

APPLICATION

*Owe no man anything*, v. 8. It is a Christian duty to pay our debts. This applies to many other debts than those which can be discharged by money. God has given to us gospel privileges and advantages in trust for mankind. We have no right to content ourselves with a selfish enjoyment of these blessings. We are under sacred obligation to convey them to all those whose welfare is embraced in the loving purpose of the Great Giver. Like the apostles, we are debtors "both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise," (Rom. 1:14); and we shall be held accountable before the court of heaven for our discharge of this great trust.

*Love one another*, v. 8. This is the rule of the Christian life. The Jews had the moral law, summed up in the Ten Commandments and in many minor regulations of conduct. Paul here gives a single rule that surpasses and supersedes them all—the law of love. If we love our neighbor, we shall not kill him, or even covet his goods. We shall be glad, rather, that he has plenty. The law of love is simple. The method of Jesus is not to burden the Christian with a long list of regulations, but to put the principle of love in his heart; for love can do no wrong and love will do all right. The law of love is searching. It applies to every situation. The Bible, for example, does not directly command total abstinence from strong drink, but the love for God and man which it creates, makes Christians sensitive to the awful shame and degradation of drink, and leads them to give up readily their personal freedom to save any weak one from falling. The law of love is self-acting. When the Persians attacked the Spartans at Thermopylae, they had to drive their slave soldiers to battle with whips. The Spartans, on the contrary, went to fight with a solemn joy. The difference was that the love for home and country inspired the Spartans and sent them to meet death, as slave soldiers never could. God asks us to be men of love in His service. He seeks that we should do His will with a loving, willing heart.

*Love is the fulfilling of the law*, v. 10. Jesus said to His disciples, "If ye love me, keep

my commandments," John 14:15. He knew that keeping His commandments would bring loss and suffering, and even death, upon His disciples, to the end of time. He knew also that love to Himself would inspire them to endure every misfortune and to brave every danger. As love to the Master constrains us to serve Him, so also love to our neighbors will influence us to do everything that their real good requires.

*Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed*, v. 11. This is an encouraging thought. Not only is our own personal salvation, but also that of our race, daily drawing nearer. The battle against wrong is being won and the victory is certain. Every good cause, for instance the cause of temperance or of missions, is sure to triumph. Christians have but to awake and exert themselves, to make the victory speedy and complete.

*Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness*, v. 12. Some years ago a magazine writer accounted for what he thought the failure of Christian missions in India by referring to the evil lives of many nominal Christians in that land. It has to be admitted that the cause of missions has suffered grievously from the conduct of so-called Christians. The church will never have its true power, until all those who bear the name of Christ put away from themselves all that belongs to the kingdom of darkness, and bring forth the true fruits of our holy religion.

*Let us walk honestly, as in the day*, v. 13. The inspired apostle appeals to us to walk straightforwardly, not wasting our toil and strength and talents and money in drinking, or in satisfying fleshly tastes and lusts, nor yet in dividing the Christian church by strife and jealousy; but to show ourselves true to Christ and the Christian ideal of life. We should live out the principle of love, making no plans or arrangements, nor having time provided when we shall think of our fleshly tastes or lusts to satisfy or indulge them. Paul's appeal is a magnificent one to Christians who are doubting or luke-warm in the cause of temperance. Because the evils of drink are not so great as they once were, the efforts of many have grown slack in this cause. The victories of the past