

# It's Time to Wake Up

by Mack Tomlinson

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*This sermon based on Romans 13:11-14 emphasizes the urgency for believers to wake up spiritually, understanding the critical time we are in as our salvation draws nearer. The call is to cast off spiritual lethargy, live in holiness, and be alert to the divine calendar of God's timing. The message stresses the importance of being spiritually awake, engaged, and intentional in our Christian walk, ready for the consummation of our salvation.*

**Scripture:** Romans 13:11, Hebrews 10:25, 2 Peter 3:8, Luke 22:46, Psalms 4:8

**Topics:** "Spiritual Awakening", "Living in Holiness"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Romans 13, we'll read a few verses, but we'll have one verse as our text. Romans 13, verses 11 through 14. The Apostle Paul says, besides this, or knowing this, you know the time.

It's a picture of a calendar, a timetable. You know the time. That the hour has come for you to wake up from sleep.

For salvation, our salvation, is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone, the day is at hand. So then, let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling or jealousy. But, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. Father, this is your word that you have given, and it's your word for this morning.

So we do echo what we sang earlier. Speak, O Lord. Only as you speak will we hear the living word, will we be transformed and changed.

So we do ask you, beyond me, in spite of me, through me, speak your word to us. Give us ears to hear, give us eyes to see, give us hearts that are engaged. Give us faith.

Grant us the ministry of the Holy Spirit right now, as we look to you. In the name of our Savior, Amen. One of those hymns we sang a minute ago ended this way.

When rolling years shall cease to move. Did you catch that line? When rolling years shall cease to move. That's quite a thought.

And Paul here says in the context of that, it's time to wake up. Children, how many of you ever hear the first words some morning, time to get up? You ever hear that? If you hear that as a young person, hold your hand up. You ever hear that in the morning, time to get up? And you go, no.

It's time to wake up. Well, the Lord says that here. It's time to wake up.

Our Heavenly Father calls to us. He says, hey, time to wake up. It's time.

Sleeping or waking. Now that's the heart of this text. And it is a wake up call.

The context here, obviously, in this chapter in Romans 13, leaves the immediate context. This exhortation, this glimpse of the rolling years ending, is sandwiched between an exhortation of love, the loving your neighbor as yourself, love is the fulfilling of the law, and then the end of the sandwich is exhortations to holiness. Let us put off darkness, put on light, live this way.

Love, holiness, in between there. Time to wake up, Brian. Are we awake? Are we alert? Nathan, you sleep? You drowsy? Don't you go sleep in this sermon.

Time to stay awake. In the bigger way, bigger picture of spiritual alertness or spiritual drowsiness. The subject of sleep.

Who doesn't enjoy sleep? Don't you enjoy sleep? Yeah, we enjoy it. The older you get, the more you enjoy it, right? When you get to have it. When you can't sleep, you long for it.

Sleep is a gift of God. It's a blessing from God. When you think about one-third of our entire life, on average, we're sleeping.

You sleep away a third of your whole life. Isn't that amazing? It really is astounding when you think about that. Sleep is necessary for life, for health.

When you're recovering from surgery, sleep's the best medicine in ways. Psalm 4 says, the psalmist said, I will lay down in peace and sleep, for you make me to dwell in safety. So it's unwise at times not to sleep.

You ought to be sleeping when you ought to be sleeping. But, at times, it's unwise to be sleeping, right? Your house is on fire. When you should be in class or at work and you're drowsy or sleeping.

Driving on a trip. In fact, Proverbs 20.13 says, Loving sleep too much is a sin. Love not sleep lest you come to poverty.

So, sleep at times is good and sleep at times is bad. Paul's words here, it's high time to awake out of sleep. It's no time to be sleeping, he says, when we should be awake as believers.

So, as Christians, we should not be awake physically when we ought to be sleeping, but we should not be asleep when we should be awake, both physically and spiritually. And spiritually, there's no time to be sleeping. Ever.

What's in Paul's mind here? Well, spiritual alertness. Being in tune with life spiritually. Being sharp spiritually.

Being engaged. Knowing the times of what God is doing in the world. Being spiritually clear.

When we're drowsy, whether physically or spiritually, we're not hearing or seeing things. We are not in tune consciously with our surroundings, with the events that are going on, and with what's going on around us. The other night, there was a bad storm.

I forget if I was home. And Linda said, did you hear the storm last night? I said, no, praise God, it never woke me up. So, I like it when noise doesn't wake me up.

So, when we're sleeping, or we're even drowsy, we're not conscious of things. Now, you know, there are various, in the context of this, find yourself. There are various kinds of Christians.

There's the mature. There's the immature. There's the wise.

