

Put on the Lord, Jesus Christ, Part Two

by John Piper

We are called to wake up from our spiritual sleep and to put on the armor of light, which is faith, hope, and love, in order to live a life that is guided by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Duration: 50:51

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 13:8, Romans 13:11-14, 2 Corinthians 4:6

Topics: "Spiritual Awakening", "Christian Living"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor John Piper emphasizes the urgency of waking up from spiritual slumber and recognizing the reality of Christ's coming. He compares those without Christ to skydivers who are exhilarated by the thrill of life but have no parachutes, facing the wrath of God. The message calls for believers to let the light of the Gospel shine and awaken others to the glory of Christ. The sermon is based on Romans 13:11-14, which urges believers to cast off the works of darkness, walk properly, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at www.DesiringGod.org I invite you to take your Bibles, if you brought one, and turn to Romans 13, verse 11. And if you didn't bring one, just listen carefully, and I'll try to say it enough times, so that you'll be able to follow along.

Two weeks ago we were on this text, and we've spent the first message on verses 11, and the first part of verse 12 on the nature of the time. And now we'll finish it, Lord willing, today. So, Romans 13, verses 11 through 14.

Besides this, you know the time that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep, for 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 and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

Let's pray. Father, we love the sunshine. We know that too much of a good thing can burn a bald head or make a person go dizzy.

And so, Lord, I pray that you would protect your people. Make this a glad day. May the word of God arrive with power here as you are screaming your glory from the heavens.

The heavens are telling the glory, and I pray that the word of God, the two books of God would be opened this morning, the book of nature and the book of the Bible. The Bible is the authoritative one, and the book of nature is sure a booster when it comes to enjoying the glory of God. So come and help me to open this text faithfully and grant your people ears to hear, I pray.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. After chapters 1 to 11 of Romans, Paul now embarks upon the unfolding of the kind of life that follows from what he has opened in chapters 1 to 11.

And what he opened there mainly was that what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did. Sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, he condemned sin in the flesh. So the main point of chapters 1 to 11 is that God has, in his son coming to the world, he has conquered sin and conquered hell and conquered death and taken away guilt and taken away condemnation all by faith alone in Jesus Christ.

And then there's the question, how then shall we live? And that's what chapters 12 and 13 and 14 are unfolding for us. The main thing we have seen in chapters 12 and 13 is that love is the dominant mark of the Christian. We saw it in chapter 12 everywhere.

We've seen it right in the middle of chapter 13, stretching back up to the authority issue with the government and now stretching forward into this issue we're dealing with today. The key verse was, owe no one anything except to love one another. Let every job, every obligation, every duty become an act of love.

It's not duty and then love sometimes. It's not job and then love sometimes. It's not submit to the government and then love sometimes.

It's all of that as an act of love. So love remains the dominant issue in chapters 12 and 13. And now we're moving into verses 11 to 14 of chapter 13.

And we saw two weeks ago that the issue was time. What time do you live in, Bethlehem? And that makes a difference in how we live. And the way we answered the question about the time, knowing the time, verse 11, is that we live in an overlap of the ages.

We live between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ. When Christ arrived the first time 2,000 years ago, the age of peace, righteousness, justice, life, joy, holiness, purity broke into this world. And all of that in measure is beginning to happen.

There's forgiveness of sins. There's the declaration of righteousness. There's the decisive victory over the devil at the cross.

There's the Holy Spirit moving into our lives to enable us to get some victory over sin. All of that is tasting the powers of the age to come. And yet, this old age of sin and misery and death did not end.

All of you, if Jesus doesn't come back before your life is over, are going to get sick, you're going to struggle with sin, and you're going to die. But in this paragraph, verses 11 to 14, the emphasis is not falling on the dark. It's not falling on what is still yet to be overcome.

It is falling upon the inbreaking of the light, the inbreaking of life, the inbreaking of the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. And so that's what we focused on before, and that's what we will focus on now again. What did Paul say about the time that motivates us to live a life of love? And we said three things.

