

How can we "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ?
By loving and serving him.
 What is the right question to ask?
 Shall we ask it of ourselves?

Remember—

That great trees grow from little seeds.
 That great sins grow from little self-indulgences.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.**General Statement.**

When to the Roman Christians Paul wrote the vigorous verses we study to-day, neither he nor they were beset by the modern "liquor question." Nevertheless the digest of Christian morals here given is one of the best of all temperance lessons. These five or six moral precepts, if followed out, would banish from the community all selfish indulgence of appetite. Paul says, "Owe no man anything" (verse 8); "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (verse 9); Do no harm to any (verse 10); Arise from lethargy (verses 11 and 12); Behave with rectitude and discretion (verse 13); and Be enveloped and coated and cloaked with the Lord Jesus, just as an ancient soldier was covered all over by his armor (verses 12, 14). Think how utterly contrary to all this is the intoxication which piles up debts on the individual and the community; which sows the seeds of hatred of our neighbors; which works more "ill" and harm than any other force in modern society; which affects the community with a sort of moral stupor, and seems at times to befool even Christian consciences; which is the most fruitful source of vice and "works of darkness;" which so fastens its shackles about a man that the slavery of its victims is more readily seen than the Christian armor of those who oppose it. The Epistle of Paul to the Romans is the most elaborate production of the apostle's pen. While it is one of the profoundest theological treatises ever composed, it is written in headlong and off-hand style, and from beginning to end it is characteristically a letter. Its date is probably A. D. 58, the fourth year of Nero's reign.

Verse 8. The apostle has just spoken (verses 1-7) of the Christian's duty to the civil government, and his words on this subject come to us with increased force when we remember the vileness of the government to which he urged loyalty. From the duties of a citizen he passes to the duties of a neighbor, and his first injunction has been interpreted by some fanatics to forbid the credit system in trade. **Owe no man anything, but to love one another.** There is no doubt that in modern merchandise the credit system is so strained and misused that it has become a readier ministrant to acute "panics" and chronic fraud than any other element. But the apostle is here handling much profounder principles than any laws of trade. The debt of love underlies and precedes all other debts. We are to love the man from whom we purchase, the man to whom we sell, and the man who neither sells nor buys from us; not to like them, selecting them from all the rest of the world because of their harmony to our tastes, but to love them, holding ourselves in constant readiness to sacrifice our own convenience and preference for them. This is the spirit of the Lord Jesus; and if it be not good business policy, that is simply because "business," as generally conducted, is pagan and not Christian in spirit. Temporary indebtedness is often a necessity, and is directly conducive to the prosperity of both seller and buyer; but, (1) No man has a right by any sort of indebtedness to forfeit his moral independence; (2) No man has a right in any business relation to transgress the Golden Rule—to do what, under similar circumstances, he would not cordially like to be done to him. Dr. Moule wittily says that the debt of

love to our neighbor is not like a forgotten account which is owing to the seller, but is rather like interest on capital which is constantly owing to the lender. **Hath fulfilled the law.** "The law" merely puts into language what a loving heart does spontaneously. "Fulfilling" is filling full. It is as if every precept and command of the Mosaic law was a cup, of no value whatever until filled to overflow with the love to carry which it was fashioned.

9. This verse shows that the "Thou shalt not" of the second half of the Decalogue mean simply, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Each prohibition is the negative statement of a positive command. How complete is the self-abnegation which the Gospel enjoins may be seen from the phrase **as thyself**. Remember, "love is holiness spelled short."

10. Love worketh no ill. A negative statement again. **Love is the fulfilling of the law.** See note on verse 8. Men and women are often kept back from the simple, pure love which characterized the early Christians, and which is God's ideal for all his children, by selfish conventions which are the outgrowth of selfishness.

11. And that. Better, "and this;" our love to our neighbor is made active by a consideration of the time. **High time to awake out of sleep.** This becomes especially true when we make use of the passage as a temperance lesson. Now is the time to think and talk and work and vote on this burning question, which makes every other question petty when compared to it. **Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.** This is the reason for the holy promptitude to which Paul exhorts. But in what sense is