

# Romans 13:11-14—How Believers Grow And Mature So Their Love For God Becomes Their Primary Motivation For Everything They Do, Say, And Think

## Memory Verse

Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

## Outline:

1. The importance of having the right motivation when serving God—receiving our eternal reward
2. Is the believer's eternal reward his only or greatest motivation to obey God?
3. The four types of motivation for obedience
4. How to I begin to change the way I think?
5. The Spirit of God: He is both all that we have, and all that we need to live a live that pleases God
6. Romans 13:11-14—How believers grow and mature so their love for God becomes their primary motivation for everything they do, say, and think

## 1. The importance of having the right motivation when serving God—receiving our eternal reward

Whomever we are, we all have to submit to somebody. Whether it be to the authority structures that God has already put in place (government, our employer, parents, church etc), or directly to God Himself in our personal walk with Him, we are all commanded by God to submit and obey. However, as we learned last time, our motivation for obedience is critical—it must be “as to the Lord” (see Ephesians 5:22). Yes, it is always best to obey (for practical reasons). However, God will reward us, not only for our obedience, but also for our motivation—why we chose to obey. If my motivation is not the highest motivation—love and respect for God—then I won't be rewarded for it. Remember, “*Only one life, will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last*” (a poem by C. T. Studd). Paul writes about the basis of the believer's eternal reward being their motivation—*why* did I obey God?

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 AMP

According to the grace (the special endowment for my task) of God bestowed on me, like a skilful architect and master builder I laid [the] foundation, and now another [man] is building upon it. But let each [man] be careful how he builds upon it,

<sup>11</sup> For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is [already] laid, which is Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

<sup>12</sup> But if anyone builds upon the Foundation, whether it be with gold, silver, precious stones [*these will all result in eternal reward*], wood, hay, straw [*no eternal reward, only shame when we stand before Christ—they will be burned up*],

<sup>13</sup> The work of each [one] will become [plainly, openly] known (shown for what it is); for the day [of Christ] will disclose and declare it, because it will be revealed with fire, **and the fire will test and critically appraise the character and worth [the motivation]** of the work each person has done.

<sup>14</sup> If the work which any person has built on this Foundation [any product of his efforts whatever] survives [this test], **he will get his reward.**

<sup>15</sup> **But if any person's work is burned up [under the test], he will suffer the loss [of it all, losing his reward],** though he himself will be saved, but only as [one who has passed] through fire. [Job 23:10.]

Paul also warns us to not be cheated or taken captive by sin, and so have our eternal reward “stolen” from us.

Colossians 2:8 NLT

Don't let anyone capture [cheat, rob or plunder] you [lead you away as prey] with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.

Remember that Satan only wants to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). We need to protect the eternal reward that God wants to give us for doing, with the right motivation, the works that God has planned in advance for us to do (see Ephesians 2:8-10). Being deceived into either directly disobeying God, or doing the right thing but with my motivation not being my love for, and gratitude towards, God, means that I am being ripped off, cheated, or plundered—my eternal reward from God is being stolen from me by satan, and I am letting him do it.

2 John 8 AMP

Look to yourselves (take care) that you may not lose (throw away or destroy) all that we and you have laboured for, but that you may [persevere until you] win and receive back a perfect reward [in full].

### **Is the believer's eternal reward his only or greatest motivation to obey God?**

Paul looked forward to receiving his reward (see 2 Timothy 4:8), and so should all believers. *However, Paul's primary or most important motivation to obey God was his love for God based on what God had already done for Him—this is the heart of the gospel.*

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 NKJV

**For the love of Christ compels [motivates] us,** because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; <sup>15</sup> and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Here is a good rule of thumb:

✓ If my motivation for obeying God is because I'm thankful for what God has already done for me, and therefore I want to do something for Him, then it's the right motivation. It is based on the gospel (what Jesus did for me) and is according to grace (I do not deserve anything God gives me). I am being compelled or motivated by the Love of God and am full of gratitude and appreciation.

✗ However, if my motivation for obeying God is based on the false logic of—“if I do something for God, then He'll owe me and have to give me something that I want”—then it's the wrong motivation. It is based on the Old Covenant law or works based principle of *earn and deserve*. This leads to pride and ingratitude as we wrongly assume that we have earned what we have, we develop a sense of entitlement, and we forget that everything we receive from God are purely a gifts given to underserving sinners.