Let me just bullet them before we move into the new part of the paragraph. He said, verse 12, the night is far gone, the day is at hand. In other words, the decisive light has broken into the world in Jesus Christ.

He broke the powers of darkness. It is just a matter of time until the darkness of this world gives way to the sun of righteousness. And that sun right there will become like a candle to the supernova of God's arrival in Jesus Christ.

There won't be any need of that sun, the Bible says, because Jesus will be our sun, our light. God will be the sun, and Jesus will be the lamp. So the night is far gone, the day is at hand, that's the first thing.

The second thing is in chapter 13, verse 11, second half of the verse. Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. Today is the 80th birthday of Dan Fuller, which doesn't mean anything to most of you, but means a great deal to me.

Because Dan Fuller was, for me, in 1968, 69, 70, and 71, God's instrument for turning my world upside down. And opening my eyes to the scriptures and the glory of God. So I got on the email yesterday, and I wrote him a long letter of appreciation and gratitude.

And among the other things that I said, I said, Dan, salvation is closer to you now than it was the day you believed. And every groan of your 80-year-old body is groaning closer to Jesus. Every heartbeat in your fragile old body is a heartbeat closer to the glory of Jesus Christ.

And I hope he takes heart in his 80-year-old frame. And I hope you take heart from your salvation, that is the completion of your redemption with a new body. And no more battle with sin is closer today than it was yesterday.

And every groaning of your aching body means I'm one groan closer to the glory that is arriving. And then the third thing he says, verse 11, first half of the verse, The hour has come for you to awake from sleep. And you remember what we said about that.

Most of the world that is not treasuring Jesus Christ as its supreme treasure is sleepwalking. Even though their life is very glitzy. It's just bombarded every day with advertisements to say, do this and you will live.

When in fact, it's the devil wringing his hands saying, do this and you will go sound asleep. Sound asleep to what that son is really saying today. How many people in Mount Zio hear the glory of God being declared from the heavens? Why? Because they spent all night watching television.

They've saturated their lives with an entertainment mentality. And the spiritual eyes have grown smaller and smaller and smaller until most people without Christ can't see anything glorious in spiritual reality. And Paul says, the day has come.

This is not a time for sleeping. This is not a time for sleepwalking. It's not a time for being like skydivers who, this is like a parable of the world without Christ.

The skydivers are leaping out of their planes and they are watching the air go at 120 miles an hour through their fingers and feeling this is the apex of the thrill of life. But there's just one problem. They have no

parachutes.

And the gravity that is pulling them inexorably towards what will happen in about a minute or two is called the wrath of God. Because Jesus said in John 3.36, those who believe on the son have eternal life and those who do not believe on the son will not taste life. But the wrath of God rests on them.

And they think they are so alive. One of our great tasks is to so let the light of the gospels shine that by the power of the Holy Spirit, eyes will wake up to the fact day has come, Christ has come, the Son of Righteousness has risen over Moundsview and over the Twin Cities. Wake up to the glory of your Savior and believe Him and enjoy Him.

Don't be a sleepwalker. Don't be a sleep skydiver. It's time to wake up.

It's time to get dressed. That's what this text is about today. Get dressed.

Take off your pajamas. Stop going to work in your pajamas. That's what this text is about today for us and for Moundsview.

So, we start now at verse 12. And what we're finding here is that we're being told what to wear as the light has come and what to do in this clothing. Verse 12.

The night is far gone, the day is at hand, so then... You see the logic. Because it is day, so then... cast off the works of darkness. Pajamas.

These are pajamas. Cast off the works of pajamas. One way to define sin is pajamas.

You should be embarrassed to go around sinning. I mean, who would go to work in his pajamas? But people go to work in the works of darkness every day. Hey, it's day.

It's day. Wake up. It's day.

