

Week of April 6, 2008

The challenges we face today are much like those faced by the early church following the ascension of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. These early believers faced a hostile crowd of Jewish leaders who brought persecution and a Gentile world that was filled with pagan religions and sinful lifestyles. Sexual immorality was the order of the day, unwanted babies were either killed or abandoned, and Christians were imprisoned or martyred for their faith. Paul wrote of those times:

Rom 13:11-14 NIV

¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² 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. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

These words of Paul also describe the “present time” we live in today and the warning and instruction given must be followed by the twenty first century church. We must come to understand the time, wake up from our spiritual slumber, recognize that the coming of Christ draws near, and “put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light” by clothing ourselves “with the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Titus 2:11-14 NIV

¹¹ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.