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But for our scripture reading this morning, we begin in 2 Timothy 3, verse 16. This is one of three verses that the pastor that God used to lay much of the foundation in my soul would quote at the beginning of each of his lessons. And 2 Timothy 3, verse 16 says, All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We saw that word complete or perfect on Friday night from the verb teleo and the noun teleos in Greek, which means to bring something to completion in terms of a construction project or something that is in a process of being made functional. And it doesn't mean that it never breaks or that it's sinless. It means that it is ready for use.

It's fully prepared. And we see here the emphasis that Paul consistently places on the Word of God as the means by which God brings us to functionality, to usefulness, to accomplish His purpose. Nearby here in the book of Hebrews, we also have one of those verses that is a part of our knowledge of the function of the Word of God.

Hebrews 4.12, For the Word of God is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Once again, we know that the power of God comes into our lives through the Word of God. And this is one of the central truths that we will have in our minds this morning as we continue our study in Romans, is the role of the Word of God in accomplishing God's purpose for us.

Also in 2 Timothy, we have the third of these verses that introduced so many of the lessons that some of us have heard. And in chapter 2 of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 2.15, Paul says, Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. We've heard this verse, some of us, hundreds, perhaps thousands of times.

But one of the things that strikes me as we look at it in the context of our study is that Paul does not say, Be diligent to present yourself approved to God with works that you don't need to be ashamed of. He doesn't say, Be diligent to present the fruit of your life before God with works that you're not ashamed of. The two references here are to our person, to ourselves.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God. Not your works, not your ministry, not your actions, but yourself. It's our self that we present to God.

And he continues, Even though we know that we do things and there is a fruit in our life and there are works that we perform, it is the workman that does not need to be ashamed. It's not that the works are worthy, it's that the workman has no need for shame. He is approved.

And we recognize that God has carefully communicated the truth that it is the workman who is perfected and the works issue forth from the completed or perfected workman. And that's the sequence in God's plan. And we concentrate on being sure that we are a workman who does not need to be ashamed.

That we are approved before God because of what He has done inside us. And these works, which are legitimate and valid and are the fruit of our life, are a result and we don't start to view them as a means. In a lot of our modern culture or modern Christianity, we think that what we do is a means of becoming approved.

Well, if I engage in this ministry, if I get active in taking advantage of the opportunities that come my way, that will make me approved. I'll be pleasing in God's sight and so forth. And God says, No, it's what happens on the inside of you that makes you pleasing and makes you approved.

And then once you are an approved worker and thoroughly equipped for every good work, the equipping obviously comes first. So these three verses constitute our Scripture reading this morning. And as we turn to Romans to continue our study with the last verse of chapter 13, we'll keep this in mind as we view this, because Paul has made this point over and over again in the various books and passages that we have studied.

The New Testament makes this point. The entire Word of God, Psalm 119, is a classic summary in the Old Testament of the importance of the Word of God. Of the 150-odd verses that are in that chapter, there are only two verses in Psalm 119 that don't make a direct reference to the Word of God.

And so we see that here. Last time, in Romans 13, we examined this last section beginning with verse 10. Love does no harm to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

So do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep. For now our deliverance, our salvation, is nearer than when we first believed. 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. Let us walk properly as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. We pick up this morning with verse 14.

We saw last time this contrast and this tension between the reality of the return of Jesus Christ, which is the reality of the day dawning. When Jesus returns, when He sits on the throne of His Father David and establishes the millennial kingdom and His rulership over the entire earth from that kingdom, that is going to be the day that creation is groaning for. Paul says in another place that the creation groans waiting for the revelation of the sons of God.

And that's the Son of God plus the brethren of which He is the firstborn. And that's the millennial age. Creation will be freed from the curse.

Jesus is going to purge the earth of unbelievers on that initial day and it is going to be a wonderful day when the glory of God is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ once again here on earth. And so that is the day. And Paul says the night is far spent, the day is at hand.

And this is one of our passages that we talk about the imminency of the return of Christ, the imminency of the rapture. I like to think of the fact that we have never been as close to the return of Christ as we are at this very moment. And we are of course always able to say that.

But that is the hope that we have. And Paul says you don't have to wait for the resurrection. You don't have to wait for the transformation and the twinkling of an eye to begin to enjoy the blessings and the peace and joy that come on that glorious day.

So he says the night is far spent, the day is at hand. He doesn't say the day is here. He says it's at hand.