The king of kings has come. So cast off, take off the works of darkness and put on... And then he chooses a word that is surprising. I didn't expect him to choose this word.

It's a word that signals that the Christian life is not just wakeful. It's war. You see that word? The day is at hand, so then... Take off your pajamas.

That is the works of darkness. And put on the armor of light. I mean, I would expect him to say put on a shirt or a cloak or dress well for work or something.

And he says put on the armor of light. So out of the blue comes... I mean, we don't just go from pajamas to clothes to armor. We go straight from pajamas to armor.

What does that say about life? It says life is war. The Christian life is a battle. Though today, oh my, the God has been so merciful to give us a foretaste of heaven today.

We wonder how could we even think in terms of life as being war and a battle and darkness to be overcome. Well, just give yourself time. January is coming.

So put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Now here's my question. What is the armor of light and what does putting it on mean? But let's make the question a little broader.

Verse 12 and verse 14 both use the word put on. Notice verse 14. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

So now you've got two put ons. Put on the armor of light when you take off your pajamas of sin. And put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

So my question really is, what's the relationship between putting on the armor of light and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ? What do those two things mean? And I think the answer is given in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 7 and 8. So if you want to go there with me, you can or you can just listen. I read this two weeks ago because 1 Thessalonians 5, 7 and 8 are the closest comparison in all of Paul's writings to what we have here in chapter 13 verses 12 to 14. When I read it, you'll hear the relationship.

So listen carefully. 1 Thessalonians 5, 7. Those who sleep, sleep at night. And those who get drunk, get drunk at night.

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober. Having put on, now there it is. Put on.

Having put on the breastplate. So now we've got armor. Put on armor.

So we know we're in the same sphere of thought. Put on the breastplate of faith and love. And for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

So Paul mentions two pieces of armor. Breastplate and helmet. We know there are more from Ephesians 6, but that's all he's dealing with here.

We've got a breastplate. Cover your heart and your will. And we've got a helmet.

Cover your brain. Because that's the only three things the devil's interested in. He wants your heart.

He wants your will. He wants your brain. So get yourself covered good here.

And get yourself covered good here. And he says there are three things that this armor stands for. Faith, love, hope.

Sound familiar? These three are the great ones. Faith, hope, and love. So now I come back to Romans 13, verse 12.

And see if this will help us. So then, let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. That is, let us put on faith.

And let us put on hope. And let us put on love. In this world of sleepwalking, the message is coming at you all day long.

Every day from television and from advertising and from all other kinds of things to say, Go to sleep. Go to sleep. Go to sleep with regard to God.

With regard to Christ. With regard to the Bible. And the less you want the Bible, the less you want Jesus, the less you want God, the more effective you know the sleeping pills of the world have been in your life.

And what he's saying here now is faith and hope and love are the antidotes to the soporific effects of the world. Always trying to get you to go to sleep. So combat that sleep-producing effect of the world by putting on faith and putting on hope and putting on love.

Now, that answer to the question of what it means to put on the armor of light is way too vague. Way, way, way too vague. The difference between an evangelical church and a liberal church is that the liberal sermon stops here.

Faith, hope, love. Go do that. And you can fill it up with Buddha or Hinduism or Islam or New Age or pizza, whatever you want to fill it up with.

We don't tell people what they have to believe. Love and hope and faith are good ideas. They're not controversial.

Now, this is an evangelical church, a biblical church, and so we want to say what the Bible says. And so we have to take verse 14 as well as verse 12 and put them on top of each other and see whether or not verse 12 now, as we understand it, sheds any light on what it means to put on Christ. Or vice versa, whether verse 14, telling us to put on Christ, sheds any light on the one we should trust and the one we should hope in and the one we should love.

And so I've already given you my answer to the question, namely, what does it mean to put on Christ? It now means put on faith in Christ, put on hope in Christ, put on love for Christ. That's the way I understand verse 14. So put on a protector, trust Christ for your protection, put on a supplier, trust and hope in Christ as the all supplying one.

