

**A NATION ON EDGE**  
**July 10, 2016 morning service**  
**Romans 13:8-14**

Bless the Lord. How good is that? Thank you, choir. You guys be here tonight and we'll sing together. We're grateful for the bells. I'm sitting here just weeping while they're singing. You know, there's some things about staying at a church a long time as the pastor and 25 years is a long time they tell me. There's some stuff you only get when you stay and that family's one of them. Wanda used to drag those two boys to my office when she and Ron were separated and sit them down in front of me and say, "Pastor, I'm going to leave. I want you to talk to these boys. They need a man in their life and we don't have a daddy at our house right now." She'd bring them. They did that every year, sometimes more than once. I don't know what we talked about. I just asked them what they were doing just to put a guy in their life, their pastor.

Then God healed that marriage and put them all back together. Now Ryan's down with Willie Rice at Calvary Church helping in their music program. We're going to ordain him tonight. I'm grateful to God for the grace. You see, what they're singing, they only sing it because they've lived – only the cross could have done that. Amen. Thank God for the cross and Wanda that were persistent. She made pictures every time they came and if you know her she sleeps with a camera. She takes pictures of her dreams at night.

It's been a tough week, hasn't it? I wouldn't say we've never had anything like it because we've walked through some things but the young millennial generation, it's a week like they've not seen. I've just had flashbacks all week as a 10-year-old boy watching Oswald and Ruby on a black and white TV in Dallas, Texas, the president being shot. I'm reading in my summer reading program a book written by a secret service agent, five presidents that he worked for and one of them was President Kennedy. We're just to the chapter about Dallas last night when I'm reading. I've just been thinking about all that. Families are mourning today. In Baton Rouge, the Sterling family is mourning. In St. Paul, the Castile family is mourning. Then in Dallas, the Thompsons and the Zamarripa and the Krol and the Ahrens and the Smith families are mourning. Other cities have tears in their eyes today because of protests and difficulty and rest and heartache.

Our nation is on edge. There's a bubbling cauldron of anger about a lot of things and it's all around us. You have to be ignorant not to acknowledge it. You have to put blinders on not to see it. America is all but a tinder box and if the wrong word is spoken by the right person or a certain action is taken, a match could go into that that would absolutely erupt into flames of destruction across our nation.

So what action should the church take? Well we've got to take action because I'm telling you that the people of faith are the answer to this issue. We must be and we can be and Paul gives us a good word in Romans 13. When I started preaching last Sunday in Romans 13 I had decided I was going to just preach through the rest of

Romans. Then I prayerfully said, "I'm not going to do that," and I prepared another message today until Thursday night. Friday I rose and said, "Lord, I just" – and I got back on this Romans track and the Holy Ghost said, "Well if you'd have just stayed where I told you, you'd have already been prepared," but I'm kind of thickheaded sometimes. I know none of you are like that but your pastor is, alright? Sometimes God has to deal with me a little bit and sometimes He has to deal with me a whole lot. I dove back into this passage and I think it is a clarion call to the church for a nation on edge. Paul says to the church at Rome in verse 8 of Romans 13:

*Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another [Say that together. Love one another]; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. [Verse 14. Read this out loud with me, please.] But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.<sup>1</sup>*

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. What does a nation on edge need from the church? You know, there are 310,000 protestant churches in America. Now that's not an exact scientific number but it's a highly educated guess that people use, a little over 300,000. Now you can throw out half of them because they're liberal and wouldn't know Jesus if he walked in the house. There are others that are moderate but I'm telling you, there's 100,000 churches that'll preach the Bible today, all across this land. They're in every city. God's got His people. What if a match was thrown into those churches and a fire of the Holy Ghost began to burn in 100,000 places this morning? Oh my Lord. That's the answer to a nation on edge. It is for the church to explode in the power of the Lord God.

What action does Paul call us to in this text? There are two of them and I want you to see them. Number one. I believe that what America needs right now out of its church and out of its community, first of all, is that we reach out to our neighbors, that you reach out to your neighbors. Notice it right here in verse number 8. Love one another. Look in verse number 8 again. For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. Drop down in verse number 9 when he names a portion of The Ten Commandments and says all the other commandments are summed up in this. You should love your neighbor as yourself. Verse 10. *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.* Do you get the idea that he's telling us we ought to love one another? You need to reach out to your neighbors.