So why should I look forward to receiving a full reward? Why should I look forward to receiving one or more of the crowns that God promises to those who serve Him faithfully? *Receiving a full reward is simply the **evidence or proof** that I spent my life habitually loving God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength; that I didn't waste my life chasing the whims and fancies of my feelings and emotions, that I didn't pursue the passing pleasures of sin, and therefore didn't constantly crush the infinity soft and tender and loving heart of my Heavenly Father. **Who in their right mind would not want this to be true for themselves? Who doesn't want to hear their Lord and Saviour say, "well done good and faithful servant, welcome into the joy of your Lord" as He places a crown(s) on their head** (see Matthew 25:14-30, the parable of the talents)? **Who doesn't want to please the One they love the most?***

Again, I want my life to count. I want my life to glorify God. I want to please God. *Why? Because I love Him—the gospel is all about the great gift of salvation that God has already provided for me, and therefore my response to God should always be based on what He has already graciously given and sacrificed for me—Himself (this is the only correct motive for service and obedience). In essence, God promises to reward those who choose to be humble and respond to His love, or, put another way, God rewards those who desire a close relationship with Him and so are willing to forsake all else so that they can walk in fellowship with Him. Therefore, I want to receive my full reward because this is what God desires for me—this is what brings God great pleasure and joy and glory. Like Jesus, I want everything I do to be motivated by a desire to please the Father. Why do I want to please Him? Because I love Him and am thankful for all He has already done for me—I owe a debt of love.*

Now consider the opposite. *Not receiving my full reward means that I have chosen to remain immature as a believer and live selfishly, habitually living out my life in a way that practically and emotionally ignores God, despises His love, and brings much grief to the very soft and tender heart of my wonderful and loving Heavenly Father.*

Ezekiel 6:9 NKJV

Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations where they are carried captive, because I was **crushed [shattered, smashed, break, broken, hurt]** by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols; they will loathe themselves for the evils which they committed in all their abominations.

Ephesians 4:30 AMP

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God [**do not offend or vex or sadden Him**], by Whom you were sealed (marked, branded as God's own, secured) for the day of redemption (of final deliverance through Christ from evil and the consequences of sin).

Summary: Me receiving my full reward simply means that I have lived out my life habitually loving God and not loving myself. This glorifies and blesses God—I have brought more joy to the heart of my Heavenly Father, and less pain and grief. Again, my desire to receive my eternal reward is because I want to see God glorified—*receiving my eternal reward is not about me, rather it's all about God—I only live to please my Abba (Daddy) Father.*

John 15:8 AMP

When you bear (produce) much fruit, My Father is honoured and glorified, and you show and prove yourselves to be true followers of Mine.

Ultimately the glory is all God's—believers who receive a reward will all cast their crowns down at God's feet (see Revelation 4:9-11). *Receiving a reward simply means that, at the end of my life, I will have something to give to God as a thankyou for His sacrifice and great love for me—that His grace towards me was not in vain* (see 1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Galatians 2:21).

Always remember that the reason our great “*God and Saviour... desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2:4), is so that He can enjoy fellowship with us, and we can enjoy fellowship with Him. *Jesus died for all mankind* (see 1 John 2:2), *so that sin would no longer have to separate us from Him. Why? Because He loves us and He longs to be in relationship with us, it's just who God is—“God is love”*.

### **1 John 4:16-17 NLT**

**We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. <sup>17</sup> And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect [mature]. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.**

Again, consider the terrifying alternative. The immature Christian is habitually out of fellowship with God. Therefore, in this life, he is habitually an ungrateful child, who almost constantly brings grief to the tender heart of their loving Heavenly Father. When they receive little or no reward, it will be a painful and shameful reminder of their ingratitude, unthankfulness, unresponsiveness, and hardness of heart, that brought so much shame to God's name and indescribable pain to His heart.

### **3. The four types of motivation for obedience**

Let's now have a look at the four motivations for obedience, and examine ourselves to see where we are at concerning our relationship with God.

