who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

The prophet Isaiah used the same idea when he wrote,

I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels. (Isaiah 61:10)

Every believer has been clothed with Christ – we call that part of justification. Once, for all time, the believer is clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

There is another aspect to this illustration, as well. Clothing ourselves with Christ means that we are being sanctified daily.

We were justified – we are being sanctified.

This is Paul's focus in Romans 13:14. This is the idea that Paul's has in this. Choosing to put on Christ means choosing not to wear the deeds of darkness, but to wear the deeds of light.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians,

for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (Ephesians 5:8)

You are robed with Christ, now choose to wear Christ in the way you live. That means to choose *not* to wear the robes of darkness.

This morning, before the sun came up, I stood in front of my closet and picked a suit coat to wear. I have a half dozen of them – they are cheaper these days because fewer men wear them, perhaps to a funeral or a job interview, but never to church.

I chose the suit coat I am wearing – I made my decision. Do you know what I was also deciding? I was deciding not to wear any other jacket.

In addition, because I put this jacket on to wear all morning, this jacket has gone everywhere I have gone; it has participated in everything I have participated in. This jacket will be with me all day. I chose that no other jacket would accompany me today, except this one.

I will not put on another suit coat on top of this one, will I? I am not going to go back to the closet and say, “Okay, I’ll wear that one too, even though it’s not my color and makes me look older . . .”.

By wearing the Savior, we are choosing not to wear sin. You cannot wear both the Savior and sin at the same time.

But there is more: by wearing the Savior, we are showing our desire to be like the Savior. That is another way of saying we want to grow up to look and sound and walk and act like Christ!

Do you know what little kids love to do? Play dress up! They love to put on someone else’s clothes and play dress up.

I will never forget a time when our boys were around five years of age and their little sister was three and a half. I was in my office and got a frantic call from Marsha. She said, “Honey, I don’t know what to do.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Well, one of the boys is outside, jumping on the trampoline, wearing his sisters one-piece bathing suit! What do I do? He’s out there jumping around like Tarzan in his sisters swimsuit. What do I do?”

I said, “Get the camera! We can’t miss this opportunity for future blackmail!”

She said, “Are you serious?”

I said, “Absolutely! Hurry!”

My son, who is now in Bible college, still laughs with us over that event when it comes back to our minds – and it comes back often.

We happen to have picture of our kids dressed in their mother’s high heel shoes – not the same son, mind you. A rainy afternoon usually meant “dress-up time”.

Have you ever seen your child wearing your shoes and pretending to walk like you – pretending to be you?

In the same way, we wear the clothing of Christ – because we want to grow up to be like Him.

So this is the question for you, “What’s in *your* wardrobe?”

It is far more important to ask that question than, “What’s in your wallet?” – right?

What’s in *your* wardrobe? Christian, what are you wearing? The deeds of darkness or the Lord of light?!

Notice that Paul uses the full expression of our Savior’s name in Romans 13:14. He says,

. . . ***put on the Lord Jesus Christ*** . . .

Paul says:

- ***the Lord*** – because we are declaring His deity – that He is sovereign; He is the ruler; He is master!
- ***Jesus*** – because we are declaring He is fully man – that He is the God-man who personally pitched His tent among us!
- ***Christ*** – because we are declaring He is the only true Savior – that He is the true Messiah!

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ! Wear Him everywhere you go.

This is the principle of a lifestyle.

Prohibition of a Lifestyle

The next phrase that Paul writes in Romans 13:14, reveals that believers also have the prohibition of a lifestyle. He writes,

. . . ***and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.***

The principle of a lifestyle asks the question, “What’s in your *wardrobe*?”

The prohibition of a lifestyle asks the question, “What’s in your *wastebasket*?”

In other words, “What are you putting on and what are you throwing away?”

Paul says,

. . . ***make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.***

Key words in the prohibition of a lifestyle

There are a couple of key words in this prohibition. Let us take a look at them.

1. First, the word “provision” is from the Greek word “pronoia” which means to:
 - perceive in advance;
 - note beforehand;
 - care for;
 - take thought for.^{iv}

Paul is painting a picture of us that we would rather not see. He is suggesting that *every* believer has the potential to plan evil things. This is a very

realistic writing; it is honest; it reveals something ugly about all of us.

