

Prestonwood Connection 2004

#8 YOU ARE TESTED BY TIME

Romans 13:11-14

Wednesday, November 3, 2004 • Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message #7 **YOU ARE TESTED BY TIME**]

...about those who were born again and then I started hearing about moral values and a..., I can't think of anytime in my lifetime that I've heard more commentators on more networks say those same words over and over again and the bottom line is, we stood up, we spoke up, we showed up and tonight we're here to give God the glory and the thanks for a new day in America. [applause] Amen!

Romans chapter 13 is a passage of Scripture that we've been looking at a..., over the last few weeks that we've been together and we've been looking at it because we've been studying together a subject, a...a series of messages that I've entitled *The Life You Were Born To Give*, and we've been learning about the purpose of our life in becoming followers of Jesus Christ and then the stewardship of that life as it relates to all the different spheres and arenas of life, the areas of life from day to day and so in that investigation and in that study we've been looking at one of the most foundational of all of the issues and this is the foundational passage that speaks to that issue, it is the matter of the Christian's citizenship as it is discussed in the Bible. In fact Romans 13:1 says:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

And so as we read that passage of Scripture we understand that we as Christians, living on this side of Heaven, have a civic responsibility in this society. But not only does Romans 13 talk to us about our citizenship, it talks specifically to us with prophetic emphasis and urgency about the work and the role of the church fulfilling the purpose of God in this generation and so it is that prophetic that I want us to look at and that I want us to embrace tonight, because I can't think of any passage of Scripture that it would excite me more to speak about than this passage of Scripture tonight. Romans chapter 13, beginning in verse 11, look at it with me if you will:

¹¹*And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.* ¹²*The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.* ¹³*Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.* ¹⁴*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and*

make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

If I could take those 4 verses that I've just read to you and summarize them in 2 simple words, do you know what those words would be? **WAKE UP!** [slight congregation laughter] I say that because a..., probably many of you are on the edge of falling asleep tonight depending on how many hours you stayed up last night. So I decided that you certainly could use a wake up call here tonight, but I say that to you tonight with emphasis and urgency because that is God's Word to His church. Wake up church! It's time for you to awake out of sleep and it is time for you to live in the light because I have a mission and I have a purpose that is here for you. I believe that in a way like never before the church of Jesus Christ has experienced a wake up call in America. I believe that what we have seen unfold and the pressure and the struggles and the tensions that we have felt, as we've seen ourselves moving ever, ever nearer to seeing our values and the foundations of our faith be, as though it were, destroyed and our secular society, as though it were today, has been nothing more and nothing less than God trying to get the attention of His church to say, hey, it's not about parties, it's not about platforms, it's not about politics, it's about people and the critical issue in America is what is the character of the American people and by the grace of God I think we have a fresh opportunity to do something about that as followers of Jesus Christ and I believe that what we've just experienced and what we've just seen is a wake up call to us. Now obviously we're well aware of the fact that our institutions of education have long undermined a..., the foundations of our history, by presenting forms of revision as history and philosophies that have gone contrary to what were a part of the founding fathers vision and dream for America and so education has turned the tide of America and while we have tried to use that as the Master Card of opportunity for the future, in many ways education has worked against us in this nation. At the same time entertainment has done the same thing in America. Our forms of entertainment and our styles of entertainment have bought into perversion and immorality and the ultimate result of so much of the entertainment in America today is that it has desensitized us to sin and it has taken us to a place where we no longer have the fear of God and we no longer have a sense of national pride or national shame. We look at our social life, we look at our family life and the fragmentation that has occurred in our society and with our family lives have just caused an unraveling of the culture and of the continuity of who we are and what we are as a people and as a result we realize there's a great need to respond to this issue and the needs to the family today. That's why I'm so grateful for a church that's so committed to families and children and parenting and marriages and building a family of faith so that people can have community and connectedness, because that's what we all so desperately need in this world and then of course we're well aware that there are churches that are dead and pulpits that are dry or worse yet pulpits that have become apostate, not faithful to preaching the truth and the message of the gospel of Christ and all of this is nothing more and nothing less than what Paul was saying to the church at Roman when he said it's time for you church to wake up. I want you to notice what he said there in verse 11, he says:

...knowing the time,...it is high time to awaken out of sleep;...

