

LECTURE ON THE TIMES AND ITS DUTIES [*] ROMANS xiii. 12.
p. 1, Para. 1, [TIMES].

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us
therefore cast off the works of darkness, and
let us put on the armor of light.
p. 1, Para. 2, [TIMES].

THE apostle in the context exhorts his Roman brethren to good works, to a holy life in conformity with the law, -- the royal law, which teaches us to love God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. He then gives the text as one of the most prominent reasons why we should conform to the requisitions of the law: because the *night* is far spent, and the *day* is at hand. p. 1, Para. 3, [TIMES].

I shall, therefore, in explaining the text, p. 1, Para. 4, [TIMES].

I. SHOW WHAT THE APOSTLE MEANS BY "NIGHT AND DAY." p. 1, Para. 5, [TIMES].

II. SHOW THE PROPRIETY OF HIS ADMONITION, "CAST OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS." p. 1, Para. 6, [TIMES].

III. ATTEND TO HIS EXHORTATION, "LET US PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT." p. 1, Para. 7, [TIMES].

I. EXPLAIN THE TERMS NIGHT AND DAY. p. 1, Para. 8, [TIMES].

[[*] The three following lectures on "The Times," "The Truth," and "Visions of Ezekiel," were written some years ago; and are but *sketches* of the subjects on which they treat. The author had neither time nor health to re-write them. And although the manner and style of them are not as good as the author and editor would desire; yet they contain so much plain, old-fashioned truth, that we have concluded to give them to the public, in the expectation that they will exert a salutary influence.] p. 1, Para. 9, [TIMES].

Night and day are used in this passage to illustrate a moral or spiritual idea, which the apostle wished to communicate to his brethren at Rome, and through them to

us. 1. *Night*, in the natural world, is that portion of time in which the face of the natural sun is hid from us, or that part of our earth on which we dwell, in accordance with certain infallible laws of nature, such as light and the vivifying influence of the sun, or the revolution of our earth upon its axis. 2. *Night* in the moral world is like night in the natural. God is the fountain of all light, life, and holiness, and without his vivifying influence we are left to grope our way in moral darkness. We cannot see things clearly, but we stumble upon the dark mountains of infidelity and doubt. This great Sun of light, life, and holiness, is governed by as immutable laws as the natural sun, yes, and ten thousand times stronger, and more stable; because natural laws may change, "heaven and earth may pass away," but not one jot or tittle of his word or law shall ever fail. One of these unchangeable laws is, that God cannot look upon sin with the least allowance. Witness the withdrawal of his countenance from Adam in the garden when he sinned, and the beginning of the night spoken of in our text. Adam, like the natural world, turned from God, and all was darkness. He broke the holy law -- "thou shalt not sin," and he and all his posterity became involved in a moral night, with only now and then some glimmering star, some Abel, Enoch, Noah, some patriarchs and prophets -- or a changing moon, the church, to shed a glimmer upon this moral night, that may haply lead us to a blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the Son of Man. The ancient prophets and apostles all prophesied of the glory that should follow; these were stars in the night of moral darkness. The church, which Christ in his flesh set up in the world, has sometimes, like the moon at its stated seasons, shown her full round face, and has given strong evidence that there was a *sun*, although hid from the immediate view of the world, and that she looked, by faith at least, upon the glorious Sun of Righteousness. p. 1, Para. 10, [TIMES].

At other times she has been veiled in a cloud or smoke of error, which rose from the bottomless pit. Sometimes she has been made gory by the persecutions which have assailed her; for the faithful have waded through trials, changes, afflictions and death. Yet one thing have they all shown by these things, that this is not their continuing city; but that they seek one to come, whose builder and maker is God. But the apostle says in our text that this *night* (of moral darkness) is far spent, and the day is at hand; which brings us to consider, p. 2, Para. 1, [TIMES].

Second, what we may understand the apostle as meaning by *Day*. Natural day flows immediately from light, or the great luminary of the heavens, the sun. Just so the moral day. Wherever God by his immediate presence dwells, and light, life and righteousness are enjoyed, there is *day*. The gospel is sometimes compared to the sun and light, and where and when that is enjoyed, it is sometimes called *day*, as in Zech. xiv. 7,8. Ps. xcv. 7: "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Heb. iii. 7. p. 3, Para. 1, [TIMES].

But that the apostle did not mean this gospel day, is evident from the text immediately preceding: "*For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*" *For the night is far spent, &c.*; strongly expressing it to be future. Now if it meant the gospel day, why did the apostle call the time in which he wrote *night*? Surely if ever the gospel shined in our world, it was in the apostles' days. Then, before the antichristian beast, and the smoke out of the bottomless pit, arose on the earth, and darkened the sun, and filled the world with corrupt sentiments, and the minds of men with heretical principles, before the obnoxious vapors of the doctrine of devils filled the moral air, and the moon was turned to blood, and the stars fell to the earth, this day must have been, or we must look for it in the future. p. 3, Para. 2, [TIMES].