Put on a treasure so that you always are beholding the beauty of Christ. So he's your protector. Trust him.

He's your supplier. Hope in him. He's your beauty.

Love him. That's what put on Christ would mean. Put on Jesus Christ means put on the parachute as you do skydiving behind enemy lines.

Put on Jesus Christ means put him on as a I don't know the names of these suits, so I'm trying to just say my description. Put on one of those high impact protective anti explosive suits that you use when you disarm the bombs of the devil. You ever seen those pictures of the guys that find the bus that didn't explode on the bomb and the way they're dressed? You say, well, that really work.

Well, Jesus works. And if the bomb goes off in your face, you don't perish. Put on Jesus Christ means put on those asbestos fireproof suits so that you can go into the hell houses and rescue people from the flames.

And it means put on the bullet proof vest as you stare down the pistols of sin and abuse in people's lives. It means on the on the supply side. It means put him on like a big, a big badge.

You can only get in here with this badge. You know, you go to one of these conferences, got to wear your badge to get in here. Well, the wealth of heaven has a badge, all the supply, all the spiritual things in the heavenly places that you need.

Everything that you need is in God's storehouse. And it takes a badge to get in. And the badge is Jesus.

And so you put on the big badge, Jesus, and every angel at the door says, not a problem. Welcome. Whatever you need, it's here.

So he's a supplier. So hoping and put him on as a as a badge or I don't know the names of these gizmos either. But I go to the airports and I see people walking around talking to themselves, you know, and they have these little gizmos now.

I mean, it used to be that it would dangle down from their pocket and up here and over right here. And they walk around like idiots in the airport just talking to themselves. But now the whole gizmo fits on your ear here and just comes down about this far.

And you can get messages and you can give messages. And all you do is talk into the air and it turns around and comes back into this gizmo and goes out of the air and lands in California. And your fiance can talk to you and you don't have to use your hands or anything.

Put on Jesus like that so that you have access every day, every hour to commune and talk with the one that you love more than you love anything in the world. That's a few things that put on Jesus Christ means the night is far gone. The day is at hand.

Take off the pajamas of sin. Put on the daytime armor of light. Life is war.

The armor is faith and hope and love. So put on faith in Jesus, hope in Jesus, love for Jesus. And now my my question is, how how do you put on faith and hope and love in Jesus? Now, the answer to that question, I think you could give probably by just thinking about the nature of faith, hope and love and where they come from.

Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. Romans 10. So put on faith in Christ would mean listen to the Bible, read the Bible, listen to scripture, hear the preaching of the word.

When you sense that the darkness beginning to gather over you and you starting to fall asleep because of the impulses of the world, take yourself to the Bible and store the Bible in here because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. So if you want to put on faith in Christ, you've got to go to the Bible and learn. Or what about hope? Where does hope come from? Hope comes from promises.

I will help you this afternoon as you go. I will strengthen you. I'll hold you up in my victorious right hand.

So if you want to put on hope in Christ, then you go to the promises, you store them up, you memorize a half a dozen promises so that when the darkness is beginning to close in around you at 11 o'clock in the morning at work because of depression or discouragement or criticism or the allurements of some chick or some computer opportunity to do pornography, you put on the promises of God and thus hope in him and the others fall then back into their darkness where they belong. Or where does love for Jesus come from? It comes from his loveliness. And so you put his beauty before you by his word, by his promises.

So we can answer this question. How do you put on faith in Christ, hope in Christ, love for Christ by saying, get the Bible into your head and get the promises into your head and get the beauty of Jesus into your head hour by hour. But instead of answering it merely by the nature of faith and hope and love, let's let verse 14 and the completeness of it and the relationship between the two halves of it confirm this effort to answer the question.

So we're at verse 14. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. There's something here that confirms me in the answer I've given to how you put on the Lord Jesus.