But he says in the light of that coming day, go ahead and live like you're in the day. And so this already not yet tension in our salvation, like so many other things that we see about our life in Christ, we are not yet perfected and yet we are called to be perfect. We are not yet glorified and yet we are called to reflect the glory of God.

We are not yet fully delivered from our fallen nature and from our fallen world and yet we're called to live as though we are. And so he says let us cast off the work of darkness and let us put on the armor of light. Let's walk properly as in the day.

He says the day is at hand. It's not here yet, but let's walk as though we're in the day. Let's walk as though we're already perfected.

We're already sanctified and glorified. And we are able to do that because we can partake of those future things now. And one of the things that motivates us and fuels us in that is our hope, the confident realization that those things are coming.

And he says in verse 14, which is where we pick up this morning, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. Now what does it mean to put on Jesus Christ, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ? One of the first clues we have to this is right here in our context because it's a wonderful thing to just hear the phrase put on the Lord Jesus Christ but how? If I say, okay, I'm now not in church anymore. I'm back in my normal life with the people that I associate with, the circumstances that I face, the stresses of my life, the good things and the bad things.

In what way can I put on Jesus Christ? Well, that's the question we want to answer this morning.

How do we put on Christ? And as I said, the first clue is right here in the context because this context has already told us something that we can put on, hasn't it? Let's look at it up in verse 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. And then in verse 14, he says put on the Lord Jesus Christ. And that parallelism tells us something about what it means to put on Jesus Christ.

To put on Jesus Christ is to put on the armor of light. But verse 12 also tells us something else. Before we can put on Christ, there's something we have to take off.

We can't just over-clothe our natural selves with the armor of light and with Christ. There's something we have to remove. This is a change of garments, not just putting on an overcoat, not putting on a facade or a superficial covering.

We're not just whitewashing our normal self with this thing that looks like Christ. There's something we have to take off. And what does verse 12 tell us that is? Let us cast off the works of darkness.

There are things we have to rid ourselves of before we can put on the armor of light, before we can put on Christ. We have to turn away from something. We have to shed something.

And this is the concept of change of mind. In our fundamental study Friday night, we looked at the beginning of Hebrews chapter 6 where it says that part of the foundation, the first brick in the foundation of our new life in Christ is a change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God. It's turning away from one thing and turning toward something else.

We remove our faith and our confidence from our works and we place it in God. We trust God for our transformation. We trust God for our provision.

We trust God for our strength. Instead of finding it in what we do, in our own resources, in our own reputation or our own accomplishments, we have to withdraw our faith from that before we can put it in God. And to try to get those two to coexist, it never happens.

We have to release our grip on the things. Many times we find our security, we find our self-esteem, we find our confidence. You know, whenever the chips are down and perhaps we feel threatened or we feel attacked, we say, oh, but look at what I've done.

And the Scriptures say we have to not place our confidence in that. We don't look at what we have done. We look at what God is doing.

We look at the strength of God for those things. So this is a conscious change of mind that we have to undergo. Look back in this same letter at chapter 6, beginning at verse 3, Romans 6, 3. Paul says, Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Beginning of chapter 6, certainly not.

How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? This coming Friday night we're going to be studying the different types of baptism that are in the Scripture and we'll be returning to this verse. But Paul says, don't you realize that there's been a change? Baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, both in its pictorial sense in water baptism, which was a very graphic picture of this, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is the reality in the spiritual realm of our identification with Christ in His death, His burial, and His resurrection. One of the more interesting aspects of that is identification with Him in His burial.

It's easy to understand the principle of identifying with His death. The death He dies, He dies to sin. The life He lives, He lives to God.

But we're going to get a chance to study what it means to be identified with Christ in His burial. But suffice it to say here that we have been baptized into Christ Jesus and in that process we were baptized into His death and Paul makes a point of that. He says, therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

We have died to something old and we live to something new. And Paul brings that truth to our minds in many places, especially here in chapter 6, because this ought to be a part of our thinking. Wait a minute, I've died to this.

In my relationship with Jesus Christ the work of the Holy Spirit has given me freedom from this old reliance. I don't have to base my confidence or my self-esteem or my security or my feeling of worth or my reputation with others on what I used to, which is my accomplishments, the way that people perceive me, the way that people evaluate me, their opinion of me, my opinion of myself doesn't need to be based on what I've accomplished or any other worldly type of viewpoint. A lot of stress is placed on how we look or what kind of car we drive or what kind of clothes we wear or how active we are in some area of life.