And there's the foolish Christian, who doesn't even view things rightly. There's the self-centered Christian. My brother-in-law, Richard, who died Thanksgiving Day, I said to the oldest sister, Linda's oldest sister, Cherry, I said, you know, when someone dies that I know and love, I begin to reflect on what I appreciate most about them.

And I said, Richard Valens, I said to her, and it was true, I can never remember a day in the 55 years that I really knew him, that he wasn't kind and thoughtful and a gracious man. He lived that way. And he was marked by that.

So, some Christians are that way. Some are gifted. Some believers are half-hearted.

Just half-hearted about things. Some are thoughtful. Some are half-committed and disconnected from spiritual kingdom reality.

Some are zealous. Some believers are prideful and arrogant. Some are inconsistent and undiscerning.

Some believers are earthbound and the temporal physical dominates their life. And spiritual things are kind of secondary. They're always struggling about kingdom things because they're earthbound with too much about family, children, work.

And the cares of life choke out spiritual reality. So, some Christians are short-sighted, near-sighted, far-sighted. And some Christians are drowsy Christians.

And some are sleeping. What are you? Did I describe you there? What are you? How awake are you spiritually in your life? At times, Paul gave a spiritual jolt to churches and individual Christians. And this is kind of one of them.

It's time to wake up, Paul writes to the Romans. It's time to wake up. So, let's think about this.

Basically, the two things Paul says here. Number one, it's time to wake up. He's calling the Roman believers.

And he's never met them, remember? But this is a principle that is across the board in terms of the economy of God's timing and God's calendar. It's time to wake up. He's calling them to rise out of any

spiritual lethargy.

It's so easy to drift into spiritual lethargy, isn't it? Spiritual laziness. Spiritual drowsiness. To be slumbering when you ought to be awake and alert.

When you ought to be fully all out and alert for the Lord Jesus Christ. You're not. You're not in tune.

The world has put a glaze over you of temporal mindedness. And you're not seeing things spiritually. You're not sharp.

That's what Paul is calling for here. That's what he's calling us to hear. And he's speaking, remember, not to unbelievers.

It's not a call to salvation. Conversion, that is. He's speaking to believers here.

It's not a call to initial conversion. For notice the second half of the verse. You know, the hour has come for you to wake from sleep.

For our salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. Believers are being called to spiritual alertness. So, to awaken fully.

To get a hold of ourselves. Sometimes when I'm driving and I get drowsy and I know I need to get further, I'll roll the window down. Both front windows.

Coal air is filling. In fact, we did this this week on our trip. Linda, we were in Idaho and wherever.

She'd roll the window down to get a good picture. And coal air would fill the car. And I said, well, this is pretty good because I'm more awake.

You know, it woke me up. We have to take measures to not be in moral drowsiness, not be in spiritual sleepiness or laziness. Slumbering when we ought to be awake and alert fully.

There's no time to lose. Paul says our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. So he wants the Romans and you and I to awaken fully mentally and spiritually to the times we're in.

To the circumstances we face as a Christian. As a Christian family and as a church. To be alert to what's ahead as much as we can be.

And how to view your life. And how to live our lives. And the King James says it's high time.

Now, that's not a phrase we use. Have you ever used that? Hey Nick, it's high time. Let's get out of here.

We've got to go. No, we don't use that that way. But it's the picture of it's long overdue.

It is critically important time now. There's no more time to lose. It's high time that all spiritual lethargy is gone from our life.

That all kingdom drowsiness, kingdom half-heartedness must decrease and cease and die and be put to death more and more in our life. There's no place for it, Paul says. It's high time.

It's critically important for us to deal with this so that we will be engaged. So that we'll be all out. So we won't be staying on the fringe of things.

So we won't stay in our safety zone and our comfort zone and we're afraid to get out of there because we have our little safe bubble in our life that lets us kind of be comfortable and get drowsy. Sleeping spiritually is always a danger. And Paul's warning against it here.

It's always lurking around us. I mean, you can be working or reading or whatever, and if you're still, suddenly drowsiness just tries to get you. It's always lurking.

It's always pulling like a magnet. And every Christian at times needs to be awakened, to awaken themselves, to be jolted, to be stirred, to be quickened to new life, to arise out of, to be aroused from a spiritual present state of spiritual laziness, of being satisfied with spiritual mediocrity. I'm okay.

You know, you're coasting a little bit. Nobody knows you're coasting, except God knows it. And you see in your own life, you know, I'm not engaged the way I should be.

I've got to rise up. I've got to wake up. I've got to be quickened.

And so here's a wake-up call by Paul like an alarm clock sounding. Wake up! Paul's saying that. Are you asleep this morning, spiritually or not? Are you slumbering? Or are you fully awake to the things of God and the things of the Spirit? It's high time to awake out of sleep in our own individual lives, in our marriages, in, brothers, our spiritual leadership.