And I believe that what we have tonight is a fresh encouragement and a fresh opportunity to wake up and to get a...aware and alert again. Literally, the alarm is ringing, the chime is sounding and church it is time for us to answer afresh and anew the call of God. Let me ask you, do you know what time it is tonight? Do you have a sense of the time and the timing and the season a..., that we have stepped into today and in these days that are before us? Great days of opportunity, great days of...of a..., responsibility for us together and it's so very important that we know the time and that we respond to the call.

One of the most enjoyable things that I did today was I called my son, Joseph who is a freshman up in Liberty University and he had his first opportunity to vote and so it was great to call him and a..., to share the joy of being a part of all of this and what's happened. If that gives you any idea of how he voted I told him he picked a winner and so I was proud of him and I encouraged him as...a...as we talked. But as I was talking to him I was thinking about the fact that this has been such an unusual time in my life to a..., in August take him there to school and I've seen him one time since then and a..., it's just been great but I'll tell you one of the strangest things I did this fall in my life was to go up there and to visit him after he'd moved in and settled into his dormitory apartment there and visited a..., him and those roommates that were there with him and it's sort of a weird thing as a parent to go visit your child for the first time in their place that's no longer your place and a..., I had that opportunity.

And it reminded me of a story that I heard about a young man who had gone off to college and some of his family and friends came to see him and they were walking around seeing his dorm, seeing this apartment that he was living in with some friends and a..., they were looking at things that were there but they noticed rather strange over in the corner, it was a big gong with a metal hammer and one of the guys walked over and said to him, "What in the world is this?" He said, "That is my talking clock." He said, "Your talking clock?" He said, "Yeah!" He said, "Watch this, sit down." The guy sat down and he took that hammer and boooooom he hit that big old gong and about that time just a massive reverberation, just a gong sound went off and about that time you heard a, [raps on podium] "Hey, jerk, don't you know it's 2 o'clock in the mornin?" from the wall next door. [slight congregation laughter] Well, we need to know what time it is and we need to know that the gong is sounding, the bell is ringing and it's time for us to wake up and for us to respond. We are the church of Jesus Christ, given fresh opportunity, fresh vision, fresh renewal today to go forward with a mandate in our hearts to live out our faith to the glory of God. Now is that a new mandate? Of course not! That's what we've been doing for the last 2000 years, but we're doing that afresh and anew in our lives, in our community, in this city and at this moment in time because this is God's hour for us.

Dr. Al Moeller who is the President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary a..., in Louisville, Kentucky wrote these words:

"The shape of the evangelical challenge in post-modern America comes down to this; we must be continually on the alert to defend the faith, for the Christian faith now faces unprecedented attacks, the rise of post modern culture has produced an intellectual context in which the very concept of truth is held in suspicion and claims to reveal truth are simply ruled out of order."

Well, that is our day and that is our time and all that I'm saying to you tonight is that it is rally time for the church of Jesus Christ. Amen? It is rally time and it's time for us to rally and it is time for us to run the race looking unto Jesus. For too long we've been lethargic. For too long we've been silent. For too long we've been apathetic. For too long we have been, as though it were, asleep and I think that with a fresh renewal of understanding we now see and know that we can overcome evil in this world if we will just do good, if we will just do what is right. I was speaking just a few moments ago, before I came in here, to our dear friend Tony Evans on the phone and havin just a great visit with Tony and of course Tony has been a part of a..., one of the challenges that the president has given a..., to try to give expression to faith and to give encouragement to faith based initiatives and Tony has shared a great vision here in the city of Dallas of getting urban churches to partner with churches where there is need for help and support in all sorts of economic and education issues in the inner cities and then getting suburban churches to partner with those to bring prayer and resource and help and a..., it's a great vision that's going to be fulfilled, that's going to bring together races and cultures and people groups and gonna do a lot of good and I'm just saying to you today I think afresh and anew we just need to do a lot of good in the name of Jesus and to do it for the glory of God.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon spoke of the day in his day when he said:

