

What Lies Ahead Pt. 1

Discussion Notes- January 4, 2025

1. When you think about your life 10 years from now, what is one area you hope will look noticeably different than it does today?

We often overestimate what we can accomplish in the short term and underestimate what consistent faithfulness can produce over time. This week's message challenged us to wake up spiritually and intentionally consider who we are becoming. Time is not neutral; it is always moving us somewhere. Scripture reminds us that future "us" will simply be an exaggerated version of current "us." What we allow into our lives eventually settles in, shaping our character and direction. If we don't like what we're getting, we must change what we're doing. Ongoing consistency, not short-term intensity, determines the life we end up living. Getting "stuck" can be good if we're stuck in the right habits, rhythms, and devotion to Christ.

Read Romans 13:11-14

"And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh."

Paul's words are a wake-up call. He reminds believers that time is limited and spiritually significant. Life isn't meant to be lived on autopilot or postponed for "someday." Instead, we are called to intentionally put on Christ daily; allowing our habits, choices, and rhythms to reflect who we belong to. Small, consistent decisions compound over time for good or for harm. The life we end up with is largely the life we've been forming all along.

2. How does Romans 13 call believers to live with awareness and urgency, and how did the sermon tie that to the idea of getting unstuck?

Read Proverbs 4:23-27

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil."

Proverbs 4:23–27 reminds us that the heart is the control center of our lives. What we allow into our hearts through our thoughts, habits, influences, and choices eventually shapes our direction and outcomes. Solomon urges intentional focus—guarding what we listen to, what we look at, and where we allow our feet to go—because small, repeated inputs quietly form our character over time. In other words, what we consistently let in doesn't stay neutral; it settles in and steers the course of our lives.

3. The sermon said, “What you let in, sets in.” What things most influence your thoughts and attitudes day to day?

Read Psalm 90:7-12

“We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. If only we knew the power of your anger! Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due. Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

This is a prayer of Moses that reflects on the brevity and fragility of human life in light of God’s eternal nature. Moses acknowledges how quickly life passes and how easily people drift through their days without recognizing their limited time. Rather than leading to fear or despair, this awareness is meant to produce wisdom as an intentional, sober way of living that takes God seriously. In the context of the sermon, this passage reinforces the idea that time is not on our side and that how we live now shapes who we become. Numbering our days helps us wake up, stay unstuck, and live with purpose instead of drifting or delaying what matters most.

4. How does viewing time as limited change the way we think about faith, priorities, or intentional living?

Read Ephesians 5:15-17

“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”

This series opener reminds us that life doesn’t stay neutral. Time is always moving us somewhere, and consistency (whether good or bad) shapes who we become. God’s invitation is not to panic or strive harder, but to live awake, dressed in Christ, and intentional with the days we’ve been given. Getting unstuck begins with recognizing where we are, understanding the season we’re in, and choosing faithfulness over delay.

5. What does it mean to you personally to “live awake” in this season of life?

Prayer/Closing:

- Ask God to help us live awake and aware of the time we’ve been given.
- Pray for consistency in following Christ, even when growth feels slow.
- Ask God to shape who we are becoming and keep us from drifting or staying stuck.

Deeper Dive: Romans 13 — Living Awake in the World

Romans 13 comes in the practical section of Paul's letter to the Roman church. Romans was written to believers in Rome who were learning how to live out their faith in a complex, often hostile culture. After spending chapters explaining the gospel through sin, grace, justification, and life in the Spirit, Paul turns to how believers are meant to live in everyday life. This chapter addresses public life, relationships, and personal holiness, emphasizing that faith in Christ should shape how Christians live in the world right now. The urgency in this chapter reflects Paul's belief that the gospel creates a new way of living in light of God's redemptive work and the coming fulfillment of salvation.

Read: Romans 13:1–7

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed."

In this section, Paul addresses how believers relate to governing authorities. His emphasis is not blind obedience, but ordered living that reflects trust in God's sovereignty. Christians are called to live with integrity, humility, and respect, recognizing that their public behavior is part of their witness. This passage reminds us that following Jesus affects not only private spirituality but also how we engage responsibly with the structures and responsibilities of everyday life.

Read: Romans 13:8–10

"Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Paul shifts from external authority to internal motivation. Love becomes the defining mark of Christian obedience. Rather than listing rules, Paul points to love as the guiding principle that shapes our actions toward others. This kind of love is active, intentional, and consistent, reinforcing the sermon's theme that what we practice over time forms who we are becoming.

Read: Romans 13:11–14

“Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

This final section carries a sense of urgency. Paul calls believers to wake up spiritually, recognize the limited nature of time, and live differently because of what God has already begun in them. The imagery of night turning to day emphasizes movement, change, and readiness. “Putting on Christ” is a daily, intentional choice—one that directly connects to the sermon’s call to get unstuck and live awake rather than drifting through life.

Discussion Questions

1. How does reading Romans 13 as a whole deepen your understanding of Paul’s urgency in verses 11–14?
2. What connections do you see between love, daily conduct, and spiritual alertness in this chapter?
3. How does Romans 13 challenge the idea that faith can be separated from everyday decisions and habits?