The famous painter, John Sargent, once complained, “Every time I paint a portrait I lose a friend.”

The truth is – none of us like a very honest picture of ourselves.

Paul’s painting is a true portrait. We know how to plan sin, which means none of us ever fall into sin by accident. We plan to sin; we sin on purpose. So:

- do not hook up the cable movie channel, and then wonder why;
- do not plan to meet someone you should not, and then wonder why;
- do not ignore godly counsel, and then wonder why.

The devout Puritan preacher, Thomas Manton, wrote, “Every corruption has a voice,” meaning that every sort of sin finds a way to bring itself to our minds and hearts.^v

So do not leave the door of your heart unlocked. If you do, you will make provision for sin.

However, here is the good news:

- you will never be trapped somewhere you never go;
- you can never be caught in a place you never visit.

This is the reason Solomon warned his son of,

. . . those who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness . . . whose paths are crooked, and who are devising in their ways . . . [be warned] so you will walk in the way of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous. (Proverbs 2:13, 15, 20)

2. The second key word, in Romans 13:14b, is translated, “lusts; the lusts of the flesh”.

This is the word “epithumia,” which is used for both good things and bad things. In the New Testament, it is used to refer to good desires; such as:

- a hungry person longing for food (Luke 15:16);
- a man desiring the office of elder (I Timothy 3:1);
- the angels longing to understand salvation (I Peter 1:12);
- the Old Testament prophets desiring to see and hear the Messiah (Matthew 13:17).

However, the word is most often used to speak of evil desires; such as:

- men lusting after other women (Matthew 5:28);
- people consumed by materialism; lusting for things (Mark 4:19).

Furthermore, this word “lust” is used negatively in relation to:

- the lust of the body (Romans 6:12);
- the lust of the flesh (Ephesians 2:3);
- the lust of the heart (Romans 1:24);
- the lust of the eyes (I John 2:16);
- worldly lusts (Titus 2:12);
- defiling lusts (II Peter 2:10).^{vi}

This is just the beginning of the list.

It is a word that shows us a portrait of what we are capable of doing and becoming.

It is no wonder that Paul wrote to the Galatians and warned them to,

. . . walk by the Spirit [by means of the Spirit’s enabling], and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)

In Romans 13, Paul warns the Romans, and us, that the only way you will not perform the deeds of darkness is to consciously robe yourself with:

- the light (verse 12);
- the Lord (verse 14).

Key questions in the prohibition of a lifestyle

Let me get as practical as possible and ask some very personal questions. Throughout your typical week:

- What are you watching?
- What are you reading?
- What are you listening to?
- What are you logging on to?

We cannot address the lusts of our flesh, in this generation, without squarely addressing the media and the internet and print.

Let me pick and choose my way through these questions. I will not even begin to address everything, but I hope to touch on some major things.

1. First, what are you watching?

Geoff Botkin, in an address at the 2004 Vision Forum's Independent Film Festival, made the case that Christian aesthetics – a biblical definition of what is good, true, and beautiful – has been under attack since the 1920s when the movie industry began to grow. He made the comment that we, as believers and especially as parents, need to wake up to the fact that even the most shallow television show teaches lessons; even the worst movie teaches, by its very nature of visual perception, a curriculum of values.

Geoff posed the question, “How does society digress from enjoying and even demanding the movies of Shirley Temple to the movies of Sharon Stone . . . how do we go from Shirley Temple to Madonna, in less than two generations?”

Part of the answer, ladies and gentlemen, is that your world is not in neutral – the doctrines of demons, as Paul called them, have an agenda. The prince of the power of the air is not napping; the ruler of this world system is not unsure of his strategies.

For what other reason would we be exhorted to wear the armor of light; to robe ourselves with Jesus Christ?

According to what we have just learned from the apostle Paul, we are to anticipate and expect the darkness to entice the children of light.