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I'd encourage you. I saw this this week. If we would add love, subtract hate, and not let the devil divide us, God might very well multiply His grace among us. Hear me again. If you'd add love and subtract hate and not let the devil divide us, God might very well multiply grace among His people. Amen. We need to love one another. You say, "Pastor, that sounds good." We say that all the time. Everybody ought to love one another. How do we do that? Well let's talk about some practical application of loving one another.

Number one. I've got a challenge for you. It'll take you 20 minutes or maybe more to do it. I challenge you to go to your computer, go to your Google search or whatever you use, Chrome or whatever, and type in Martin Luther King's letter from a Birmingham jail. It's ten pages, single-space in type. Run it off. I did. Print it out and sit and read it and mark it up. I am telling you, this letter of over 50 years ago from a man in jail just three hours north of where we sit has a prophetic word for America. In that letter he is answering eight white preachers that wrote an editorial about the protest that King led in Birmingham encouraging him to wait and let the courts move where we needed to go. In that letter Martin Luther King says, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." It's a strong letter.

In it he gives the four steps for non-violent protests. I'm telling you, anyone who thinks about protesting in the city streets of any city ought to read these four markers. King said, "Before you would have a non-violent protest, do four things. Number one, collect the facts and see if indeed they do warrant a protest." Not just because you saw something today and then jump in the streets tomorrow. Collect the facts. Find out what you're really talking about and see if it rises to the level of non-violent protest. Number two. He said, "After you've collected the facts, negotiate. Speak to people. Come to negotiation. Before you take to the streets, take to negotiation. Spend time talking to one another."

I was amazed in the book I'm reading of when Eisenhower was the president, after Ike left and Kennedy was elected, we had the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Bay of Pigs. I barely remember that. The only thing I remember about it is at Pisgah School down in the border room there was a basement and they had one of those red signs on it. I don't know what the scientific meaning was but I knew that it meant there was a bomb shelter if there was a nuclear explosion. The Russians were bringing those bombs in to Cuba just off our southern shore. Kennedy and Khrushchev were back and forth and Kennedy – you won't believe this – President Kennedy went to Camp David and called President Eisenhower and asked him to come and meet with him in a closed door meeting, just the two of them, for an hour and a half. You say, "What?" Think about it. When's the last time that a Democrat and a Republican got in a room without Twitter and without Facebook, without cameras and just said, "In God's name, let's try to solve something for America." Wouldn't it be refreshing to negotiate with truth rather than trying to make some stupid political statement? Just for the good of the Republic and the people.

You know, we always all say it. It would be amazing what we could do together if we didn't care who got the credit. That doesn't just work in Washington. That works in the halls of Olive too. He said, "First of all, gather all the facts. Secondly," in this letter he said, "Negotiate." He said thirdly, "Go through a season of self-purification." Before you take to the street, look inside yourself. Self-purification. Say, "Lord, is it me? Is there something about me? Is there something in me that needs to be looked at?" Then number four, King says in this letter after you collect the facts, negotiate, and go through self-purification, then if nothing else works go to direct action.

It's an amazing letter. I challenge you to go run it off and read it. He speaks in there about just and unjust laws. Oh how I wish Martin Luther King were alive today to speak a word about just and unjust laws in America. He said a just law, a just law is one that is in line with the law of the Creator and the natural law that the Creator has put within us. It's a powerful, powerful couple of pages on just and unjust law. It's amazing. I challenge you to read it. Then he finishes. Let me just read the words of his concluding sentence. He said to these preachers, "Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of" – here's our word, "love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty."

Fifty years later we're still waiting. We're still working for the radiant stars of love and brotherhood to shine with scintillating beauty across our land. I challenge you to love one another. Read that letter. It'll help you to understand some things about racial – there's no place for prejudice in our culture of any kind, any stripe, and certainly not the church of the living God. All God's people at the foot of the cross.

