

Awake!

Romans 13:11-14

Introduction

Admiral William McRaven – is a retired U.S. Navy Admiral

He wrote a book giving ten life lessons he learned from his Navy Seal training

His class of recruits began with 150 men – but only 42 made it to the end and graduated to become Seals

One of the lessons came when he and his swim partner were to swim a mile off the beach – at night - - in waters that contained sharks

They were warned – these waters contain Mako sharks / hammerheads / leopard sharks / but the one most feared was the Great White

They explained to us that no one of the SEALs has been eaten by a shark – at least not recently

And they instruct you that if a shark begins to circle you – stand your ground – do not swim away. Do not act afraid – and if the shark, hungry for a snack – darts toward you – then punch him in the snout and he will turn and swim away.'

Admiral McRaven: 'There was something a little unnerving about being alone, at night, in the middle of the ocean, knowing that lurking beneath the surface was a prehistoric creature just waiting to bite you in half. But we both wanted to be Seals so badly that nothing in the water was going to stop us.'

The Christian is given similar warnings about hazards and dangers we encounter in the life of faith

We too – are called to stand our ground against our enemy

James 4:7 - 'Resist the devil and he will flee from you.'

Don't run / don't panic - - - resist – call on the name of the Lord

McRaven – gave another lesson about the importance of 'not giving up' in the fight

He and another partner – 'a swim buddy' – had to compete against other Seal teams in swimming and various exercises - - - if you came in last place for the day - - - your name made the Circus list.

'The Circus' was held every afternoon at the end of training – it consisted of two additional hours of calisthenics – combined with nonstop harassment by Seal veterans who only wanted the strong to survive training.

What made the Circus so feared by the recruits was not just the additional pain but also the knowledge that for the next day of training – you would be so exhausted from the extra workout and fatigued that you would likely end up on the list again!

As one Circus would follow another – it was a kind of death spiral that caused many to drop out

As Admiral McRaven recalls – he and his swim partner – went thru the grind of the Circus numerous times – which consisted of push-ups / pull ups / sit-ups among other exercises. By the time the sun went down – they could barely move

As the Circuses continued – a funny thing happened. “Our swims got better and Marc and I began to move up in the pack.”

The Circus, which had started as punishment, was making them stronger, faster, and more confident in the water.

On the day of final exam – they came in first in their class

McRaven: 'In life you will face Circuses . . . but if you persevere, if you let the Circus teach you and strengthen you, then you will be prepared to handle life's toughest moments.'

In a similar way – we are told that in the Christian life – valuable lessons come to us thru trials and tribulations in our journey

Romans 5:3-4 - 'And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope.

In this next section of Romans – Paul brings us to a classic motivating principle in living out the Christian life

He says – we are to know the time

This evil age will come to an end – this world is not our home – we are just passing through

John Phillips: 'Every day we pitch our tent a day's march nearer to home.'

Romans 13:11 - 'For now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.'

I. Armor of Light! - vv. 11-12

Do this - - - fulfill the law of love [vv. 8-10]

To walk in love – and obedience – day after day requires us to wake up / be alert

Sleepiness is a metaphor for moral laxity and carelessness

The night refers to this present darkness that is upon the world

We are to awake out of sleep / throw off the old clothes of the night / put on Christ Jesus / and be armed and prepared for the conflict of faith [fighting the good fight] – against sin / Satan

We have an enemy in the Christian life - - - 'Satan' means adversary

Joel Beeke: 'If you are a true believer; Satan hates you because you bear the image of Christ . . . Satan hates you because Christ is within you and because you love Christ.'

He is also a potent enemy

Joel Beeke: 'Satan is a confident, experienced adversary. Who has wrestled with him without being wounded? If great men like Noah, Lot, David, and Peter fell under Satan's temptations, how can we hope to withstand the tempter? Do not presume that you can defeat the devil in your own strength.'

We are called to be aware / alert because of Satan

I Peter 5:8 - 'Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, [διδυμοειδής] prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.'

We have to put on the armor of the day / armor of light

Satan is not omnipotent / neither is he omniscient

He can be resisted – and he will flee from us

We are to lay aside the deeds of darkness

Al Mohler: 'The world surrounds us with a circus of temptations. In fact, our culture considers it unnatural to resist these temptations.'