Anymore if you're a celebrity you have to be sure that you're engaged in some form of charity and be sure that they get the cameras out there to see you reading to the children or visiting the hospitals or whatever, because in the world's eyes you may be a celebrity, but you're an especially great celebrity if you're also charitable, if you're altruistic, if you give back to society something of what they have given to you and so forth. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with doing these things, but if people base their sense of worth, well I'm not a bad person, look at these charitable things that I've done. That's the old man, that's the old way, that's part of what we have died to.

Our worth and our value is based on what God has done. It's based on our identification and our standing in Jesus Christ. And that's an unshakable and immovable thing in the universe.

Jesus Christ is the fullness of the Godhead. He has intrinsic righteousness. And it doesn't matter what we do or don't do in the realm of good works.

It doesn't matter how people perceive us. Our standing and our value is inextricably tied to the Lord Jesus Christ because we have been baptized into Him. So we don't have to feel threatened.

We don't have to feel insecure. We don't have to feel unworthy in any sense because when God the Father looks at us, He sees Jesus Christ. And we are called to recognize that, to perceive that ourselves and then to live in the light of it.

And there's no criticism, there's no misperception, there's no opinion that other people can have that can shape the fundamental confidence we have that we are in Christ and we are a new creation. And our worth and our value is based on that. There's so much in the way of social action.

You look around and you see people saying, oh, they're down on me because I'm a woman or they're down on me because I'm black or I'm not getting the opportunities and the recognition that I deserve because of some facet of my person, some thing that I'm saddled with. I have a history or I have this in my past or there's some characteristic, whether it's race or gender or whatever else. You see people agitating.

They've changed the military academies and they've changed the Citadel and so many different things have changed because people feel, well, this is somehow demeaning me, that I'm not allowed to do this or I'm not perceived the same way. And you can make arguments pro and con in culture and in society for things and there ought to be opportunities for everyone, but you get the feeling when you listen to some of these people that they're looking for vindication, they're looking for personal worth, personal justification. I need people to give me my due, to give me my just rights and recognition and I don't want them to hold anything against me.

Well, A, if you're looking for vindication in the eyes of people, you're never going to get it because you can knock yourself out trying to please people and you can't please all the people all the time. You may be P.T. Barnum and you may be able to take most of the people most of the time and so forth, but you're never going to get what you feel is your due from people and it's futile. That's the thinking of the world.

That's what we have died to. We don't look there for our vindication. And it's a wonderful thing to be in a role, to be a woman or to be a blue-collar worker or to be a minority, quote-unquote.

Most of our minorities are majorities now. But to have some, quote-unquote, social handicap or whatever and to realize that God is blessing and that the opportunity to bear fruit that has eternal value is unlimited. There is no limitation on what God can do and on our opportunities in Christ because in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek.

There is neither male nor female. There is neither bond nor free. And what's Paul's point there? Not that we should all be colorblind, genderblind, classblind, but that if we focus on the real meaning of our life and the real opportunities in our life, there is nothing that holds us back, any of us, in whatever position in life, whatever our status.

We have the same opportunity as every other believer because it all depends on God's resources, on our standing in Jesus Christ. And that's the same for all of us. So Paul says we need to keep that in mind.

We need to think about that. We need to realize that we have been buried with him through baptism into death in Romans 6.4. So that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection.

Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. This same old, new contrast is in view here in chapter 6, isn't it? And this is another one of these cases where there is an already, we have been united with Christ, we have been united with him in his death, in his burial and in his resurrection, and yet there is a sense experientially where we need to live in that light. We need to be conformed more closely in the experiential sense to what is true positionally.

And we know that these things have a literal outcome. If you look at 1 Corinthians 15, 53, where Paul is talking about the resurrection, he says we know that Christ has died and been raised and we are also going to die and be raised just as he was. That's the literal identification with Christ and our union with him guarantees our resurrection in the future.

He says the same thing in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 3. And he is talking about the literal death and literal resurrection in the physical realm that we have as a confident expectation. But in our daily life, we can get a preview of that. We can get a preview of the things in the kingdom.

We can get a preview of the freedom and the separation from sin that is going to be a part of that literal resurrection and transformation. We can do that now experientially. We don't have to wait for that any more than we have to wait for the peace and joy that are a part of the kingdom.