You can't be sleepy when you've got a wife and children to lead and a pastor. In your own church life, in your own involvement, in worship and in kingdom-mindedness. You may be in college, but what you are truly is a missionary and a light and salt in that place where you're going to school.

And there are those you can influence. Spiritual alertness. What about in our personal evangelism and influencing others? It's all too often to drift into slumber and you're around people once or you're around them thirty times a month because you work around them.

And you're spiritually asleep in relation to those individuals. And you don't have the courage to engage them. You don't even try anymore.

You're not intentional. You're personal evangelism. We need to wake up to those around us because often we're slumbering as to the state and needs and conditions of others.

You see people all the time and you observe them and you know by their life and their conduct and their words, you know they're lost. We have a choice. If we have opportunity, what do we do? I love sometimes when I'm in places, if I'm in a restaurant waiting on an appointment or whatever, I love intentionally to open my Bible on the table and I'm reading.

It's not a show I'm reading, but I'm hoping a door is going to open with that server. And often it does. And they say, are you a pastor? How do I answer? I'm a Christian that loves the Bible.

I'm a Christian that loves the Bible. That's where I start. Why? Because I don't want them to think only pastors read the Bible.

Christians read the Bible. What does that say to them? Oh my. And then conversation will start.

I might have 20 seconds. One server came back and started pouring out one day problems. Their daughter messed up, grandchildren, and wanted prayer.

God opened the door to get to the Gospel. What I'm saying is, if we're not alert and spiritually awake, opportunities will pass us by because we're temporal minded and earthbound. Wake up! To the needs and opportunities all around us.

Keith Green used to say, open your eyes. Open your eyes. Remember that song, Open Your Eyes? Right now, think about your own life.

What lost person are you awake about? Right now. You ought to be able to name one. What lost person are you seeking intentionally to try to influence, win, love? Who are you going after? Who are you engaging? Who are you alert to and awake about as far as ministering to them? If you're spiritually slumbering and you drift through months and have not spoken to a soul about your Savior, you are asleep as far as Gospel opportunities and duties.

Now, why does Paul give this clarion call to us to wake up? Well, look at the second half of the verse. The hours come for you to wake up from sleep for or because one reason to awaken. The divine calendar.

For our salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. Paul has in mind this divine calendar, this timeline of God's economy, of the calendar in eternity of moving. God has a calendar.

Events and history is moving, moving, moving in a fast pace. Jonathan Thompson and I had breakfast this morning and he was asking me about our trip and I told him what we drove. And his response was, Man, you were mowing down some miles on that one.

Mowing down some miles. I'd never heard it put that way. Suddenly I saw the miles were just getting mowed as we kept driving.

We drove 15 hours a day. You know what? God is mowing down centuries and decades and years. And you know what? You and I are too.

We're mowing down the years. We are moving. This is saying, Paul is saying, time, the existence of time is on a fast pace scale and God's bringing it soon to an appointed end.

The calendar of time. To see our life in light of the calendar of time, we use calendars and alarms, don't we? Everybody here that has any responsibility uses a calendar or uses an alarm. You keep track, you keep appointments, not forgetting something, to not be late, to be ready.

When do I need to be there? And when does that flight leave? 7 a.m.? I'll show up at 6.50. No, I won't. You're not going to get on the plane. If you don't use a calendar, things are going to mess up in your life regularly.

It's good and wise to use a calendar. And that's what Paul is saying here. It's high time.

It is critical to see the time, spiritually, in the kingdom of God. William Hendrickson translates it this way, You know how critical the time is. Well, let's just pause.

Do you and I view it that way? Can you say in your heart, I know how critical the time of life is. I see how important it is. I see how fast it moves and how I've got to redeem it.

I've got to buy up the opportunities. I see how critical time is that's passing. Paul is telling us that.

You know how critical the time is. The hour has arrived, Hendrickson translates it. The hour has arrived for you to wake up from your slumber.

Wake up from all slumber. Why, Paul? Because the night, he says, That's a picture of this temporal life. The night is fast advancing.

And the day, that's a picture of eternity here. The day is at hand and it's drawing near. Now this is a Pauline motivation toward the end of life and everything wrapping up.

And Hebrews 10 does the same thing. Remember Hebrews 10 says things like this, Let us draw near. Let us hold fast.

Let us consider one another to stir one another up to love and good deeds, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some years. Why? And so much the more because you see the day is approaching. The day is fast approaching.

Every time I go to my hometown Clarendon, five hours northwest of here, and I drive in from the east, and I can think at a certain road. The cemetery is five miles south right here. And I can think, I'll probably be buried there.

Linda and I have two lots there. I don't know if we'll be buried there. I don't care where I'm buried.

Honestly, I don't care at all. But when I drive in there, I say, I may be buried here. And the day is much quicker and sooner than when I was last in Clarendon.