And it's in these words, make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. Let me unpack that for just a minute. The word provision, *pranaya* means forethought.

Think, think ahead and make some forethought for something. So I'm going to paraphrase it like this or translate it perhaps more literally like this. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and don't let any thought in your head that would.

Now, here again, I'm going to back up and say when this text says so as to gratify your desires, it's jumping over something because in the original it simply says don't have any forethought for desire unto desire. So I think it means not just the gratification of the desire, but the awakening of the desire. So here's what the second half of verse 14 is saying.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, don't let any thought into your head which will awaken sinful desire leading to its gratification. Now, we all know how this works, right? Every person above eight, seven, six, nine knows how this works.

We all know that we can choose to begin to dwell on the thought. And if we do it, if we dwell on this thought, it begins to awaken desires we are not to have. And I know what you're all thinking.

And that's right. But that's not the whole story, is it? Paul gives us three categories of sin, not just one. So let's look at verse 13.

Three categories of sin that you should not let any thought into your brain to awaken desire for them. All right. Number one, let's just read verse 13.

Let us walk properly in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness. That's category number one. Not in sexual immorality and sensuality.

That's category number two. And not in quarreling and jealousy. That's category number three.

And you shouldn't limit the category to the specifics he mentions. What he says in category number one, orgies and drunkenness, is don't let any thought come into your brain that would awaken desires that are inordinate for substance abuse. Alcohol, drugs, marijuana, crack, heroin, nicotine, caffeine.

Ouch. So whatever the substance is, beware, he's saying, of stirring up by dwelling in your mind on any thought that would awaken desire for something that you shouldn't have, or something that you shouldn't have in a measure that you want it. The second one is, don't let any thought in your brain that would stir up inordinate desires for sex.

That's the one we all think of when we think of brain action leading to desires. It could be fornication, sex outside marriage. It could be adultery, wrong sex in marriage.

It could be incest. It could be bestiality. It could be pornography.

And then the third category is, quarreling and jealousy. Don't give any place in your brain for thoughts that would awaken desires for preeminence or control or attention because these kinds of things start to breed quarreling and breed jealousy. So, make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

Don't let any thought into your head that gives rise to sinful desires. Let me be specific. Listen to see if you're included in any of these.

If you are bored, or lonely, or tired, or discouraged, or feeling hopeless some night, don't even ponder the relief that alcohol might bring, or drugs. They simply put you to sleep. They stir up sleepwalking.

They produce works of darkness. It's like going to work in your pajamas. Resist any thought that would say, oh, just a little.

Just a little would bring such good relief when you know you're going to be in trouble. Frustrated housewife, or working mom married to a man who never learned affection, never learned tenderness, never learned how to just talk with you about the things you want to talk about. Don't daydream about romantic Mr. Perfect.

Don't even let the thought into your head of what another man might be like, besides this clunker. There are ways to love him, but that's another sermon. Frustrated husband, or single man who wonders why there's no woman to embrace at this age in my life, or why the woman he gave me doesn't want to embrace me.

Do not let illicit thoughts into your mind. Don't put them there by fantasy, and don't put them there by your computer. Twelve percent of all websites are pornographic.

Twenty-five percent of all search engine requests are pornographic related. Internet revenue is 2.5 billion dollars a year just for pornography. Don't be conformed to this darkness.

Don't walk around in your pajamas all day. Wake up. Put on Christ.

Don't let thoughts into your mind that would produce desires that would then be gratified in ways that would be sinful. What about quarreling and jealousy? What about that category? If you have been wronged, maybe 30 years ago, or you have been overlooked at work, or you have been belittled in some disrespectful way, or you have been misunderstood when you did your best to communicate, or you have been abandoned as a child or as an adult, don't let these thoughts lodge themselves in your head. They simply make provision for the flesh.