We can do that now. So he says that this is a means by which we are conformed to Christ. Let's turn to 2 Corinthians 5 because this is a great place to see the link between our future physical death and resurrection and the implications for it in our life right now.

2 Corinthians 5, verse 3. In fact, we can start in 5.1. We know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. This is our resurrected state, our resurrection body, if you will. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven.

Now this is our new body that we're going to put on, isn't it? We're going to put on something when we're transformed. If indeed having been clothed we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but we want to be further clothed, so that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has also given us the Spirit as a guarantee. With the power of God in our lives, the Word of God and the Spirit of God, we can experience in our souls what we will ultimately experience in our bodies, the putting on of Christ, the putting on of the immortal, the perfected, the sanctified. And he says in verse 6, So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased, rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to him.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each man may receive the things done in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad. The conclusion that Paul draws here is we know that there is going to be a future reality of new life, a new putting on that will take place. But whether we are still here in this life and in this body and in this state or in that future state, we make it our aim, whether now or then, to be pleasing in his sight.

We know that God is going to evaluate us at the judgment seat and that we may receive the things done in the body, but we know that God evaluates us every day. So we don't live in a short-sighted way. We want to be pleasing to God now while we are still in our mortal body, so that we will be pleasing to God then when we are in our resurrected body.

If you skip down to verse 15, he refers back to the same things we saw in Romans 6. Christ died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh and so forth. Look at verse 17.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

Verse 21. He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. We might become the righteousness of God in him.

That's what Paul is talking about at the end of Romans 13. How do we put on Christ? How do we put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light? We recognize, first of all, that this is something that God does. How many of us think about this? Suppose we're not in the rapture generation and we're all going to go through the experience of physical death.

How many of us are going to resurrect ourselves and assign ourselves a resurrection body?

What work are we going to do to make that happen? Well, it's absurd. Of course, we cannot. It's a work of God to give us that new body, that new clothing, that new creation.

Well, it's no different in the spiritual realm. This is not something that we do. We don't say, well, where are those good works that I can put on? Where is that armor of light that I can clothe myself with? This is something that we obtain from God by faith, by trusting Him.

We trust that God is going to resurrect us after we die. We trust that God is going to give us that armor of light, that we are going to be clothed with good works, that we are going to become the righteousness of God in Him. But we trust God for that.

We know that that's the transforming power of God. How does the transforming power of God come into our lives? What are its two components? One of those components is not our efforts, is it? Or our straining, or our striving, or our endeavors. Those things are both from God.

It's God's Word and God's Spirit. And it is God who made Christ to be sin for us. And it's God who makes us righteous through Him.

So we have to learn to put ourselves in position to let God do His work, to let Him have His perfect work in us. And that's the intermediate step that brings us to the ultimate goal of living our lives for Him and having the things that we do, which are legitimate and are valid and do reflect God's glory. But they come as a result of God's work.

They're not our work trying to achieve a result that only God can bring about. So to put on Christ, to put on the armor of light, we have to put off the old. We have to die to sin.

We have to put off the old man with his works. You may recall when we were studying the life of David in 1 Samuel, and we got to the point where David wanted to build a temple for God. He said, I'm dwelling here.

I've run the Jebusites out of the city of Jebus. I've established my capital here in Jerusalem, and I've built myself a palace of cedar, and I'm living here in splendor. And I look out my window, and across the flat patch of ground here, I see the tabernacle of God, and God is still dwelling in skins and cloth.

He's got this temporary, movable place for His glory to dwell. And David went to the Lord, and he said, I want to build a temple. I'm dwelling in a palace.

And the ark of God still dwells in tents. And God said, it's your son who's going to build the temple. And there's been a lot of interpretation of what God says to David there.

At one point, God is quoted as saying, you are a man of blood. And we've heard a lot of people say, well, you know, David had slaughtered so many people and murdered, and he had blood on his hands, and he couldn't build the temple of God with these bloody hands. But that isn't what it's

saying at all.

And if you remember our study there, the point that God was making to David is, he said, go back and look at the Word of God. What did God say through Moses to the nation of Israel? You are to go in and drive the pagans out of the land that God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You need to go in and drive out the evil, drive out the idolatry, drive out the wickedness and the fornication and the horrible depravity that is exhibited by these people.