That the apostle does not mean the gospel day, is evident, also, from the fact that he gives instructions to the Roman Christians how to obtain the gospel armor, which was to be as light to them during this night of moral darkness; for if it had been day, their armor of light would be of no more use than a candle at noon. p. 3, Para. 3, [TIMES].

Again. The day spoken of cannot mean death; for death is nowhere in scripture called *day*, but the reverse. "The night cometh, when no man can work." John ix. 4. Then I know not what day the apostle alludes to, unless he has reference to the great day when "Christ shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." That this day is what the apostle meant, is evident, -- 1. Because it is a day of salvation, as he says in the context -- "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed," and "he comes the second time without sin unto salvation." Again, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus

Christ." "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." It is evident that he means this day, also, because the Sun of Righteousness will then live and dwell on the earth, and he shall be the light thereof. See Mal. iv. 2: "But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts." Again, in Psalm lxviii. 18: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Zech. ii. 10: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord, and many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee." Again, Rev. xxi. 3: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." p. 3, Para. 4, [TIMES].

This is the day, my brethren, which the apostle Paul alludes to in our text; and if he could say eighteen hundred years ago, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," surely, my brethren, we may say now he standeth at the door. And I do most solemnly believe that the day of the Lord is near, yes, very near. "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness." This brings us to our second head, -- to show, p. 4, Para. 1, [TIMES].

II. THE PROPRIETY OF THE ADMONITION, "CAST OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS." p. 5, Para. 1, [TIMES].

What then is meant by works of darkness? In the first place, it is an abhorrence of light, for fear our sins will be brought to light or made manifest. "We love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil." These characters may be known by their anxiety to destroy the main principles of the word of God. Sin, in their view, is nothing more than a misfortune; salvation is only the good deeds of man; Christ is only a man that set good examples; atonement is only the forgiveness of our Adamic sin; and punishment is only the evils of life! They always are very

uneasy, and often angry, if future punishment is mentioned. And we may know they are wrong; "for anger rests only in the bosom of fools." p. 5, Para. 2, [TIMES].

Again, there is another class who work the works of darkness. These are those who are ignorant of the righteousness of God, and go about (as the apostle says) to establish their own righteousness. These may be known by their complainings; nobody is right but themselves; they are always justifying their own ways and condemning others; they will ever be framing some plausible excuse for neglect of any duty, and condemning others for the merest trifle. They are strange characters. You may preach to them of their crimes, and they will give it to their neighbor; you may admonish them, and they regard it not. They are so completely shrouded in their mantle of selfishness, that nothing makes any impression upon them. Preach law -- they have kept it; preach gospel -- they need it not; preach duty -- they will throw in your face a host of excuses. Their coat of mail is like the hide of Leviathan, no arrow can pierce it, and I have thought that nothing but the trump of God will ever awake them. Well did Christ say to such characters, "O generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?" p. 5, Para. 3, [TIMES].

There is another class whom the apostle calls "worldly-minded sinners," who "work the works of darkness." These may be known by their anxiety for the world, and their disregard to all the means of salvation. Visit them, and their whole mind is on the world: they can talk freely and flippantly of their farms, their silver, their cattle, and sheep; but not one word about salvation. They can go into a long detail of their plans to gain property, but talk to them of the plan of salvation and it will be very insipid and dry. The week is spent in hoarding up treasures, and the Sabbath in counting their silver and casting their accounts. They never visit the house of God without some worldly motive in view. They search their accounts oftener than their Bibles; they study more how to obtain the world than eternal life. In one word, they are glued to the present evil world, and when the day shall come, they will, with the rich man, lift up their eyes, being in torment. p. 5, Para. 4, [TIMES].

There is still another class, and they are those who seek for the honors of this world, more than to honor God, having men's persons in admiration. In their works of

darkness you may discover them; they are deceitful, their words are smooth as oil, and with their lips they use deceit. They flatter but to destroy; they deceive but to betray; they pretend to be friendly to all, yet are friends only to themselves. They never talk plain or open-hearted, but always wound in private. There is no meanness which they will not stoop to do, to obtain their end. Solomon says, "He that knoweth and dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him, when he speaketh fair, believe him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart. p. 6, Para. 1, [TIMES].

Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation." "But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." Rev. xxi. 8. If these things are so, then surely the apostle has done well to admonish us to "put off these works of darkness;" -- and oh, my hearers, we should do well, yes, we should be wise, and that too for ourselves, to obey the injunction of the apostle, "for the *night* is far spent, the *day* is at hand, when every man's works will be tried so as by fire." p. 6, Para. 2, [TIMES].

III. WE WILL NOW EXAMINE THE APOSTLE'S EXHORTATION, "LET US PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT." p. 7, Para. 1, [TIMES].