Secondly I'd say to you that if you were white, you need to befriend a black family and get to know them and have them eat at your table. If you are black I encourage you that you would befriend a white family and have them eat at your table. It will help you just to have friends that don't look like you if we are really going to be salt and light in our culture.

I sat in my office Saturday afternoon praying and planning. My phone rang and when I looked down at it, it was a young, black pastor that I have spent time mentoring some in our city. When I answered the phone I said hello and he said, "Doctor." That's what he calls me. He said, "Doctor, I just needed to hear your voice today and I needed to tell you that I love you and I'm praying for you as we walk through this season in our culture." Well he set my heart to thinking. So I decided I needed to make a phone call or two. I did and I couldn't find any of my black preachers that I could call. Nobody was answering their phone.

I walked into Olive on Friday. Usually I manage by wandering around on Friday afternoon and I just kind of walked around and when I went into the gym there were 12 young black boys playing basketball. So I just went out there and stood and watched until the game – they played a ten, one point per bucket – when the guy made the last

shot I walked out to center court. I said, "Hey, guys. Come here a minute." They all looked at me like, "Okay, what did we do? Did we mess up? We didn't dunk. We didn't tear up the goal." I just put my arm around the biggest guy out there. I said, "Listen, I'm Pastor Ted Traylor at the church." Then of course it was, "Oh Lord." I said, "You guys probably don't know me. I know I don't know you. One or two of you I do." I said, "I just want you to know that in the middle of all that happened this week in America, I'm glad you're here playing ball. This preacher loves you and just wanted you to know that we're all together in our American family. Hope you have a good day." If you ever clap for me like that again I'm going to run all of you out of here. I'd rather you just say Amen.

I noticed those boys kind of look at each other and here's the way they looked at each other, like, "Does he really mean that?" You see, they don't know me and I don't know them. They won't know me until they sit down at my table. Number one, I encourage you to read King's letter. Number two, that you'd get to know a black family or somebody not like you. Take that action. That's the third thing.

Then number four. In the next seven days whenever you see a police officer, you stop and shake his or her hand and you thank them for what they're doing to keep peace in our land. I did it yesterday. I did it this morning with the men that work for us here. They help us with security and then they get you out of here out on the road. So this morning rather than hollering at them and blowing your horn when they make you stop out here, try to be just a little saved when you leave this morning, alright? Wherever you see that badge, you stop and you shake somebody's hand.

I was walking into the Maritime Park last night and saw a Pensacola police officer standing there as they always do and helping us get in and out. I just went up, took my ball cap off and stuck my hand out. I wasn't even looking at who I was talking to. I didn't know he was a member of our church until I got up and saw him and recognized him. I said, "I want to thank you for what you do." He said, "Pastor, I thank you for what you're doing." I thought, Lord have mercy. Then I found out who he was and began to talk. I was just trying to say thank you. I met these guys down here this morning and shook their hand. I put my arm around them and slapped him on the back. I thought, boy, that old boy's in shape. He had on a vest. If I had on a vest, I'd be hard.

Let me tell you, these men and women that walk out there walk into danger every day of their life and they walk in there for you. A few days ago a window jostled at my house at 4:00 in the morning and sent an alarm. They called my house and I didn't hear the phone. Man, I was sleeping. Then they called my daughter and she called. I didn't hear that. Then they called my assistant and then they called the executive pastor. Then they called the county sheriff's office. Finally I saw lights and heard this siren going off. At 5:00 in the morning I walked out and I saw Dr. Lewis and Beth Harris and a Pensacola police officer with bright lights standing in front of my house. I cracked the door. I said, "Stan." He said, "We weren't coming in because I know how many guns you've got in there." I said, "Well you're a smart man." He said, "How long have you

had that c-pap machine? I want me one of those if I can sleep like you're sleeping." I said, "Amen." It'll work, won't it, Brother Pete? Yes, sir.

Why was that officer there? That officer was there because he came to see if I was alright. That's what those officers are for and you ought to say thank you. You ought to love them. Now if they pull you over, you get a pass. You don't have to tell them you love them if they write you a ticket but you've got to be nice. When you see them in town, love one another. We need to reach out to our neighbors is what I'm telling you. You need to get to know the folks that live next to you and across from you and sitting across from you. You need to love one another. It's the answer to this issue.