Benjamin Stein, who served as a speechwriter for former presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, entered Hollywood and acted in approximately forty movies. In the 1970s, he began, as an insider, evaluating the themes of the cinema, and has done so for many years. In evaluating thousands of scripts, he eventually came up with at least eleven characteristics that dominate television programs/sitcoms and cinema. These include:

- sexual relations come before marriage;
- children are wiser than parents;
- successful businessmen are evil;
- clergy are uninformed and ineffective;
- social workers are noble;
- homosexuality is genetic;
- military personnel are psychotic sadists;
- fathers are stupid;
- criminals are the result of poverty or racism;
- profanity is a part of honest reality;
- women who reject motherhood are heroic.^{vii}

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the predominant curriculum of a world that is dominated by the lusts of the flesh.

You cannot allow yourself to spend time being educated by an anti-biblical movie that moves your emotions and shapes your perspective, and then wonder why the truths of scripture seem so narrow – and why some Christians, including your pastor, seem so uptight.

Maybe you have already bought into one of the eleven things I read a moment ago. In fact:

- Maybe you are wondering why two people who love each other cannot be intimate with each other – surely that is a beautiful thing.
- Maybe you are wondering why certain criminals should not get away with their crimes – surely they were disadvantaged.
- Maybe you are thinking that children ought to determine their own rules – surely they have a lot to teach parents.
- Maybe you are wondering why pornography is such a big deal – surely God made our bodies and He must have made them to be seen.

I have personally heard every one of these arguments from people who claim to be Christians, but had obviously been influenced by the curriculum of this world system.

What are you watching?

2. Secondly, what are you reading?

Are you reading the curriculum of worldly aesthetics – anti-truth, anti-beauty, anti-goodness?

It is interesting to me that in describing the deeds of darkness, Paul hammers on the subject of immorality.

A book published fairly recently, reveals the disintegration of truth, as it relates to marital fidelity. The book is called, *Affair: How to Manage Every Aspect of Your Extramarital Relationship with Passion, Discretion, and Dignity*.

I learned of the book as I was reading one pastor's comments on our cultural immorality. The pastor quoted the publisher's review, which said, “[this is a] thoughtful, detailed discussion of every aspect of considering, preparing for, beginning, and conducting a successful and emotionally fulfilling extramarital [relationship].”

Even though I was reading a quote from a pastor who said he had leafed through the book, I still found

it a little hard to believe. So I went on Amazon.com to see for myself, and there it was.

I pulled it up and clicked to open the table of contents. Chapters were entitled:

- Getting Ready to Meet That Special Someone;
- Guidelines for Pre-extramarital Courtship;
- Situations That Serve As an Appropriate Basis for Having an Affair.

I scrolled down to the reviews from readers, who were gushing in their praise.

One wrote, “This book was a lifesaver for me. It helped me find and keep my special friend to help me through until my children are older.”

Another wrote, “I wish I had known this information some time back. I could have avoided a considerable amount of emotional pain by not selecting the “wrong” type of person.”

Another, obviously experienced adulterer, wrote, “[this book is] filled with common sense; this will greatly help those wanting affection from outside their marriage. If an affair is something that a person cannot avoid, then this is *the* guide to have.”

I could not help but think of *this* guide (the Bible), which says that unrepentant adulterers will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

What is in *your* wardrobe? That is another way of asking, “What are you watching? What are you reading?”

3. Thirdly, what are you logging on to?

What are you logging on to on the internet? Any medium can have a powerful potential for the spread of the gospel, but also for the spread of anti-gospel. It can spread:

- the truth of Christ;
- the lie of anti-Christ.

Perhaps the most powerful and far reaching tool today, is the world wide web. Without a doubt, it can be used to spread the gospel.

We partner with the Bible Broadcasting Network (BBN), which is using the internet to spread the gospel in many languages; including Mandarin – throughout China. People log on to the BBN site and listen, via internet. The site is experiencing more than one million hits a week – from China alone. BBN is receiving dozens of e-mails every week from new Chinese believers who have heard the gospel of

Christ and believed in Christ. What a great use of the internet!

BBN has even trained some of its staff in America to go to chat rooms – all sorts of chat rooms – and begin to interact with people. In fact, on one occasion, one staff member went to a chat room for atheists and typed, “I know God is alive – I just talked to Him.” The chatting really picked up steam.

