

Perhaps you have seen those ads about earning \$1,000 a week stuffing envelopes in your home. You can work in your pajamas, they tout, while still earning a good living.

In fact, I spent several years as a communications consultant in which one of my primary clients was based in Europe. So I would get up early and, often, while still in my pajamas, would do all the work for them that they needed that day. Only after their business day had ended, and mine was halfway through, did I often put on day clothes.

But working in our pajamas, as we all know, has its limitations. When the client calls on Skype, we rush to block the video so they can't see us. And we can't visit clients without changing into our day clothes. And not all of our networking can be done via social media – some of it must be face to face. In fact, long-time freelance writer Laura Spencer advises work-from-home-folks to get up, wash their faces, and put on actual clothes every day. Feeling ready for work helps boost performance. Pajamas, of course, represent to our psyche that it's time to relax and lounge around the house. Dressing in appropriate attire makes us ready to meet whatever the day has for us.

Paul urges his readers to wake up – to be ready for the second coming of Christ to earth. During the interval between Christ's first coming (and ascension into heaven) and the second coming in the future, we are called to be clothed in the Lord. Eugene Peterson, author of the Message, translates verses 13 and 14 of Romans 13 this way:

“We can’t afford to waste a minute, must not squander these precious daylight hours in frivolity and indulgence, in sleeping around and dissipation, in bickering and grabbing everything in sight. Get out of bed and get dressed! Don’t loiter and linger, waiting until the very last minute. Dress yourselves in Christ, and be up and about! “

The image here, according to Colin G. Kruse, a theology lecturer at the University of Melbourne, Australia, is one of military readiness, perhaps that of a soldier putting aside his night wear to be clothed in his armor. Armor, in the time of Paul as today, was one of the most important part of the soldier’s equipment because it protects the soldier in battle. It also allows the soldier to go forth with less fear. Armor of that time period included a helmet and neck guard to protect the face and the throat from downward slashes; and segmented armor that covered the chest and shoulders from spears, missiles and swords; and shields, which offered further protection and which often included the colors and symbol identifying the holder with a particular unit.

As disciples of Jesus, waiting and serving in the interval before Christ’s second coming to earth, we are called to get out of our pajamas and be dressed in Christ, in armor, as if in battle. No more slouching around waiting for other folks to do it. No more cowering in fear. In fact, we are fighting a battle – against evil in our society and against the temptations in our heart. Putting on that armor – that is putting on Christ -- protects us, gives us courage in our fighting and identifies us with Christ. Our baptism – that water bath on our head and the sign of the cross on our forehead – serves as a helmet. The body and blood of Christ taken inside us comprise our segmented armor. The Word of God

is part of our shield. Our actions often become a way in which folks identify us with our living Lord.

These actions – as soldiers dressed in Jesus and fighting the battle for Him – include kindness, love and tolerance, rather than quarreling and jealousy. They include stepping aside from the grind of everyday obligations to spend quiet moments with God – to get our marching orders from Him rather than letting the circumstances of each day govern what we do. They include denying ourselves pleasures that might be wrong for us and especially avoiding being greedy or overindulging. They include showing consideration for others, including those we struggle to like. They include showing consideration for those in future generations by conserving what we can of earth's resources. Being clothed in Christ, ready for battle means that we not only **take** seriously His commandment to put God first in everything we do and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves but that we **act** seriously. We don't wait for others to do it. We claim our identity in the Lord – grabbing all that armor – Scripture, communion, grace in baptism – and jump forward energetically to join with Christ in transforming our world – right now. Jesus calls us to active waiting, not just lying around – half asleep.

As we actively join the battle with him, Jesus also offers us a promise. He promises protection. You see that's really the purpose of armor. It protects us. Our baptism, our spiritual food from the table, those signs of the cross placed upon our heads. Although they are a call to action, they are at the same time means by which we receive grace. They are means by which we receive God's protection. Just as metal armor protected Roman soldiers from the missiles and spears of their enemies, God's

armor protects us from missiles of pain from the sins of us or the sins others; from spears of disappointment; from swords of illness and grief.

The Jesus who loved us so much that he left all that glory in heaven to come first as a little baby in a feeding trough in Bethlehem, still comes to us in love every time we stop to seek Him. And that Jesus will come again to earth to renew all of creation. As we wait, we are ready, watchful and active, joining with Him in this transformation.

Amen