"We have come to a turning point in the road. If we turn to the right we may have our children and our children's children will go that way, but if we turn to the left, generations yet unborn will curse our names for having been unfaithful to God and His Word."

Well, I believe that's a word that rings afresh to us tonight and so tonight what I wanna do is I wanna give you 3...3 things that we need to do as the church of Jesus Christ if we're gonna answer this time, this call, this chime that God's given to us and it's seen right here in this passage that we've read.

...this do...

Verse 11:

...knowing the time that it is now high time to awake out of sleep; for our

salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

What's the first thing that we need to be doing this day and in this hour? Well, #1 **WE NEED TO BE WATCHING THE CLOCK.** We need to get our eye on the clock. We need to be a people who understand the importance and the value of the stewardship of our time. All of this series of messages a..., have focused on this idea of stewardship and life management and what we are to do with what we've been given. Well, can I submit to you tonight that you and I have not been given anything greater than the wonderful gift of time. [Psalm 118:24]

This is the day that the Lord has made; and we will rejoice and be glad in it.

And we thank God for every day and every hour and for the time that has been given to us and this time that we live to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul not only wrote this here in Romans about knowing the time and it being high time that we awaken. Over in the book of Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 15 he said this:

¹⁵*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,*
¹⁶*redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

We need to be very serious about what we do with our time and how we spend our time. It was the inventor Thomas Edison, who invented over a hundred different time saving devices who said:

"The most important thing in the world is time."

Time is the most important thing in the world and then it was Benjamin Franklin one of our forefathers here in America who said:

Doest thou love life? Then do not squander time for that is the stuff that life is made of.

Don't waste time. Live with a sense of purpose. Live with a sense of mission. Have your eye on the clock and don't live, not so much that we would live with a sense of a panic, but with a sense of order, with a sense of responsibility and with a sense of doing what matters. Have you ever noticed how many times we use words and terms that we associate with money that we associate with time? We talk about saving time. We take about spending time. We talk about investing time and that's exactly what we say about money isn't it? We talk about spending it, investing it and saving it. Well I just submit to you that there's not a greater commodity in all the world that we have than our time and therefore when Paul is saying to the church it is high time, he's sayin listen, don't waste your time. To waste your time is to waste your life and I'm afraid far too many of us are marking time and wasting life. Guard your time. Manage you time. Use your time. How much is lost in the life and the energy of the believer and of the church today simply because we do not guard our time? Mismanagement, procrastination, the great theologian Mark Twain said:

"Don't put off till tomorrow what you can put off till the day after tomorrow."

Heh! [slight congregation laughter] I'm afraid there are a lot of people that live by that mindset and that mantra and how many times is it that we're not effective for Christ because we're not effective in the management of the greatest gift that He's given to us, our time? Moses prayed in Psalm 90 in verse 12:

Teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

And if I could just share with you what is on my heart tonight, it is this, that that passage of Scripture would become the prayer of Christians in America in this day and in this hour. Lord, teach us to number our days. Help us Lord to be faithful. Help us Lord to be focused. Help us Lord to live and to understand the value and the measure and the balance of time. It was Charles Hummel who said:

"Our greatest danger in life is permitting the urgent things to crowd out the important."