They awaken resentment and anger and envy and covetousness and jealousy, which leads to dissension. Put them out of your mind, out of your head. Don't think any thoughts that would awaken sinful desires.

How do you do that? How do you do that? How do you keep a thought out of your head? Just the effort to keep a thought out of your head keeps the thought in your head. I have a lot of experience in this. I do not mean to say that a direct confrontation of a thought is a bad idea.

It is a good idea. I do it virtually every day of my life. Something like this.

A thought could be a lustful thought, could be a greedy thought. More often than not, it's a self-pitying thought. Something that, if they had done it this way, this wouldn't have happened.

Thought. And I, if I'm alone, will say to that thought, No! Get out of my head. Now, I say that's a good thing to do.

And sometimes, by the grace of God, that's all you need to do. But usually, that's not all you need to do, because you just said no so loud, your brain heard you say no. And remembers what you're saying no to, and therefore it's theirs.

Like, I will not think of white elephants. I will not think of white elephants. I will not.

And it's just over if that's all you do is say no. That's why I hate the label just say no. It's not going to work.

It's not a gospel sentence. So what do you do? You've got to become proactive here. Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ means actively.

Not putting out, but actively putting in the words of God that awaken faith. It means actively calling to mind promises that awaken hope. It means actively getting pictures of the glory of Christ, especially Christ crucified for you, hanging on the cross, or rising triumphantly from the dead, or speaking out over a storm-tossed sea, peace, be still, and it flattens, and you don't want to hang around with this Christ in your pajamas.

You want to dress right. You want to put on the armor and say, me and you, Jesus, we're going to Moundsview today. Be gone, anxiety.

But you can't just say, be gone, anxiety. You've got to put on Jesus Christ. And I say, this is a confirmation that we were on the right track when I said how you put on faith, and how you put on hope, and how you put on love, is by calling to mind the Word of God that produces faith, and the promises of God that produces hope, and the beauty of Christ that produces love.

Now I see that verified in the way I understand the last half of verse 14. Make no provision for the flesh. So let me close by reminding us that this paragraph is both an incentive to love, verse 8 of chapter 13, owe no one anything except to love.

Don't owe Moundsview anything except one thing this afternoon. Love them. So it's an incentive to that, because you know the time.

You know the time. It's day. The sun of righteousness is just over the horizon.

But it's also, this paragraph we've just been looking at, is also the opening of what love looks like. See, another difference between liberals and evangelicals is that liberals love love, but they don't want to get specific, like drinking and sex and dissension. It's the details that tell whether you believe your Bible or not.

And so let me just close by showing you that these three categories of sin in verse 13 are given to us to help us learn what love looks like. Very specifically, what I see as I analyze the pairs, the three pairs in verse 13, is that each of them is saying, love does not tear apart what God has put together for our good. Now let me try to show you that in conclusion.

Love doesn't tear apart what God joined together for our good. When you drink excessively, I happen to be a teetotaler for, I think, a number of good reasons. To be a member of this church, you don't have to be a teetotaler.

If your family has always had a glass of wine at Thanksgiving, we're not going to go after you and do church discipline. That's not where we are. You just decide for yourself what is a biblical use of substances like caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, heroin.

There are Christian ways that you don't do that. And I better not say there are Christian ways that you do, because I listed heroin in there. When you drink or do drugs in such a way that your mind ceases to be a faithful guide for your body, you have torn apart what God meant to be together, the mind and the body.

Love doesn't do that. Love doesn't tear apart the mind and the body. Love does things that will keep the mind in good working order to govern this, what C.S. Lewis called, brother ass.

Our bodies are one big pain in the neck. Always wanting more than they should get. Always wanting to look at stuff they shouldn't look at.

Always wanting to eat more than they should eat. Drink more than they should drink. Stay in bed longer than they should stay and get zero exercise.

We are married to an ass called the body. Guess what the ruler of this body is under Jesus? The mind. Filled with the Word of God.