Number two. This text says the second thing is not only do we need to reach out to our neighbor, we need to wake up to our needs. Wake up to our needs. Notice what he says in verse 11. He says, "Know this, that the time is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep, for now salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night's almost gone. The day is here." It's almost dawn. Wake up. Wake up. The church is asleep at the wheel. We've got sleepy Christians filling our churches. It's time to wake up. Paul said to the church at Ephesus in chapter 5 and verse 14, "Awake, sleeper. Arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you." Hey sleeper, wake up. He said to the church at Thessalonica in I Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse number 6, "So then let us not sleep as others do but let us be alert and be sober. Wake up." We need a spiritual awakening in America and it needs to begin with us. We're just lazy, lollygagging through worship and through the week never pressing the gospel and pressing the issue of justice and morality and godliness and salt and light. Bless God. Wake up. Wake up. Wake up.

This text tells us we need to wake up to four things. Number one. We need to wake up and watch. Verse 11 says that salvation is nearer than when we – what's that talking about? That's talking about Jesus coming again. Your salvation, it's closer than ever. Salvation in the Bible is always in three tenses. Number one, there is salvation past. That's when God forgives you of the penalty of your sin. Can you tell me you've been saved? Say Amen. Take me to a place and tell me of a time. "I've been saved." When you were saved, you were saved from the penalty of sin. But now salvation also has a present tense and that is when he saves us from the power of sin, that the power of sin does not have sway over you. The power of the Holy Spirit has sway over you and then the future tense. He will save us from the very presence of sin. When we get to the other side there'll be no sin there. Hallelujah, friend. Wake up. I'm telling you, salvation is closer than you've ever known it. Dawn's almost here. We need to wake up and watch for the coming of our Lord. We need to live like He's coming today.

Secondly he says to us, wake up and go to war and we're in a war. Notice in verse 12. The night is almost gone. The day is near, therefore, let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the what? Armor. Put on the armor of light. In Ephesians 6:12 we're told that we have a struggle. Hear me, church. We're in a battle and that battle is not against flesh and blood. No, no. It's not against a man. It's

against rulers. It's against powers. It's against world forces, this darkness. Spiritual forces of wickedness that are in heavenly places. There's a spiritual battle of wickedness among us. There are forces of darkness and houses of government and houses of churches. Friend, we've got to go to war and I'm telling you how we war is we pray. Then we stand for truth.

I shared this with you last week. You probably didn't get it so I'll say it again. If you've not gone to the website Socrates in the City – it's Eric Metaxas' website and on that website there are various videos you can watch about varied subjects. I watched one this morning just five minutes long. There are others that are an hour long. There was one this morning I watched from Chuck Colson. Chuck Colson said and it gave me a jolt, Colson said, "The worst thing you can do when you're making a major decision is follow your conscience." I've been taught all my life, follow my conscience. He said, "You don't need to follow your conscience because you are a lost man and you're not smart enough or have enough." He said, "You need to follow the virtue found in the very revelation of the word of God and let it control your conscience." I thought, old Chuck's onto something here. That's the war. It's the war. It's the war we're in. Wake up and watch. Wake up and go to war.

Number three, he said, "Wake up and walk straight." Oh yeah. Look in verse 13. Let us behave properly as in the day. In what day? It's like if Jesus came today you'd walk different. Wake up and behave properly. He tells us what to do, behave properly, and then he tells us what not to do. Carousing. There's no place for Olive members to be carousing. Drunkenness. There's no place for Olive members to be drunk.

The pastor of one of the greatest churches in America got fired this morning. He preached to over 30,000 people a weekend. He got fired this week because he's drunk. Alcohol will kill you. There's no place for drunkenness. There's no place for carousing. Some of you have already said, "Well now, pastor, what is carousing?" You already know what it is. Sexual promiscuity. You say, "What's that?" You know what that is. Sensuality. I'm not man enough to go to the beach in the summer. Number one, I get sunburned. Number two, my eyes get burned.