I'm closer to the consummation. And Paul is talking about the consummation here. The day, the final closing, the finishing of our ultimate salvation, conversion, sanctification, Christlikeness, death, resurrection of the body.

Aren't you looking forward to it, Sister Rae? Final glorification? The consummate salvation, Paul said, is nearer than when we first believed. A lot nearer than it was for Paul. How much more is it nearer now than it was for Paul? And it's much closer than when those of us who are here are believers.

No matter if you were converted a year ago or 50 years ago, your final salvation is nearer than when you first believed. The time is drawing near. Time like an ever-rolling stream.

It doesn't slow down. It doesn't stop. It doesn't take a break.

The final closing, finishing of our salvation. So Paul is saying, brethren, because that's true, we cannot afford to be spiritually asleep. You just can't afford to be spiritually asleep.

It will cost you to be spiritually asleep. It will cost you at the judgment seat of Christ to be spiritually asleep. To be oblivious to spiritual realities and priorities and you drift through life in a mundane routine of mediocrity and you're neglecting spiritual priorities and you're blind to them because you're spiritually drowsy.

More than once Jesus' disciples were what? Sleeping. They should have been awake, praying. Luke 22 says, when Jesus arose from prayer, He found them sleeping and He said, what question did He ask them? Why are you sleeping? Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.

To some of us this morning, the Lord Jesus Christ asked you this question. Why are you asleep? And He says to you in your life, whatever level it is, are there not areas you can wake up more in? Wake up, brethren! Jesus said to them, why are you asleep? Knowing the times, the time is critical because spiritual drowsiness contradicts kingdom living. It just does.

Time is running out. All of history and time, time is a created thing, right? That's a big discussion. Anyway, we won't go there now.

But the existence of time is like a jet plane moving rapidly to an appointed end. Now our ultimate salvation, the final regeneration of all things as the Gospel writers state it, the consummation of all things, the ushering in of the new heavens and the new earth, all of it is on God's fast approaching calendar. Now when the apostle Peter thought of that, do you remember what he said? What his attitude was for him and all believers? Look at it with me in 2 Peter 3. This was Peter's attitude about that.

Peter was slumbering once. Here, he's gotten him when he writes 2 Peter and he calls them to spiritual watchfulness, alertness, being spiritually awake. 2 Peter 3 beginning at verse 8. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years.

God has a different calendar than you have. One day is like a thousand years. A thousand years is one day.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a roar and the heavenly bodies, the elements, will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Since all these things are to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness? You see his logic? Same thing Paul is saying in Romans 13. Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn. But according to His promise, we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Brothers, wake up. Sisters, wake up. Be alert.

Stay awake. No slumber in the kingdom. No drowsiness in the battle.

No sleepwalking in the Christian life. Some might think, well, Mack, you're getting old. That's why you talk about this stuff more in recent years because you're thinking more about dying in the end.

But some of you could tuck away the thought in your heart. You know, I've got a long time yet to live. My whole life's in front of me.

So I don't view it the way you do. That's why you're viewing it because you're older. But I've got all the time in the world.

No, you don't. No, you don't. Long life is not promised.

It's not a given. In fact, if you're 18, you've lived at least 25% of your life already on average, right? And I heard Alistair Begg say this one time in a message. The average life has 36,792,000 minutes.

So 36 million plus minutes, the average life. You sleep 12 million of those minutes. You eat your way, as you did Thursday probably, you eat your way through mounds of food in your life, probably for about 3 million minutes you spent eating.

3 million minutes in life you spent just eating. You work another 13 million minutes, some a little more, some a little less. And that leaves you with 8 million minutes.

Well, once you shower and clean up, dress and do all that stuff, you're down to about 5-6 million minutes. Unspoken 4 minutes. So you don't have a lot of time left.

Do we realize God's calendar? Do we realize the connection of how important it is for us to be spiritually awake and alert to where we're going and how soon we'll be in eternity? Intentionality is what the Apostle is calling for. Spiritual intentionality. Don't drift.

Don't slumber. Don't be undiscerning. Don't be drowsy.

Salvation. Our ultimate salvation is nearer, whether our death or whether the Lord Jesus coming and the end of all the ages. God is moving His calendar rapidly and that's His appointed end and He's serious about it.

Our salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed. So let us wake up and be ready. The clock is ticking.

The plane leaves at 2 o'clock. Be there early. Wake up.

Get up. Dress up. Load up.

Going soon because life is a vapor for every one of us. It's high time to wake up more and more. Let's pray.

Father, thank You for the Apostle's words that are so simple really, and yet so profound, so digging into our lives and our souls. So apply this to our hearts. Change us through Your Word by Your Spirit.

Lord, however You need to and whatever needs to happen in our minds and our hearts and our choices and our habit of living to live spiritually awake. Do it in us. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

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