Filled with the promises of God. And filled with the beauty of Christ. So the first thing love doesn't do is rip apart what God joined together, namely the mind and the body, so that the mind would be clear.

Put on Jesus Christ with your mind. Make no forethought. I'm getting all this from that forethought idea.

Put no thought in your brain that's going to lead you to a behavior that's going to separate mind and body and let your body just become stupid on the airplane. You want to know why things get loud on the airplane, on long distance flights? Because the wine is free. People start talking like stupid idiots on the airplane.

And the tongue is totally out of control now after three glasses of free wine on the airplane. Number two. When you cultivate sexual stimulation, whether in your mind or in your body, with a person with whom you do not have a marriage covenant.

Did I say that clear enough? When you cultivate, cultivate, it could be just in your brain by fantasy. It could be in front of the computer. It could be with a real live person you should have no relationship with sexually.

When you cultivate sexual stimulation with the person on the screen, the person in your brain, the person in your bed, with whom you have no marriage covenant, you rip apart what God meant to be united, namely sex and covenant. Sex and covenant. Body and covenant.

Marriage is covenant. Every woman in this parking lot knows you don't want sex without a covenant. And some of you have yielded to it because you want it so bad you thought it might make a covenant.

And it didn't. And it never will. Covenants come first.

And they are deep and they are personal. And they are lifelong bonds. I will be your husband till death do us part.

I will be your wife till death do us part. God made a big, glorious, beautiful covenant in which you can stimulate your sex as much as you want, but not outside. And so love doesn't rip apart what God joined together, namely sex and covenant.

Body and covenant. And finally, number three, when you savor thoughts of one-upmanship, I'm going to get the last word here. I'm going to say something tomorrow that puts him down like he put me down today.

When you savor thoughts of preeminence, I'm going to rise to the top. I'm going to be known as the top. When you savor thoughts of control, I'm going to get my way here at any cost.

No matter what other elders think, what other employees think, I'm going to hold sway here. When you start to think those kinds of thoughts, you are preparing for quarrels and jealousy and discord and thus you will rip apart communities that ought to be communities not of one-upmanship, but communities of forgiveness, forbearance, patience, kindness, meekness, love. So whether it's substance abuse, or whether it's sex, or whether it's dissension in communities, love doesn't rip apart what God has put together.

It doesn't rip apart the mind and the body so the body can just start doing stuff the mind would disapprove of if it were sober. It doesn't rip apart covenant and sex. It doesn't rip apart communities like this one that are made to be beautifully forgiving, patient, kind communities.

So verse 13, let us walk properly as in the daytime. Bethlehem, we're about to go. We're about to go to the fair and we're about to go to the city.

Walk properly. That is, walk in love. Oh, mounds you nothing but to love every house, every person, every trailer that you visit.

Walk in love. Show mounds you today that sharing the light of Christ is what we love to do. Why don't you stand with me as we pray.

Father in heaven, our desire is to love today. We don't want to owe anyone anything except to love them. And so I pray that our whole demeanor would be filled with thankfulness to Christ that He saved us, thankfulness to Christ that heaven is open and we're heading home, thankfulness to Christ that the night is far spent, the day is at hand, thankfulness to Christ for beautiful weather, thankfulness to Christ for health in our bodies, thankfulness to Christ for something worth sharing with others, thankfulness to Christ for 60 plus ministries in there and yes, all the missionaries from Bethlehem too.

Lord, we are a brimming people today and I pray that we can just spill over now on to Mounds View and hold out to them an invitation to come to Bethlehem in a couple of weeks. Into your hands I commit your people, Lord. Conquer the darkness, overcome anxiety, give us direction, may wonderful divine encounters happen today, may there be providences being set up right now in homes so that when we arrive, they might even say, we were wondering if somebody would do this today.

Lord, grant miracles of salvation today, we pray. And all the people said, Amen. You are dismissed to your place.

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