Isn't that the challenge you face every day? There are just so many urgent things, so many things that...that clamor and clap and shout for your attention and you struggle because they're all yelling at you and yet before long you've spent so much time on the things that are urgent you haven't done the things that are important and it's learning to focus on what is important that makes the difference. That's why Paul said we need to redeem the time. We need to know that it is high time, that we wake up and that we answer the call of God on our lives. Now, of course, when the Bible speaks here it's not only speaking about this moment and this time, these days and these times in which we're living, the Bible is also speaking about a time that is coming, for notice that it says here:

This do knowing the time, that it is high time to awake out of sleep; for our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

What do you think he's talking about there? He's telling us that you and I are the generation closest to the coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is coming back again and we are living in a prophetic generation. Do I know if this is the day, this is the hour, this is the time? No! But what I do know is that where we stand today and what we do as a church today could very well be at the very edge of the final moments of human history and drama until Jesus comes again and I don't know about you but I don't wanna be ashamed when He comes. I wanna make the most of my time. I want my life to count for Christ and therefore, not with a sense of panic, but with a sense of purpose I am going to watch the clock and that's what every Christian, and that's what every church needs to do. It's high time, it's high noon for our mission, for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the Bible tells us that **WE NEED TO WAGE THE BATTLE**. We need to

wage the battle. He says here in verse 12:

The night is far spent, the day is at hand...let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on...

What is that last phrase, what does it say?

...the armor of light.

Now obviously anytime you read the word armor you're immediately reading about a reference to something that is a...of a combat nature, of military a..., significance and here the Bible is saying not only are we to live with a sense of urgency, watching the clock and keeping our eye on the time, but the Bible is saying we need to wage the battle and there is a battle going on. It is the battle between life and the battle of darkness between truth and error, between God and between the ultimate foe, Satan himself and we are caught in the midst of that battle and the Bible says that we have been called to wage the battle wearing the armor of light. There really is a word picture here, the picture is that of a soldier...a soldier who has been out on a campaign and comes home. He comes home and he goes out at night with his friends and his friends are glad to see him and he's a hero come home, but by the late hours of the night all of the discipline, all of the uniform, all of the things that have given virtue and value to that soldier have been thrown away because he's given himself to a series of things that are listed here. He's no longer prepared for battle, he's unprepared, he's unarmed and he's unready and that's the thing that Paul is warning us about, that we are not to be unguarded as followers of Jesus Christ. Look at the list here that he gives to us. He says:

...not in revelry and drunkenness,...

That is not to be unguarded, not to let your defenses down, not to live without a sense of honor. He says:

...in lewdness and lust,...

I'm sorry to say that's become so much a part of the culture of America, lewdness and lust and who is it that is to be the chief proponent of love in this culture and in this society? Who is it? It is the church. Can we say that together? It is the church and we are to go forth and to demonstrate true love and the purity of love and the virtue of love in our lives. So therefore we have to wage the battle for love, carrying the light of truth, which is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Revelry and drunkenness, that's un-guardedness. Lewdness and lust, that's unfaithfulness, no spirit of fidelity, of virtue and then:

...strife and envy.

That is simply living without love and I want you to know today that while there has been a battle in American for votes and all of that was settled

today, we've just begun the battle for values again in America and ladies and gentlemen we better wage that war, because our voice is a voice that speaks of the value and the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and we take this book and we arm ourselves for battle and we go forward, not with a spirit that is an insensitive spirit or a hard spirit, but a spirit that understands the engagement of conflict and is there to stand up, to speak out and ultimately to make a difference.