And once you have achieved peace on every side through God, who is going to give you these victories, then I will designate a place for my glory to reside. And when the enemies have been driven out, and the battles have been fought and won, then I will come and dwell permanently in that place. God said that before, just as they were leaving Egypt.

Well, here we are 400 years later in the time of David, and David says, Lord, I'd like to build you a temple. And God says, no, your job's not finished. The enemies haven't been driven out of the land.

Your calling, your commission is to be the man that goes out and wins the wars, that sheds the blood of the enemies and drives them out of the land. And that job's not finished. You finish your job and your son will have the freedom and the peace on every hand to fulfill that Word of God in building the residence for God.

And we saw the principle that the same is true in our lives. Before the Lord Jesus Christ and before God the Father can come and make their home in our hearts, John 15, Jesus talking in the upper room, if any man loves me, he will keep my commandments, and I and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. And this is something conditioned on obedience.

Obedience is not engaging in the former works of darkness, putting off the old man. And when we drive the enemies out of our soul, that's the precondition to the indwelling of Jesus Christ and the indwelling of God the Father that Jesus talks about in John 15. And we have to put off the old before we can put on the new.

Now, it doesn't mean that we're not going to have the power of God, that we can't have the Word of God or the Spirit of God, but why do we have those resources? It's the same thing that God gave Israel. God gave them victory in battle, but he didn't just cause all of their enemies to die and say, okay, walk right in. God said, you're going to go and use the power that I have given you to fight your own battle and win your own victory by the strength that God provides.

And they learned that without that strength from God, they could not be victorious. They went to the little town of Ai and got their helmets handed to them. Why? Because they had gone without God's power, without God's approval and without God's support.

God could have easily done what he did to the armies that gathered outside Jerusalem. You remember the two lepers who were so hungry and they said, well, let's go see if we can find something out in the camp of the Assyrians out here. And they went out there and the Assyrians were all gone.

God made them disappear. God can do that, but God didn't do that in the land of Canaan. God said, you go in and fight the battles.

That's what he does for us. He doesn't perfect us at the point of our salvation. He says, I'm going to give you the resources and the support and you go in and fight these battles and win these victories because through that we gain appreciation for our God and we learn to trust him and we learn to operate in his strength.

So it's an exercise. That's the lesson that Israel learned in driving the enemies out of the land. And David is such a magnificent example of faith and trust in God as he won those victories and paved the way for Solomon to build the dwelling place for the glory of God.

And that's our calling to put off the works of darkness so that we can put on the armor of light, so that we can put on Christ. You'll remember in Romans chapter 8, Romans 8.28, we know that verse, all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose, for whom he foreknew, them he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. What does it mean to put on Christ? It means to be conformed to his image, to live the kind of life that he lived when he was here on earth, to be baptized into his death and burial and resurrection.

God has designated us for that. That wasn't the calling, that wasn't the purpose or the designation for Old Testament saints. Sometimes we overlook the fact that Old Testament saints are not in the body of Christ.

They are not called to be conformed to the image of Christ. Christ had not yet come. They're saved and their sins were paid for on the cross, just like ours.

But the body of Christ is something that's unique to this age. Union with Christ, conformity to his death and burial and resurrection is unique to us. Old Testament saints had a different calling.

They had a different purpose. God had a different mechanism working for them. But we are called to be conformed.

We are called to put these things off. And one of the things in the Old Testament age that was demonstrated is that without that transformation, it is impossible to please God. And the law demonstrated that all of us sin and fall short of the glory of God.

But we have been designated ahead of time to be conformed to the image of his son so that he

may be the firstborn among many brethren. We are to look just like the Son of God. We are to be many sons of God, many children of God of whom Christ is the firstborn.

But we're supposed to look just like him. Children tend to resemble their parents. You can say, oh yes, I see she got her father's ears or she got her mother's smile or whatever.

We reflect our parents. Well, Jesus Christ is the perfect reflection of his Father and we're supposed to also look like the Father. We're to bear a family resemblance to Jesus Christ.

And in fact, we are to be conformed to his image and put him on. So this is our calling and this is the necessary sequence of events. Before we can bear fruit that reflects the glory of God, we have to be transformed.

And before we can be transformed and put on Christ, we have to put off the form, put off the clothing, put off the old man and the old ways. We're going to pause here and take our break and when we come back we're going to see some additional passages that shed light on this whole concept of walking in the light and being conformed to the image of Christ. Let's pause and take our break.