We have a model for responding to temptation – in the way Christ responded to His temptations from Satan

He responded each time with the word of God

Matthew 4:8-11 - 'Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things will I give You, if you fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Begone Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'" Then the devil left Him; and behold angels came and began to minister to Him.'

God's Word is part of our spiritual armor

Kevin DeYoung used God's Word this way

Kevin DeYoung: "Years ago there was a house in our neighborhood I often went past on my way to work. I don't know who lived there and never met anyone from the house. But frequently in the summer a young lady in an immodest bathing suit would wash the car in the driveway. Matthew 5:8 was the sword I used to slay my temptation to turn my head and take a look. I thought to myself, 'I want to see God, I want to know God. I don't want to feel distant from Him the rest of the day. I know fellowship with God is better than a 3 second glance.'

Matthew 5:8 - 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

We have to store up Scripture in our minds so we can take it out and use it in the battle

Paul says: Wake up! / get rid of that sin / pull yourself together / quit making excuses

Remember - - the nighttime of world history will soon give way to the daylight of Christ's kingdom

Our world – during this time is hostile to God and does not recognize the hour it lives in

John 3:19 - 'this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.'

The current arrangement is temporary / fleeting / soon to pass away

The day is dawning

The fulness of our salvation draws closer to us with each passing hour

II. Works of Darkness - vv. 13 -14

Sometimes certain verses of Scripture become associated with the conversion of a noteworthy person in the faith

This was true of Saint Augustine - and Romans 13:14

Romans 13:14 - 'But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.'

Augustine grew up with a pagan father and a Christian mother

He saw the Christian truths with his mind – but his heart was holding on to a life of sin

He once prayed, 'O Lord – give me chastity but not yet'

His mother was continually praying for his conversion

As a teenager – he indulged in the sins of the flesh - - - and eventually settled down with a concubine - - - to whom he was not married

Then one day – in Milan, Italy [around 30 yrs. old] with his friend – Ambrose [383 AD] - - - he heard a child's voice telling him 'tolle legge' – take up and read

He found a nearby bible and happened upon the text of Romans 13:13-14

And that finally broke the logjam in his soul – he turned to Christ / turned from his sin

He would later write in His Confessions

Augustine: 'Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee.'

God used this text to awaken his soul - - -

The Christian life calls for vigilance / sobriety / alertness

I Corinthians 16:13, 14 - 'Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.'

Admiral McRaven shares another story from his Seal days

He had come out of the surf and his commanding officer told him to make himself a 'sugar cookie' - which was not a good thing!

McRaven; 'In all of SEAL training there was nothing more uncomfortable than being a sugar cookie.'

Becoming a sugar cookie – meant that you had to jump into the water – get soaked from head to toe – and then roll around in the sand on the beach and cover you whole body with sand

It was a test of your perseverance – as you had to spend the rest of the day with sand down your back / on your neck / on your legs - - - and there was often no rhyme or reason to it. You became a sugar cookie at the whim of the instructor

His instructor Moki hollered at him

‘Hey Mac, do you have any idea why you are a sugar cookie this morning?

‘No, instructor Moki’ – I dutifully hollered

“Because – Mr. Mac – life isn’t fair and the sooner you learn that – the better off you will be.’

Moki was a phenomenal athlete – and several years later - he was out on a 25 mile bike ride and collided head-on with another rider. The other guy emerged – relatively fine – but Moki became paralyzed from the waste down – never regained the use of his legs

After the accident – he became a phenomenal painter – continues to oversee the Super Frog Triathlon – that is held every year in Coronado

MacRaven: ‘For the past 35 years, Moki has been in a wheelchair. In all those years, I never once heard him complain about his misfortune in life.’

McRaven: ‘Sometimes no matter how hard you try, no matter how good you are, you still end up as a sugar cookie. Don’t complain. Don’t blame it on your misfortune. Stand tall, look to the future, and drive on!’

I Corinthians 16:13, 14 - ‘Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.’

