

Sermon Title: Wake from Sleep (Part 2)

Biblical Text: Romans 13:11-14

Teaching Series: Justified by Love

Preaching Date: March 12, 2023

Preacher: Jason C. Helveston

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.

Today I'd like to continue settling into something. When we opened to Romans 13:11-14 last Sunday, it was clear the Lord was getting our attention. He was drawing us in to help us see our need for healing, healing from what Paul calls, "*the works of darkness.*" We looked at Paul's list of six works, representing disordered relationships we develop in the darkness of a life bound within the confines of the flesh; a life limited to this fallen world. He says, ***Read Romans 13:13 ... Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.*** What Paul is telling us is that we need healing in our relationships with alcohol, people, and sex. It's all about learning self-control. But it's our need for sexual renewal and transformation which seems most urgent. After all, Paul opened this new section by

appealing to his readers *Read Romans 12:2b ... "to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."* Our bodies are made for worship. But the darkness teaches us that our flesh is detached from our souls. That's what I'd like to talk about today.

A disordered sexuality detaches body from soul.

An ordered sexuality is body and soul in worshipful harmony.

Healing begins by stepping into the light. That's where the Apostle John tells us that fellowship with God and one another is possible. I think that's what we did together last Sunday and through the week in our groups. We stepped into the light a bit. We named sins and shame and disorder we've experienced in relation to our sexuality. However, the invitation is not to simply step in the light, but to walk in it.

John gives us a powerful picture of walking in healing. And it's directly connected with Paul's words in Romans 13. John say, *Read 1 John 1:6-7 ... "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."* In his motif of light and darkness, I think John gives us a pathway of healing from sexual shame and harm. I'd like to walk down that path a bit together today. A pathway toward our bodies and souls finding worshipful harmony. The path has three signposts if you will. *Fellowship* (with God and one another), that's order. *Not practicing the truth*, that's disorder. And this requires *walking in the light*, not simply stepping in the light.

That's how we'll organize our time ...

- Embracing the *order*
- Understanding the *disorder*
- Walking in *healing*

While Romans 13 is our launching point, we'll spend most of our time considering the creation story from Genesis 1-3.

[Pray]

Movement 1: Embracing the Order (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:23-25, Ephesians 5:32)

The path to healing begins with the first signpost: embracing the *order*. When we look at the creation narrative we see harmony within and between men and women. Specifically we see the wholeness of a humanity, whose bodies are in harmony with their souls. *Read Genesis 1:26-27 ... Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* In general, Genesis 1 reads like a poem. But it's a poem with the express purpose of "*attacking rival cosmologies*" (Wenham, 9). That is, the writer of Genesis is responding to other stories and beliefs about the origin of the world. It still offers such an alternative reading of popular views of our identity and beginning. It still sheds light in the darkness.

According to Genesis 1, men and women not only have the same *nature* (the image of God) and so we cannot fully image God without community, but also we have the same *calling* (dominion). That's what I mean, a picture of order and harmony.

As we mentioned last week, theologian Marva Dawn identifies two kinds of sexuality in the creation narrative in her book *Sexual Character*. She builds on the insights of author Joyce Huggett. In Genesis 1 Dawn sees what she calls *social sexuality*. She says, ***"Our social sexuality is composed of all aspects of our being that are distinct from specific feelings, attitudes, or behaviors related or leading to genital union"*** (11). In our day we have almost no understanding of social sexuality. That is, we have very little healthy appreciation for being fully male and fully female, without being drawn toward sex in some way.

This is why many women often feel like they have to be less feminine around men, so that they don't give off the wrong idea what they wear or so or carry themselves. It's why many men think to be a man is to be physically desirable. In other words, we've learned to see our bodies are separate from our souls. But when the writer of Genesis first records the creation story we're given a vision of a society and human community in which we are fully male and fully female, do life together as men and women, have dominion together as men and women, and image God's nature and character together, as men and women. There is an obvious biological element to our nature, but also a deeply spiritual element. Something that draws us together which does not desire for or result in sex. That's social sexuality. Intimacy without sex. It's healthy same-sex and opposite-sex friendship. It's body and soul in harmony.

We gain an even deeper understanding of human order when we read the second account of creation. It's in Genesis 2:18-25. The man, Adam, is created first and we're told there's not suitable *helper* found for him (vv.18,20). Adam goes to sleep and God takes a rib from his side and makes the woman (v.22). Here's how it's recorded from there, ***Read Genesis 2:23-25 ... Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*** Genesis continues to shed light in the darkness. *Did you notice?* A man and woman are completely naked, fully exposed and there was zero shame. That's a picture of order and harmony. But it's different than the order and harmony of the first creation account.