The Christian in this night of darkness and error is compared to a soldier on guard in the night, and in time of war; and how apt and instructing is the allusion. In the night, on guard, a soldier must have his armor all on; he must not lie down; he must keep awake, not sleep, stand at his post; he must watch the approach of the enemy, hail the approach of a friend, understand the use of his armor, have in readiness the watchwords of the camp; and he will watch for the dawn of the morning with as much anxiety as a bride for the return of the bridegroom. Just so with a Christian in this night of moral darkness. He is called to watch, and to have on the armor of light. He must stand up, and having done all, must stand. He too must keep awake, as says the prophet, Isa. li. 17: "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem." He must not sleep, as Paul says, 1 Thess. v. 6: "Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober." He must watch his enemies, both outward and inward; he must hail and rejoice over one sinner that

repenteth; he must learn and understand the use of his spiritual armor; he must be ready with the word at all times, so that he may give the reason of his hope with meekness and fear. p. 7, Para. 2, [TIMES].

And if he is a good soldier in Christ, he will watch for the dawn of the morning when the Captain of his salvation shall come the second time without sin unto salvation; when his enemies will all be slain, and the shout of victory be heard by all the righteous dead, and the last loud blast of the trump of God shall proclaim universal peace in the kingdom of Christ. p. 7, Para. 3, [TIMES].

Then how happy will that soldier of the cross be, whom, when his Lord comes, he shall find with his whole armor of light on. So doing, "stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." The truth will make you free. It will strengthen you to combat error; it is all-powerful, for God is truth; and he hath all power in heaven and earth. You will never be afraid that your cause will not prevail; for truth is mighty and will prevail. You will never want to use carnal weapons, for the holiness of truth will forbid the thought. And that man who resorts to carnal weapons to support his cause, may depend upon it he is not on *truth*. "And having on the breastplate of righteousness." This, too, is the armor of God prepared for us by Christ himself. This righteousness will give us confidence, that we shall not be afraid to front all enemies, even death itself, knowing that in him and by his robe we shall be justified from all things wherein the law could not justify; for we, being weak in the flesh, could not justify ourselves by the works of the law, but Christ becoming the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, we, therefore, may have confidence, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us; and such need not be ashamed before him at his coming. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." This teaches us that we must walk after the example of John, who prepared a people made ready for the Lord, and Christ, who fulfilled all righteousness. How necessary, my brethren, that our walk be found according to the examples of Christ and the apostles, that our feet may be shod with the gospel of peace, that we may be ready to enter in through the gate into the city. p. 8, Para. 1, [TIMES].

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked." This is

an important part of the armor. *Faith* is able to carry us through all the trials of life. By faith we receive and enjoy all the rich promises of God. By faith we live upon his word, as the children of Israel lived on manna in the wilderness. By faith we please God; by faith we believe in the day spoken of in our text; and through faith we shall be able to subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, obtain promises, stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire; in one word, come off conquerors through him who hath loved us. p. 8, Para. 2, [TIMES].

"And take the helmet of salvation." This is our hope, and the evidence of this only can be obtained by our diligence in the calling, and by our love for the Author of our salvation. How do we know that we are in a state of salvation? Answer. By our hope. And how do we know our hope is a good one? By its being founded on the grace of God, and not on our works. Then the speaker, say you, has contradicted himself, for he has just told us that hope was obtained by our diligence, and that part suited his belief exactly. You have mistaken me; I did not say our hope was obtained by our diligence; but the evidence of its being a good one. Will not smoke ascend, and will not water run down? If you have a good hope, you have a good heart, and from that heart will proceed good fruits. p. 9, Para. 1, [TIMES].

Again; "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This, being our only rule of life, and the only means of trying the Spirit, may be truly compared to a sword, for it cuts off all false rules, doctrines, spirits, and leaves nothing but "thus saith the Lord." And here, again, we may try ourselves: In every trial do we fly to the word of God for direction? Do we square our lives by its rules? Is this word our law-book, our director? And, like David, can we say, "How love I thy law?" p. 9, Para. 2, [TIMES].

"Praying always with all prayer, and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." These constitute the whole armor of light, or of God, as the apostle calls it in Eph. vi. 13. Here again is another rule to try ourselves by. Is prayer a solemn, an interesting, and soul-reviving duty? Do we in trials, in afflictions, in joy and sorrow, in light and darkness, in coldness and warmth, find peace, comfort, consolation, and reconciliation in this duty? Or do we pray to be seen of men, or to stop the gnawings of a guilty

conscience; or do we neglect this weapon altogether? Let God and our own consciences decide -- and let us decide quickly, and justly -- for the "day is at hand which will try every man's work, whether it be good or evil." -- "Let us, then, put on the whole armor of light." p. 9, Para. 3, [TIMES].

IMPROVEMENT. p. 10, Para. 1, [TIMES].

1. By our subject we learn that the night of sin, error, darkness, and every evil work, is almost spent. p. 10, Para. 2, [TIMES].

2. The day is near when all these things will be brought to light, and every evil work will receive a just recompense of reward. p. 10, Para. 3, [TIMES].

3. We are admonished to cast off the works of darkness. And, p. 10, Para. 4, [TIMES].

4. We are exhorted to put on the armor of light. p. 10, Para. 5, [TIMES].