#### **1. Fear: I submit to authority because I don't want to get punished (vs 1-4)**

Romans 13:1-4 NKJV

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. <sup>4</sup> For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

This is the lowest and most selfish reason for obedience to any authority, especially God's authority over our lives. This motivation is only for those whose love for God is weak or non-existent, who don't love other people and so have little or no concern for how what they do affects others, and their conscience is seared or dead to what is right and wrong. If this is a believer's highest or greatest motivation for obeying God, then there is real reason for concern regarding their fellowship with God.

#### **2. Conscience: I submit to authority because my conscience tells me that I should (vs 5-7)**

Romans 13:5-7 NKJV

Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. <sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. <sup>7</sup> Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.

This is better, but consider that even many non-Christians live good lives as guided by their conscience—they choose to live by godly principles like having integrity, working hard, being generous, sacrificing for their families, social justice, and treating others fairly, etc. If conscience is all that motivates a Christian to live a godly life, then they still have a long way to go.

3. **Love for others: I submit to authority because I love other people and want to do what is best for them (vs 8-10)**

Romans 13:8-10 NKJV

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” <sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Now we are starting to look beyond ourselves. We are starting to have a genuine concern for other’s wellbeing, demonstrating Gk: *phileo* (brotherly), and Gk: *storge* (family) love. We aren’t just being nice because it makes us feel good (conscience), but rather we sincerely care for others and look for ways to bless them. While this is good and biblical, there is still a greater or better motive for obedience, as even unbelievers are capable of this kind of love and concern for others; “*For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?*” (Matthew 5:46).

4. **Love for God: I submit to authority because of my devotion to Jesus and my genuine desire to please Him (vs 11-14)**

Romans 13:11-14 NKJV

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 armour 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.

This is true kingdom living, and only possible if a man is born again. This is where the believer’s first concern is to please God and bring honour to His name. Here, our unconditional Gk: *agape* love for God (and therefore others) is what drives us and motivates us to love, serve, and submit to God, other people (even our enemies), and all kinds of authority.

How is this possible? It can only happen if we are submitted to, and therefore empowered by (or filled with), the Holy Spirit who lives in us. This is the highest, purest, and best motivation for obedience. Pray that God would help us to mature to this kind of thinking, loving, and living, that we would grow and mature to be like Christ who only had one concern in life—to please the Father.

John 8:28-29 NKJV

Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. <sup>29</sup> And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.”

The primary context in Romans 13 is the Christian's motivation for obeying the government or authority that is put there by God. However, this can obviously be applied to every area of the Christian's life. *The instructions given to us in Romans 13:11-14 are clear and simple—the only thing stopping us from living a godly life is our pride, our stubborn refusal to submit to God's authority over us. Understand that for the believer, obedience is never a matter of ability, but only willingness. We will see this as we study and apply today's passage in Romans 13:11-14.*

#### 4. How do I begin to change the way I think?

It's not about being super spiritual, or being some kind of 'super Christian', rather we just learn to ask ourselves the following *God centred questions* before we do anything:

- "What will *God* think of this?"
- "Will *God* be pleased?"
- "Is this what *God* wants me to do?"
- "Will this please the *Father's* heart?"
- "Will this bless the *Holy Spirit* or grieve Him?"

These unselfish questions or motivations (which can only be asked by the new nature), replace the very selfish questions or motivations (which can only be asked by the sinful human nature) that we often ask or think to ourselves before we make a decision:

- "What will happen to *me* if I do this?" (living by fear of consequences)
- "How will this make *me* feel, will *I* feel good or bad if I do, say or think this?" (living by conscience)
- "What will others think of *me*?" or "Will *I* be popular?" (fear of man)
- "What do *I* want? (motivated by love of self)
- "Is there any benefit in this for *me*?" (motivated by love of self)
- "What will bring *me* the most pleasure or fun?" (motivated by love of self)

We must make a conscious effort to allow God to change the way we think, to renew our minds. We do this by immersing ourselves in the Word of God, and then by faith obey what it says. Remember, one of the evidences that we are maturing as a Christian, and growing in our love for God, is that our love for God's word will proportionally increase. The more we mature as a Christian and grow in our love for God, then the more time we will spend meditating in God's precious and holy Word. Consider some of the practical and spiritual benefits from Psalm 119 (NLT) of reading and meditating on the Bible, God's love letter to us which is "*profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV):

