

The Night is Nearly Over, the Day is Almost Here.

For Christians of every generation, “the present time” is no time for spiritual slumber. In fact, the window of opportunity to lead a life of love and service to God and our neighbour becomes smaller with each passing day. The hymn writer James Montgomery has it right when he says that the passing of each day brings us “a day’s march nearer home,” (*Forever with the Lord*, Hymn 497).

Along the same lines, the apostle Paul observes that “*our salvation is nearer now than when we first began to believe*,” (Rom. 13:11). The full realisation of our salvation, either at our death or at the second coming of Christ, is always imminent. Who knows, it could be today! Hence in view of the rapid passage of time, the message is clear: seize the opportunity to live a life of righteousness. The apostle states that in a negative/positive combination: let us “*lay aside the works of darkness*” and “*put on the weapons of light!*”

Laying aside the works of darkness means avoiding the disgusting things that the sinful nature is inclined to do when it thinks it is operating under the cover of darkness and no one will see. Paul’s list of such things is representative rather than exhaustive. He urges us to *avoid excessive feasting or getting drunk, not in sinning sexually and living wildly, not in quarrelling and being jealous!* Paul is not listing every possible sin, but he would have us tailor the list to include our own special temptations and pet sins.

The counterpart to putting off such “*works of darkness*” is putting on the “*weapons of light.*” Or as the apostle also states it, “*put on the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Again, the hymn writer Nicolaus L. von Zinzendorf serves us well when with picturesque language he says, “Jesus, your blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress,” (*Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness*, Hymn 327). Paul used a similar picture when he wrote to the Galatians, “*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ,*” (3:26-27).

Being clothed with Christ means, first and foremost, having faith in the righteousness Christ has earned for us. Adorned with that glorious robe, we have the righteousness that avails before God and thus are assured of our eternal salvation. But having Christ’s righteousness by faith involves more. It also enables and empowers us to live a new life marked by true holiness in our daily lives and conduct.

While such life and activity is not what saves us, holiness of living is not simply an optional feature of the Christian life. It is the mark and sign that our faith truly is living and active. That’s important! James states it very clearly: “*Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead,*” (2:17).

We realise then why Paul devotes almost four chapters of this letter (chapters 12-15) to sanctification, that is, holiness of living on the part of the redeemed children of God. Sanctification is an inseparable part

of the Christian's life. For it to be lacking would be a most distressing sign, even to the point of putting the vitality of our faith into question.

Hence we do well to strive earnestly, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to heed Paul's double encouragement to lay off the works of darkness and put on the weapons of light. Let us do so all the more as we see the Lord's Day approaching. After all, "*The night has advanced, and the day is almost here.*"

*The night is marching onwards,
The day cannot be far.
With songs of praise now welcome
The bright and morning Star.
And all who cried in darkness
Sing too with joy again;
That Morning Star is shining
On all your fear and pain.*

Hymn 738 v. 1