

ROMANS

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STUDY THIRTY-FOUR

Wake Up and Get Dressed!

Romans 13:11–14

Alarms are never soft little chimes. Somebody designed them to hit that discordant thing in our brain that makes us uncomfortable. Why? To wake us up.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN your alarm goes off, do you ever press the snooze button to stay in bed awhile longer? *Just ten more minutes and then I'll get up*, you think to yourself as you drift back to sleep. Then the alarm rings again, and you hit the snooze button again. Ten more minutes . . . alarm . . . snooze button . . . back asleep. Ten more minutes . . . alarm . . . snooze button . . . back asleep.

Suddenly, when the alarm rings once more, your eyes squint in the bright daylight flooding your room. You've overslept! Tossing aside the covers, you stumble out of bed. The time for leisurely getting ready has passed. Now, it's urgent! In a groggy fog, you pull a brush through your tangled nest of hair and rifle through your clothes to find something to throw on. No time for breakfast, not even coffee, you must go now! All the while you're rushing around, you're telling yourself, *Next time, I'll wake up at the first alarm!*

Similar situations like this can creep into our spiritual lives. If we're not careful, it can even become a habit! So, it's helpful to receive a strong word from time to time as though we were standing ramrod straight before a drill sergeant.

In the passage for our *Searching the Scripture* Bible study, Paul assumes that post. He sounds an urgent alarm to shake us awake. Although we rest secure in God's marvelous, saving grace, we have a purpose to fulfill in this current age. No time to hit the snooze button on God's calling!



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

*The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us;
the God of Israel is our fortress. (Psalm 46:7)*

Echo the security and assurance that the psalmist found in God during challenging times. The same Lord Almighty has given you His presence. Israel's God is your God—your ultimate source of protection. Express your confidence in His great power to strengthen you as you heed the Spirit's urgent call in Romans.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul saw the need for the Roman believers to not “just pretend to love others” but to really “love them” (Romans 12:9). He urged them to use their gifts in service to one another (12:4–8), to “take delight in honoring one another” (12:9–16), and to “conquer evil by doing good” (12:21).

In Romans 13:1–7, Paul admonished his readers to render to everyone what is due—taxes, respect, and submission to those in authority. And then, he circled back to the heart of Christ's command to His followers: “love one another” (13:8).

Healthy Christian relationships can only be built on a strong foundation of love. Having made this critical point, Paul turned his readers' attention to the urgency of the hour. “Time is running out,” Paul declared as he rang the alarm that Christ was coming soon (13:11).

Do you sense that God's plan for the ages is nearing its culmination and time is running out? What is happening in the world that makes you feel a sense of urgency?

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Observation: The Urgent Spiritual Wake-Up Call

Begin your study with observation by reading [Romans 13:11–14](#) thoughtfully and repetitively to find out what Paul is communicating.¹

A Fervent Call for Urgency—Romans 13:11

Note the urgency in Paul’s words in [Romans 13:11](#): “Do this,” he writes (NASB), recalling his command in [13:7](#) that we love others. Why is it urgent that we “do this”—that is, “love your neighbor as yourself” (Romans 13:9)?

Paul came to the end of a very practical section where he addressed the importance of loving one another. He says to us at the end of this same context, “Do this.” Why? Because the hour is soon to come when you will answer to your Savior. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

A Strong Appeal for Purity—Romans 13:12–14

In [Romans 13:12–14](#), Paul appealed for us to change our spiritual wardrobe. First, we must take off deeds that characterize the darkness in the world. Try to find all the dark deeds in this passage that Paul says are like “dirty clothes” and place each pair in their category.

Deeds of Darkness That Reflect . . . Romans 13:12–13	
Lack of	
Lack of	
Lack of	

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Reread [Romans 13:12–14](#). Once we’ve removed these worldly “fashions,” what should we wear? With what should we clothe ourselves instead of deeds of darkness? What was Paul’s command regarding the flesh in [13:14](#)?