You better be very careful. That's like when we had the Southern Baptist Convention in Las Vegas. Every hotel you go in had a casino in the bottom. I told my wife, I said, "Whatever you do, you hold my hand when we walk through a casino." I said, "I do not have a propensity to get drunk but I could like this. I could like a quarter becoming a ten dollar bill." What I don't like is a hundred dollar bill becoming a nickel. I said, "You just hold my hand and we'll watch other people be fools, alright?" Yeah.

Strife. Strife. Striving. That's what's in America right now. There's strife. There's anger. People are mad and some of them don't even know what they're mad about. Some very well think they do know what they're mad about. There's great strife. Jealousy. Thank God for that last word. Baptists don't have to worry about that. Just all the rest of that stuff bothers us. We don't have to worry about jealousy. If Baptists were writing that verse we'd put jealousy at the top. Wake up. Watch. Wake up. Go to

war. Wake up. Walk straight. Wake up and wear Jesus. Wear Jesus. That's what he said. He says, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ."

Let me tell you, you are a grateful people that I put on this suit today and did not wear to preach what I wore to sleep. That's a good place for an Amen right there, I'm just telling you. When I got up and walked in the bathroom and looked in the mirror this morning, Brother Jack, I said to myself, "I'm preaching on "Put on Jesus." Wake up and put on Jesus. I think I'll just wear what I got on." Ooh, Lord, you would not have stayed long. Wake up, cast off your nightclothes, and put on Jesus. "What's that mean, pastor?" Well Jesus was a radical. He was a revolutionary. He loved people didn't anybody else love. Prostitutes at wells, thieves up trees, thieves on crosses, tax collectors, religious leaders that were mean and hypocritical. We've got to put on Jesus.

This Thursday night at the city council in Pensacola there's an old boy that's going to pray. His first name is David. He's the leader of what's called the Satanic Temple. Now don't get too upset about that. He doesn't even believe in the devil. He doesn't believe in God and he doesn't believe in the devil. That's just the name of his place to make you mad. He's going to talk about Satan but he doesn't even believe in him. You read his writings. We stand for truth but how do we respond to old David? We love him in Jesus' name. Amen. We shake his hand. We speak truth. I'm just here to tell you, being mean spirited is not going to help you. You've got to love one another and then you've got to wake up.

You see, our issue is we just come to church and check in and we just kind of get lulled in. Everything's going fine. We're pretty good but then tragedy strikes and rather than hitting our knees we want to hit somebody. Oh what if the wind of God began to blow and raised up some people that would fight the fight of truth with a keen mind and a broken heart?

Hear this and we give an invitation. Years ago in the days of slavery in England, William Wilberforce, God raised him up with a mind and a heart. Statistics tells us and can be verified that in London in those days 25%, one out of every four women, was a prostitute in London. You say, "My Lord, preacher." Yes. If that tells you something about the women, what more does it tell you about the men? It was a godless place and the Wesleys began to preach. Wilberforce heard the gospel, not singlehandedly but many would say yes, singlehandedly. He led the charge to turn the day of slavery in London town and spiritual awakening, spiritual – did you get the last word – awakening. The church woke up and began to be the church. Not just in a building. They went out and spread like wildfire. It all started with a brokenness, with a repentance, with a God be merciful to us, to a desperate cry. God raised this man up and he turned, he turned a nation.

What's going to turn this nation? God's going to raise up a prophet somewhere, people somewhere and there's going to be an awakening in the church somewhere and it's going to spread. Now watch this. If it does not start right here, be very careful that

you don't look with suspicion and jealousy because it doesn't look just like you look but when you see Christ exalted and the Bible believed, encourage your brothers. There may be one somebody here today that God is going to call you to put on Jesus because you've been hiding Him. You've been putting Him down and you're going to be awakened and you're going to put on Christ. God's going to use you to touch a son or a grandchild or be in a classroom. I don't know. He's going to call you to speak up and put on Christ.

What are we going to do with this nation that's on edge? We're going to love our neighbor and we're going to wake up to our own need. We need the Lord and we need one another.