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# The Epistle of Romans

The Justification of the Ungodly

Romans 13:11-14

Verses 11-14 are not a pep-talk. Paul is not trying to get us pumped up to get into action before Jesus comes back. As a commentator on Romans states, *"This is not merely a paragraph tagged onto the end of imperatives to heighten the urgency of some ethical appeal to action: 'you had better really shape up starting now because the judge Jesus is coming back very soon – and he is ever mad!'"* Instead, Paul is again sharing the reality and power of the Gospel. Paul is pointing to the reality of the Christian's posture, attitude, and behavior within the new reality of the Gospel.

But when is the season or hour? Paul is not simply talking about the coming end of the world. While it is true that each day of our life is a day that much closer to Christ's second coming, Paul is drawing attention to the fact that now - in this moment - is the eternal victory of Easter! The Christian lives in the light and the new day, even though he still is a pilgrim through this life under the sun. We live in a paradoxical state where what is to come is ours currently right now; however, we still put up with this vale of tears. We possess Christ and His Easter victory, yet we are still bombarded by sin, death, the devil, and the world. As stated before, we live simultaneously as heirs of

Christ, while also enduring the pains and struggles of this life. From our baptismal birth until our physical death, we live in a broken framework where we currently possess the gifts and power of God yet we are still pilgrims in this life. We walk in light and darkness. We have a new man in Christ and the old Adam. We are flesh and spirit. We have eternal life and yet we die.

The implications of all of this means that we are to put off that which belongs to the old Adam and the works of darkness. Why? Well, we are baptized! We do not belong to darkness but to light. In baptism we were snatched from the clutches of the devil and placed in the kingdom of light. This is exactly what we hear from Colossians 3:1-17. We read that this old Adam, along with its fruit, must be put to death. Yes, Paul says that the old Adam and its fruit must not be reformed or converted or improved, but put to death, put away, and stripped off! The sinful old Adam mustn't pass 'Go' and does not collect \$200. In other words, the old Adam is not to be treated with kid gloves, but rather, this old Adam is to be treated as an enemy combative. This old

Adam needs to be kicked around – admonished, forced, threatened, punished, and ultimately executed.

So, instead of letting the old Adam have his way, we instead confront the sinful nature. Remember you are a Christian, the sinful old Adam can never be given asylum with a Christian. The sinful nature is never to be granted a voice or a safe haven with the Christian, for it is our enemy. And so, when the stubborn sinful nature grumbles, you kick the old Adam and drag this sinful nature to church, where you stand shoulder to shoulder with everyone else and confess, *"I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You O God all my sins..."* And then the pastor hearing the confession, makes the sign of the cross reminding you of your baptisms while saying, *"In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you of all of your sins."*

And at that moment the old Adam is executed – the old Adam is plunged into your baptisms where it drowns and dies. Indeed, at that moment your faith is strengthened – faith that kills the old Adam and makes you altogether a different person

And here is the catch, dear Baptized Saints, this is the life of the Christian. *"The daily Christian life is nothing other than a daily baptism. Because you belong to Jesus and because you have been put at war against your old Adam, you are to daily plunged into your baptisms by confession. Yes, when you confess your sins and confess the old Adam within you, the Lord declares to you that you are baptized - forgiven! Your baptism is not just a past event but a present reality. You received forgiveness of sins in baptism, and that forgiveness remains day by day as long as we live, that is, as long as we carry the old creature around our necks."* [Martin Luther]

So, we fight against the old Adam, not by reforming the sinful nature or trying to make it better, but by putting it off – putting it to death. And when we attack the old Adam by confessing, which is repentance, we are also walking in our baptism (putting on righteousness) where we are given the grace, Spirit, and strength to fight the good fight and finish the course.

Strip off the old Adam, put him to death, for you have died in Christ and are raised anew by faith in Him – clothed in the radiance of your baptisms. The old Adam cannot be carried forward because Christ is your life!