Look at the next word. Does it surprise you? You expect garments of light. But the word is armor. Why? Because this world is no playground. This world is a battleground. If you could see the unseen forces of principalities and powers, it would take your breath away. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Time to Wake Up Spiritually

The second step of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, interpretation, helps us answer the question, “What does the passage mean?” To do so, we look up the definitions of key words, explore cultural backgrounds, and determine what it teaches about God and life.

Paul told the Roman believers that they should love one another, “knowing the time” ([Romans 13:11](#) NASB). The Greek verb, *kairos*, translated “time” doesn’t refer to the hour and minutes but the *kind of time*, such as a season. What was Paul saying about the time in which his readers lived—which is the same time in which we live?

See the word time? Two words Paul could have used when he came to that term. One is chronos from which we get our word “chronology.” It’s the time you see on your wristwatch. The other is the word kairos. This is quality of time. To Paul, Christ’s return was imminent, at any moment. In light of the kind of time in which we live, listen to the alarm. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Paul also told the Roman believers to wake up because “now salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed” (Romans 13:11 NASB). Read [Romans 13:11](#) in various translations such as the NET, the J. B. Phillips, and the MSG. How do these versions explain the meaning of the phrase?

Salvation runs its course like the crescendo mark on a musical score. As life gets longer and louder and larger, we are involved in either being filled with the Spirit or operating in the flesh. This is called sanctification, which is the unfolding of the whole salvation package. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Reread [13:12–13](#) in the NET, MSG, and J. B. Phillips. Try to find the definition for each deed of darkness. For more exploration, look up the Greek term. Then write in your own words the meaning of each term.

Deeds of Darkness Romans 13:12–13 (NASB)		
Carousing	<i>komos</i>	
Drunkenness	<i>methe</i>	
Sexual Promiscuity	<i>koite</i>	
Debauchery	<i>aselgeia</i>	
Strife	<i>eris</i>	
Jealousy	<i>zelos</i>	

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Why do you think Paul chose these sinful deeds as characteristics of darkness? How do these deeds destroy the soul? What does it look like for you to clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ?

We're all in different worlds, but we all are to walk properly, appropriately. So, we're to lay aside the things we have no business wearing.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: God's People—Awake and Aware

Take the next step of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method by comparing other passages of the Scriptures with the passage for your study to confirm your interpretation.

Like the men of Issachar who “understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take,” (1 Chronicles 12:32), God desires His people to be awake and aware. Christ might return at any moment. Compare [*Romans 13:11–14*](#); [*1 Corinthians 15:51–58*](#); [*2 Corinthians 5:6–10*](#); and [*1 Thessalonians 4:13–17*](#). What common message do these passages convey to every believer?

There will ultimately be a day when the Savior will return from the sky and call us up to meet Him in the air, and then we will stand before Him individually and independently and give an account of our lives—your giving your account and my giving my account. And rewards will be given for being “good and faithful servants.” It's nearer than ever. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Wake Up! Put on Christ!

Paul urges us to “put on the shining armor of right living” (Romans 13:12) amid the darkness of our day and to “make no provision for the flesh” (13:14 NASB). How? Pastor Chuck Swindoll helps us with a couple of practical steps.

First, *stay away from anything that weakens your moral fiber*. Think about your routine of life—people, habits, leisure, or work. Is anything weakening your moral fiber? Is there an immediate step the Holy Spirit is leading you to take?

Second, *stay involved in everything that strengthens your walk*. What has the Holy Spirit prompted you to start doing that helps you “clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ” (13:14)?

As you dress for the day every morning, use the following prayer to help you clothe yourself with the presence of Christ before you head out the door.

Every morning say, “Lord, I know You’re in me. I take You with me. Lord, I want Your eyes, Your ears, Your discernment, and Your discipline. I want You to help me when I come to that hard moment when I would normally weaken because I know You are never weak. I lean on You this day, feeling great about the day because it was lived in honor of You.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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A FINAL PRAYER

Express your gratitude to the Lord for the timeless biblical principles you learned from this passage. You've heard the alarm. Be awake. Get dressed for His glory!

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2007, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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