In Genesis 2 Dawn observes the second aspect of our sexuality, *genital sexuality*. She says, God has ***"designed sexual intercourse as a special sign of a unique relationship, one that develops out of leaving former family bonds and cleaving to one and only one person for the rest of our lives"*** (22). Social sexuality shares intimacy and oneness with other people. Genital sexuality shares intimacy and oneness with one other person. In each aspect we cherish something fundamental about our personhood—body and soul. That's why Adam says this is flesh of *my* flesh and bone of *my* bone. But it's more than flesh. The Apostle Paul would later say that this leaving and cleaving is retelling the story of the gospel. He tells the church in Ephesus, ***Read Ephesians 5:32 ... This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*** Genital sexuality is physical and spiritual, it's body and soul in harmony.

In summary ...

Social sexuality is a designed longing to see, know, and enjoy each other as whole human beings. It's friendship that's true and beauty. Genital sexuality is a designed union to express the mystery of the gospel. It's marriage that's true and beautiful. The order we're invited to embrace in Scriptures is a sexuality in which body and soul are one. Our physical flesh filled with spiritual life.

Movement 2: Understanding the Disorder (v.13, Galatians 5:17, Genesis 3:7-8)

The path to healing continues, from embracing the order to a second signpost: understanding the *disorder*. *What's the disorder?* Well, our bodies and souls are not one. And the reason our bodies and souls are disjointed and lack harmony is because of sin. Paul told the Galatian Christians, ***Read Galatians 5:17 ... For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.*** The fracture of sin runs through our bodies and souls. *The flesh is against the Spirit. The Spirit is against the flesh.* There is disorder and disharmony. We see this tragically unfold as the creation narrative continues.

Our first parents are instructed to use self-control (as Paul instructs us in Romans 13). They could enjoy the beauty and abundance of the world they'd been given, but there was one tree from which they needed to abstain—*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* (2:17). But if you know the story, they definitely ate fruit from that tree. In doing so they reject God's world where truth and beauty lived in harmony, where body and soul were in order. That's why their consequence was a world bound in flesh ... separated from spirit. Watch this unfold, ***Read***

Genesis 3:7-8 ... Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Notice, *their eyes were opened. What did they see?* Only flesh. Only bodies. What was once male and female bearing the image of the divine—body and soul—now they only saw nakedness. What's more, they were ashamed of what they saw. So they not only hid behind fig leaves, but also hid behind trees.

Body and soul were disjoined.

Commenting on Adam and Eve's fall, pastor and author Rich Villodas explains in his book *The Deeply Formed Life* that, ***"the way sin opens humanity's eyes paradoxically cuts off the deeper vision by which we are to see each other. We now live ashamed by our exposure, self-conscious of our vulnerability, and needing to protect ourselves from being laid bare"*** (135). Because of sin we often only see bodies ... we only consider the flesh ... we're prone to limit our sexuality and the sexuality of others to genital expressions. That's disordered. That's pornography; enjoying someone's body without their soul. That's isolated experiences of masturbation; bodily pleasure and fantasy without another person's whole presence. That's advertisement that shows skin to sell. That's social media. We separate body and soul so often we no longer even realize how disordered it is.

Perhaps these are obvious. But we're prone neglect the soul and only see the body must more subtle ways within community. Men struggle to be in relationship with other men. Women struggle to share intimacy with other women. Healthy platonic

friendships with the opposite sex seem impossible. Instead we've been taught to compare and fear each other's bodies, and remain blind to the soul. Instead of seeing a sister in Christ, we see a threat to our marriage. Instead of seeing a brother in Christ, we see only a potential mate. Instead of seeing a wife, a picture of Christ's Church, a husband sees a means for sexual gratification. Instead of a husband, a picture of Christ's love, a wife sees a pathway to children. Detaching body from soul.

This is what the darkness does. This is what sin has done. It separates body and soul. It separates what God has created for union. There, of course, are boundaries in all types of relationships. But healthy boundaries aren't never set by shame and fear, but by what is true and what is beautiful.

Back in Romans, that's what Paul is writing about. With the full view of creation's order and sin's disorder he tells his readers that our relationship with sex needs healing and change. It needs to be renewed. He says, ***Read Romans 13:13 ... Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.*** Paul lists six vices, in three sets. Each sin does the disordered work of separation. Drunkenness separates us from our better judgment. Anger separates us from each other. And sexual immorality separates body and soul. This is a small list of vices, other Pauline lists are much longer. Places like Galatians 5:19-21, Colossians 3:1-11, and Ephesians 5:1-14. In Galatians he lists what he calls *works of the flesh*. In Colossians a list of *what is earthly*. In Ephesians he calls them *works of darkness* like in Romans. He always includes sexual sins. And they are always described by what is physical, visible, immediate, and of this world. Sexual immorality is sexual character void of

spiritual meaning. It's just bodies. Sensuality is sexual experience without the grounding of the soul. It's just desire. The disorder is body and soul disjoined.