This past Sunday, October 31st, was actually known in Christian history as Reformation Day. It was on October 31st of 1517 that Martin Luther broke ranks with the Catholic Church in a very formal and official fashion. He went to the chapel at Wittenberg and nailed his 95 thesis to the door and there from that moment there was a conflict that erupted and the people moved with him and there was a great Reformation between professional performance religion and the true gospel of Jesus Christ based on the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ and certainly Christendom has never known a greater warrior than Martin Luther. When standing before the council who reviewed him and who demanded only one thing, "Luther, you must recant, recant of preaching the gospel of being saved by grace, through faith." Martin Luther stood there before that council knowing that it could mean his death and he simply said, "Here I stand, I can do no other." And that's where we have to be today as a people who will stand and who will wage the battle. He wrote a hymn. It's still the battle cry of the church and if you've never seen it through the eyes of this passage of Scripture let me just remind you what it says again:

*A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe—
His craft and pow'r are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

*And tho this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear,
For God hath willed
His truth to triumph thru us.
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him—
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly pow'rs,
No thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Thru Him who with us sideth.*

*Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also—
The body they may kill;
But God's truth abideth still;
And His kingdom is forever.*

Wage the battle! Don't live in darkness! Put on the armor of light!

There's a final challenge that Paul gives us tonight and that is not only to watch the clock and wage the battle, but look at that last verse, verse 14:

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

What does he say? Wear the name! Watch the clock! Wage the battle, but listen to this, **WEAR THE NAME OF JESUS**. Some of us in this political season have had bumper stickers on our cars. People have been wearing buttons and all sorts of a..., means of identifying with candidates, certainly far beyond that in our culture we're such a sports obsessed culture it's hard to go any where today without having constantly before you a team emblem or a team name and we identify with baseball and football and basketball. We identify with all sorts of designers and their ability to make cloths and people even live to try to buy cloths with certain names and labels in it. But I ask you tonight are you wearing the name of Jesus? Because as the church of Jesus Christ the most important thing about you and about me is that we are wearing the name of Jesus, not to flash the name, but to be faithful to the One whom we call...who has called us and whom we call our Lord and our Savior. It's not a popular thing to wear the name of Jesus, but right now it's something that's getting the attention of our nation and those of us who name the name need to wear the name. Oh, I'm not talkin about goin out and buyin a Jesus t-shirt or something like that, or putting a bumper sticker on your car. What I'm saying is that you gotta live it and live it to the degree that people know that you are a Christian, a Christ follower and that you're not ashamed to wear the name and to bear testimony to the name of Jesus. As Christians in this society many times we are frustrated by the fact that on our coins and on our dollars and on our buildings we constantly see references to our founding fathers and to their faith. Obviously, on every coin, *In God We Trust* and we feel that there's a sense of value and heritage every time we see this. There are obviously some who don't share that value, who don't share that vision of America's past or of America's future, but just as you and I take offense to those who would try to, as though it were, erase or sponge from the history of America that which has been so much a part, we must not erase the testimony of Christ by living a life that is not consistent with His name. So therefore we're to wear the name, we're to bear the name, we're to stand for the name of Jesus. I love the way that Peter said it over in 1 Peter chapter 4, I want you to look there with me, 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 14. Here Peter the apostle of Jesus Christ was writing and challenging those who would be living in a day just like this day in which we live and this is what he

said beginning in verse 14, he said:

¹⁴If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

Have you learned to glorify God? From bearing the name and even receiving shame for that name? That the cost, it's a call to watch the clock, it's a call to wage the battle, it a call to wear the name and the Bible says in verse 19:

Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

Are there gonna be days when you feel as though you're loosing the battle? Sure! Are there gonna be days when you feel that the clocks running out and you've not done all that you wanna do? Sure! Are there gonna be days that you wear the name and you stop and think Lord it just seems like it's always a...a point of resistance and frustration to my life and to others because they put me down for bein a Christian? Sure that's gonna happen, but you commit your soul to a faithful creator, because I wanna remind you tonight our God is faithful and whatever we do in His name and whatever we wage in His honor and whatever we do for His glory, He will honor, He will bless and He will never forget. So what's it time to do? It's time to stand up and to be the image bearers of Christ in this generation and don't let anything keep us from fulfilling the purpose to which God has called us. I know tonight that a..., there's a need for us to just call upon the name of the Lord together and to give Him thanks and to pray.