- **Joyful [Blessed, happy]** are those who obey His laws and search for Him with all their hearts. (v 2)
- They **do not compromise with evil**, and they **walk only in His paths**. (v 3)
- Then I will **not be ashamed** when I compare my life with Your commands. (v 6)
- As I learn Your righteous regulations, **I will thank You** by living as I should! (v 7)
- How can a young person **stay pure**? By **obeying** Your word. (v 9)
- I have **hidden Your word in my heart**, that I might **not sin against You**. (v 11)
- I have **rejoiced [true happiness]** in Your laws as much as in riches. (v 14)
- **Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths** in Your instructions. [v 18]
- Your laws **please [delight] me**; they give me **wise advice**. (v 24)
- I lie in the dust; **revive [recover] me** by Your word. (v 25)

- I told You my plans, and You answered. **Now teach me** Your decrees. (v 26)
- I weep with sorrow; **encourage me** by Your word. (v 28)
- **Keep me from lying to myself**; give me the privilege of knowing Your instructions. (v 29)
- I have chosen to **be faithful**; I have determined to live by Your regulations. (v 30)
- I cling to Your laws. Lord, **don't let me be put to shame!** (v 31)
- I will pursue Your commands, for You **expand my understanding**. (v 32)
- Make me walk along the path of Your commands, for that is **where my happiness is found**. (v 35)
- Give me an **eagerness for Your laws rather than a love for money!** (v 36)
- **Turn my eyes from worthless things**, and **give me life** through Your word. (v 37)
- **Reassure me of Your promise**, made to those who fear You. (v 38)
- **Help me abandon my shameful ways**; for Your regulations are good. (v 39)
- **I long to obey** Your commandments! **Renew my life** with Your goodness. (v 40)

Remember, this process of transformation does not just happen; we must work with God! The Christian life is a partnership, with God being the senior partner, and us the junior. If we are going to experience success, then we need to do our part. Reading the bible with faith means that we actually put into practice what we learn.

1 Corinthians 3:9a AMP

For we are fellow workmen (joint promoters, labourers together) with and for God.

2 Corinthians 6:1 AMP

Labouring together [as God's fellow workers] with Him then, we beg of you not to receive the grace of God in vain [that merciful kindness by which God exerts His holy influence on souls and turns them to Christ, keeping and strengthening them—do not receive it to no purpose].

## **5. The Spirit of God: He is both all that we have, and all that we need to live a live that pleases God**

Romans 13:11-14 tell us what our responsibilities are, what we must do. But remember, we do all by God's power working through us. If a Christian tries to change the way they think by their own strength, they will eventually fail—their true level of immaturity will eventually be revealed. They can go through the motions of asking themselves the questions, "What will God think of this? Will He be pleased? Is this what God wants me to do?", etc, but if it is only so that they can boast, so that they can think of themselves as being more spiritual, or have others think of them as being more spiritual, then it's a waste of time. Not only will people see through their false humility, but they will eventually fall into sin—the human strength and desire to live a holy life is very weak and short lived.

In contrast, the main evidence of genuine humility and dependance on God is that:

- We will be thankful and humble instead of ungrateful and prideful
- We will habitually walk with God instead of only short term obedience
- We will have a genuine and ongoing love and desire for the word of God.

To avoid this dangerous trap of legalism or self-reliance, let us see how we are to depend on God as we work hard to put into practice what He asks us to do.

Philippians 2:12b-13 NLT

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. <sup>13</sup> For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

2 Corinthians 9:8 NKJV

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

Ephesians 3:20 NLT

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

1 Corinthians 15:10 NLT

But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favour [grace] on me—and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace.

## **6. Romans 13:11-14—How believers grow and mature so their love for God becomes their primary motivation for everything they do, say, and think**

**Romans 13:11-14 NKJV**

**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 armour 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.**

**Romans 13:11-14 NLT**

**This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armour of right living. <sup>13</sup> Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarrelling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.**

We will look at three very important principles—wake up, dress up, and buckle up—which, if we put into practice, will transform us from being sleepy, dirty, worldly, disobedient, shameful, and immature believers, to being awake, clean, obedient, godly and mature believers.