However, with all the potential of the internet for the spread of light, it is an incredible messenger of darkness.

Over a year ago, *ABC News Primetime* conducted an extensive poll and found that the number of adults who visit adult-only websites in a typical week exceeds eleven million people. Keep in mind, these were the eleven million people who admitted it.

The evidence speaks of vastly greater numbers, simply by virtue of the number of pornographic websites – that seems to be growing exponentially. I read recently in the *Leadership Journal* for pastors that:

- in 1998, there were 71,000 adult-only websites;
- three years later, there were 311,000;
- three years later, there are now more than 1.3 million.^{viii}

This does not include sites for internet gambling, false religions, the occult, and a host of other dangerous traps.

I do not believe I am exaggerating when I say that the internet can be the single most dangerous trap today for the believer.

Conclusion

The truth is – temptation always comes packaged with a promise. That is the reason it appeals to our lusts.

A beer commercial never shows someone throwing up at the party; adult websites do not show pictures of incurable diseases and their symptoms.

Sin is promoted as beautiful, together, satisfactory. It is promoted as something you are entitled to; something you have a right to; something you deserve. So do not hesitate – buy now!

The trouble is – when you finally have it in your hands, you discover you are trapped in its hands; when you finally have sin cornered, you discover it has cornered you.

I read, just yesterday, and I could not help but laugh, that in New York City, there are eight million cats. I knew there was something about New York I did not like! Now since New York City is basically cement and concrete, when your pet dies, you cannot just go out in the back yard and bury it. In fact, the city authorities decided that for fifty dollars, they would dispose of your deceased pet for you.

One lady, however, was rather clever. She placed an ad in the newspaper which said, “When your pet dies, I will come and take care of the carcass for you, for only twenty-five dollars!”

This lady would go to the local Salvation Army thrift store and buy an old suitcase for a couple of bucks. Then, when someone would call about their pet, she would go to the home and put the carcass in the suitcase. That evening, she would take a ride on the subway, set the suitcase down, and act like she was not watching. Every time, at some stop, when the doors opened, a thief would rush by and steal her suitcase. She would say, “Stop . . . Thief.”

What a surprise for the thief! They think they have stolen something good – and it is a dead cat!

We, as Christians, can become like New York City thieves. We can be grabbing something that we believe will bring us happiness, yet when we open the package, it is nothing more than decay and death.

Sin never keeps its promise. Lust never pays off.

Paul says, “Run from the deeds of darkness – and don’t leave a forwarding address.”

Strap on the armor of light and put on the clothing of Christ – there is not much time left, so do not wait another moment.

I received an e-mail from a man who responded to last Sunday’s illustration. He wrote, “I took your example of the marbles in the vase and modified it a bit. I put a vase on my desk at home with only one marble in it. When I look at that single marble, it reminds me that today could be my last month, week, day, hour, and even my last breath on this earth.”

That is “livin’ like you’re leavin’” – which is really living!

Consider this final thought. Paul wrote the Corinthian believers and said, in effect, “One day soon, you will put on the clothing of immortality. Don’t forget, one day, your glorified body will be robed with immortality.” (I Corinthians 15:53)

Let us be “livin’” in light of the wonderful truth that we are “leavin’” – headed for the presence of our wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sing:

He is Lord, He is Lord,

He is risen from the dead and He is Lord.

Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess,

That Jesus Christ is Lord.

Let us not just sing it – let us live it.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 1/22/2006 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Alexander, Koch, Silvey, Live Like I’m Leaving (Cross Keys Publishing, 1995).

ⁱⁱ Warren Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, New Testament: Volume 1 (Victor, 2001), p. 558.

ⁱⁱⁱ John MacArthur, Romans: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 1994), p. 256.

^{iv} Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged (Eerdmans, 1985), p. 644.

^v MacArthur, p. 269.

^{vi} Bromiley, p. 340.

^{vii} Geoff Botkin, Hollywood Versus Christian Culture (Vision Forum Ministries).

^{viii} Leadership Magazine (Winter 2006), p. 135.