Movement 3: Walking in Healing (v.14, Genesis 3:10-13;21)

The pathway of healing takes us to a longer path than we probably expected, and certainly longer than we'd probably like. That's the third signpost on our journey: walking in *healing*. Healing from sexual disunity takes time. Because sexual sin and shame and the spiritual malpractices around sexuality have shaped us in ways we likely don't fully understand. That's the beauty and power of John's invitation to not simply step into the light, but walk in it. When we step into the light, in a sense we are immediately healed. By the power and love of Jesus, we are made new (2 Corinthians 5:17). But in another very real sense, we have only just begun to heal. In other words, in Christ our soul and body are rejoined and renewed, but it takes time to learn all this means. Or as my professor William Klien has written, it takes time to *become who you are*. It takes time to name sexual wounds, whether we have caused or endured them.

I think that's what Adam and Eve experienced next. As they hid, God drew near. He asks them, "*where are you?*" He invites them out from the darkness, out from the merely physical world and mindset, out from the purely fleshly vision of the world sin had introduced to them ... and into the light. And they do. They step into the light. But then let's listen as the disjointedness is progressively exposed, even though they are now in the light. Adam said, ***Read Genesis 3:10-13 ... "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree***

of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” They say, *we're naked. We only see our bodies. We only see flesh.* And God says, essentially ... *who taught you to see like that? Who taught you to understand my good and truth, and beautifully Spirit-filled world that way?* And then comes blame. The man blames the women. The woman blames the serpent. The two humans who had just been made one—united socially and genitally—are now at odds. They're opposed to one another. They're in disharmony.

What's happening?

Stepping in the light is about confession. Walking in the light is about restoration. It's about lament and healing. Now lament may seem counterintuitive to healing. But lament is necessary for healing. Professor Soong-Chan Rah says, ***"Shalom requires lament."*** He goes on to explain in his book, *Prophetic Lament*, that avoiding lament causes us to forget. We don't forget our pain of course. But we forget who God is. We forget who we are. You see, many of us remain unhealed from sexual wounds because we have yet to lament them. And that's okay. That takes time and rediscovering safety and rebuilding trust. Lament is the patient invitation to name sin, clarify shame, and define our pain and woundedness in the arms of a loving Savior. When we name the disorder, healing is possible. We bring it into the light, we walk in the light.

That's what God does with Adam and Eve next. He names their sin. He clarifies the cost or consequence. But he leads them down this path, he helps them to not just

step into the light but walk in the light ... not to condemn them, but to heal them. After he names sin and consequence, ***Read Genesis 3:21 ... God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*** Once he named their spiritual disorder, he clothed them with grace and love. *Why is this loving?* Well, God makes a sacrifice. The penalty for eating of that tree, for sin was death. But instead of their life, God took the life of an animal. He cleanses them with grace and love.

From the beginning God has shown us how he intends to rejoin separated bodies and souls: substitutionally sacrifice. This animal in the Garden is a signpost too. It prepares us for the Anointed One on the Cross. Therefore when Paul says, ***Read Romans 13:14 ... But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*** ... he's talking about putting on grace. Putting on love. Put on the substitutionary atonement. *Put on the righteousness ... forgiveness ... and power of Jesus.* When we put on Christ, when we walk in the Spirit ... our disordered way of seeing ourselves and others is healed ... and continues to find healing. Because when we put on Christ we don't just think and see the flesh, and seek to satisfy bodily desires. We think with the mind of Christ. We seek to satisfy spiritual longings. We live as body and soul. The way God sees us. The way God made us. That's who we are. And, that's who we are becoming ... a whole person made in the image of God. Male and female. Together.

Walking in the light is about renewal and restoration. It's about following these signpost from order to disorder to healing. It's not always linear and progressive. We often need to go backwards to go forward. It's what makes us long for the return of Christ. When Jesus comes back, he will set all things to rights. He'll bring healing and restoration, the fullness of his truth and beauty joined as one. He'll

bring together what has been sinfully separated. Between now and then, by his power we're meant to begin and participate in this work of renewal. Personally and as a community, we walk in the light ... down the pathway of healing together as men and women.