### **A. Wake up: Live in constant anticipation of Jesus' soon return for His bride, the church**

**Romans 13:11-12a**

**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.**

**Romans 13:11-12a NLT**

**This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here.**



Simply put, Jesus could come at any time, so we must be ready. We don't want to be found to be immature and living a worldly life when Jesus comes back to take us to be with Him in Heaven—that would be the most shameful and horrible feeling imaginable. We don't want to be “caught red handed”, or “caught with our pants down”, as the saying goes. The rapture will be a time of great joy for those who are watching and waiting for it, but if we are not walking with God, if practically we are living as though Jesus won't come back anytime soon, *then it will be a moment of great shame and regret because we did not finish well and so will miss out on our eternal reward.* Consider the similar warnings in the following verses:

1 John 3:2-3 NKJV

Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. <sup>3</sup> **And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.**

Matthew 24:36-44 NLT

“However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.

<sup>37</sup> “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. <sup>38</sup> In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. <sup>39</sup> **People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away [even though Noah was warning them for 120 years]. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.**

<sup>40</sup> “Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.

<sup>42</sup> **“So you, too, must keep watch!** For you don't know what day your Lord is coming.

<sup>43</sup> Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. <sup>44</sup> **You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.**

1 Thessalonians 5:1-8 NLT

Now concerning how and when all this [the rapture] will happen, dear brothers and sisters, we don't really need to write you. <sup>2</sup> For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> When people are saying, “Everything is peaceful and secure,” then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be no escape.

<sup>4</sup> **But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief. <sup>5</sup> For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night. <sup>6</sup> So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded. <sup>7</sup> Night is the time when people sleep and drinkers get drunk. <sup>8</sup> But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armour of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.**

Titus 2:11-13 NKJV

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, <sup>12</sup> **teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.**

David Guzik wisely points out that though a believer may be *physically* awake, they may be *spiritually* asleep, meaning that they are living a worldly lifestyle. He says the following: **“The night is far spent, the day is at hand:** Because we know the danger of the times and we anticipate the soon return of Jesus, we should be all the more energetic and committed to a *right* walk with God instead of a *sleep-walk* with God.

How important it is to **awake out of sleep!** We can do many Christian things and essentially be asleep towards God. What a difference it makes when we are **awake!**

- We can speak when we are asleep
- We can hear when we are asleep
- We can walk when we are asleep
- We can sing when we are asleep
- We can think when we are asleep”

## **B. Dress up: Take off the dirty deeds and sinful living and instead clothe ourselves with Christ and the armour of light**

### **Romans 13:12b-14 NKJV**

Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly [*decently, honourably, respectably*], as in the day, not in revelry [*orgies and wild parties*] and drunkenness, not in lewdness [*any sex outside of marriage and other all other sexual sin*] and lust [*wilfully sinning, abandoning yourself to follow the evil desires of your heart*], 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.

### **Romans 13:12b-14 NLT**

So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armour of right living. <sup>13</sup> Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarrelling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.

Consider what a fireman wears when on duty—he is covered in head to toe with protective clothing and equipment. Why? Because that's who he is and that's what he does. The same principle applies to the believer. **“Wild parties and drunkenness... sexual promiscuity and immoral living... quarrelling and jealousy”** etc, *have no part in the life of the believer—it is completely against the new nature of the believer to clothe themselves with these wicked and evil behaviours.*

v 12 **Let us cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light:** *This is the solution—the believer must choose to (with the right motive): count the cost, die to self, get rid of anything in their lives that hurts their relationship with God, and replace them with things that will benefit and strengthen their relationship with God.*

The road to spiritual maturity is so simple, yet so few believers do it. Why? Because they are not truly living with the eager expectation of the rapture, the soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ—they are not living as though their master could come back at any time—they are experiencing spiritual slumber and therefore remain immature believers. But, if we truly believe that we could give account of ourselves at any moment (we might even die before the rapture), then we will live like Jesus is watching us, that He is coming back for us. We will therefore be responsible stewards of the time, resources, talents, and spiritual gifts that He has left us with (see Matthew 24:45-51, 25:14-30 for two very strong warnings Jesus gave concerning watching, being ready, and having to give account).