If we are to behave properly – as in the day – not in carousing / drunkenness / sexually promiscuous - - - we have to recognize the time / the hour in God’s program

We have to see sin’s association with the darkness of a world in rebellion

The pagans worshiped the god Bacchus – [the god of wine and revelry]

Bacchanalia was an orgiastic feast involving gluttony / unbridled sexual behavior

Many of the Greeks were saved out of paganism - - - and were to make sure these sins did not creep back in to their lives

I like the story of President Truman

Harry Truman visited Germany after the allied victory at the end of WW II – one of the soldiers who was escorting him around said to him – ‘I can get you anything you need Mr. President – Tobacco, alcohol - - - even women’

Truman pulled him up short: ‘Son I married my sweetheart and she doesn’t run around on me – and I don’t run around on her!’ – I don’t want to hear that kind of thing again!

That’s it!

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ – and make no provision for the flesh

Rioting and drunkenness are deeds of the flesh

Night is often the time for sinful deeds / under cover of darkness

Men and women who are living on the edge of eternity should not mess around with such things

Put on the armor of light

Eph. 5:8 - 'For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light.'

No Provision for the Flesh – v. 14

We are to put on Christ – Christian works

Sin is like a dirty garment that needs to be cast off – quit wearing that!

Those things belong to the night – we belong to the day

Sanctification is a process / we grow – we don’t become perfect the moment we believe in Christ – our sanctification is a life-long journey

When I got drunk on my 20th birthday – and wrecked my car - - - you would think – that’s it / he’s done with that stuff – he’s learned his lesson

And it did mark a turning point in my life towards God – but I had to try the party scene one more time - - - I’ll go but I won’t drink – that didn’t work – I came home drunk one more time - - - then that was it

Kevin DeYoung: 'The Bible is realistic about holiness. Don't think all this glorious talk about dying to sin and living to God means there is no struggle anymore or that sin will never show up in the believer's life. The Christian life still entails obedience. It still involves a fight. But it's a fight we will win . . . Sin may get in

some good jabs. It may clean your clock once in a while. It may bring you to your knees. But if you are in Christ it will never knock you out . . . Sin has no dominion over you . . . You serve a different Master.'

Put on Jesus Christ

He is my Lord - - - we are here to do what He says

I Corinthians 6:20 - 'For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.'

Later on – I went to a semi-pro hockey game with one of our elders at the E-Free church where I served as an Associate Pastor – and he shagged down a beer from the beer guy – and asked me if I wanted one

I was like: 'What?' - - - you mean? - - - I politely declined

That was my way of making no provision for the flesh

Benjamin Needler: 'We must not part with sin, as with a friend, with a purpose to see it again and to have the same familiarity with it as before, or possibly greater . . . We must shake our hands of it as Paul did shake the viper off his hand into the fire.'

I like that picture – shake it off into the fire

Beer may be an old friend – but I don't want to see him again!

Making provision for the flesh is planning for it / arranging things so that the flesh can be gratified

Don't go where you know you'll be tempted

I've heard several speakers who travel a bit and wind up at the end of the day in a hotel room by themselves – and they confess that the TV can be a big occasion of stumbling – they have different movie channels they don't put on their TV at home

Some men will even ask the hotel to remove the TV from their room – before they return

People rationalize – 'What's the harm?' / etc.

The moment we start to rationalize – is the moment we make provision

Denny Burk: 'The human heart has an uncanny ability to rationalize the evil it perpetrates. This is especially the case with sexual sins . . . to rationalize is to allow my mind to find reasons to excuse what my conscience knows is wrong.'

We begin suppressing the truth / making excuses

John Piper comments on this sin - - -

John Piper: 'Seeing naked women on the screen - or naked men - causes a man, or woman, to sin with their minds and their desires, and often with their bodies. If Jesus told us to guard our hearts by gouging out our eyes to prevent lust, how much more would He say, "don't watch it!"'

There is no fool-proof way to guard yourself from all temptation

We live here in this world of darkness – in rebellion against God

You and I are to fight / resist – pray -in the power of the Spirit – using the weapons of our warfare

And we take encouragement in facing the hazards of the battle – from our God / His Word

Joshua 1:9 - 'Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.'

Conclusion

I John 1:6-7 - 'If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.'

What a glorious truth – our fellowship is in the light

When we come to the eternal state – we read:

Revelation 22:5 - 'And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.'