v 12 **Therefore let us cast off... and let us put on:** “The rags of sin must come off if we put on the robe of Christ. There must be a taking away of the love of sin, there must be a renouncing of the practices and habits of sin, or else a man cannot be a Christian. It will be an idle attempt to try and wear religion as a sort of celestial overall over the top of old sins.” (Spurgeon)

v 13 **Lewdness or licentiousness:** “The idea behind the word for **licentiousness** is “the desire for a forbidden bed.” It describes the person who sets no value on sexual purity and fidelity.” (David Guzik)

v 13 **Lust:** “**Lust** in this passage has the idea of people who are lost to shame. They no longer cares what people think and flaunt their sin openly, even proudly.” (David Guzik)

v 12, 14 **Let us put on the armour of light... But put on the Lord Jesus Christ:** “*Putting on Christ* is a strong and vivid metaphor. It means more than *put on the character of the Lord Jesus Christ*, signifying rather *Let Jesus Christ Himself be the armour that you wear.*” (Morris)

**C. Buckle up: Make no provision for the flesh—Put on our spiritual seatbelt (set strong boundaries) that will keep us safe from sin**

**Romans 13:14 NKJ**

**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**

**Romans 13:14 NLT**

**Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.**

v 14 **Make no provision for the flesh:** This is where the believer must learn to use biblical wisdom and principles to make set strong boundaries to, at any cost, protect themselves from any sinful influence, and so keep themselves from sinning. The world will call us crazy, and will criticise us harshly, but remember that Judgement is waiting for them (see 1 Peter 4:1-5).

The believer must cut all ties to sin—there must be no compromise allowed. Why? *So that sin will no longer have the opportunity to dominate him.* The ex-alcoholic who thinks that he is strong enough to go back to the bar will not be an ex-alcoholic for much longer—he just made provision for his sin, and so he will sin, sooner or later. Whatever our weakness may be, and it will be different for each of us, we must be willing to do whatever is required to protect ourselves from whatever is a threat to our fellowship with God.

**1 Corinthians 10:12 NKJV**

**Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.**

Remember, **making provision to sin, or letting ourselves think about ways to indulge our evil desires**, is really the same thing as choosing the sin. We have opened the door, we have let the sin in and it now has a foothold in our lives. *The resultant fall into sin is inevitable.* The person who continues to expose themselves to dangerous situations is **asleep and living in darkness**; they need to **wake up and walk in the light**. Again, the motivation for this is that we will all soon have to give an account of our lives to Jesus, and none of us know when that will be—people die every day, and the rapture is obviously incredibly imminent.

**“Make no provision for the flesh:** The flesh will be as active as we allow it to be. We have a work to do in **walking properly, as in the day**—it isn’t as if Jesus does it *for* us as we sit back; instead, He does it *through* us as we willingly and actively partner with Him.

God used this passage to show Augustine, the great theologian of the early church, that he really *could* live the Christian life as empowered by the Holy Spirit—he just had to *do it*. And so do we.” (David Guzik)

### **Summary and conclusion**

The goal for every believer is to mature in their faith so that their love for God becomes their primary motivation for obeying God in thought, word, and deed. We do this by first understanding that we will all face the judgement seat of Christ—we **wake up** from our spiritual slumber. We understand that our motivations will be tested, and that anything not done motivated by our love for God and our desire to please Him will be burned up.

Our goal in life changes to live in fellowship with God and so receive a full reward. We don’t want to lose our reward, we don’t want to allow satan to steal it from us by deceiving us, by us choosing sinful pleasures instead of finding our pleasure in our relationship with God.

Then, in light of this fact we take practical steps, concrete action, so we can habitually walk in fellowship with God. We **dress up** by first getting rid of anything that hinders our fellowship with God, and replace those worldly or unhelpful things with godly things that will encourage us in our walk with God—we put off the works of darkness, and put on Christ and His armour of light. This is the practical outworking of the “renewing of our minds” as we spend more and more time reading the word of God and obeying it.

We are learning to partner with God and depend on His grace. We do this by choosing to submit to the Holy Spirit who lives in us, and so experience His infinite love and power at work in and through us. This is the only way that we can live a life that pleases God.

We then **buckle up** by setting strong boundaries (make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts) so that we will not fall back into the sin which used to control us, and so we maintain our fellowship with God. It is only at this point that the baby or immature believer has grown up and matured into a “young man”—the strong believer in whose heart the the word of God dwells, and who has overcome the evil one (see 1 John 2:12-14).