

Chapter 61

The Armour of Light

(Romans 13:8–14)

Paul's appeal leads easily into verses 8 to 10. What is the relationship of love and Mosaic law? He begins in a very practical way. ⁸*Do not owe anything to anyone* . . . He is not totally forbidding borrowing. The godly person 'lends generously' (Psalm 37:26). Paul's phrase forbids **overdue** borrowing. Modern salesmanship encourages debt. The bigger his debt, and the lower the amount he repays, the more money the credit-card company gains! Paul's instruction is clear. Don't borrow unless it is something vital to your **present** needs and you **know** you are in a position to repay. Get your budget below your income. If you spend more than you earn, do something about it! God will help you.

But you will never get to the point where you have done enough loving and can now quit! You will never pay off this debt: . . . *but you are to show love to one another*. Like the good Samaritans show love to the person who is in need, and also to the person who is not in need and about whom we might be a bit envious.

Verses 9–10 widen the matter to include everyone ('the one who loves the other person'). The Christian has to die to the law in order to live to God. He is under Jesus. He is in the Spirit. So is there any 'law' for him to follow at all? Yes, he must pursue love. *For the one who loves the other person has fulfilled the law.*

⁹*The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery. You shall not murder. You shall not steal. You shall not covet' and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'* ¹⁰*Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

1. **Love is the supreme matter that the godly man or woman must concentrate on.** This is the heart of Paul's teaching about godly living. Love is the first aspect of the fruit of the Spirit and the key to the rest of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23).

2. **Love does not have a casuistry.** 'Casuistry' is the building up of case-law in order to cover all sorts of situations. The Mosaic law was a step in the direction of casuistry. As time went on, to make it practical as a legal system it had to be greatly expanded. But Paul does not put the Christian under the Mosaic system.

3. **Yet none of this means that love is a mysticism that cannot be stated in words.** It is not simply a matter of 'love is what I feel good about'. There is a balance that needs to be drawn here. For some people love is defined in terms of a casuistry. The opposite of this is some kind of impulsive 'what seems to me to be loving'. The biblical position is different from both extremes. Love can be described and spoken about in words, but it is not a casuistry. The Sermon on the Mount, much of the teaching of Jesus, much of the teaching of the epistles, are all putting into words what is the leading of the Spirit, along the pathway of love. Though love is not **defined** by the Mosaic law if practised today – yet **love fulfils** the law. The Mosaic law cannot be thought of as an **exposition** of love; nor it is a rule-book which will produce love if obeyed. The point is not that the law expounds love or is love's rule-book. Rather the Mosaic law was a weak and temporary **pointer** in the direction of love.

4. **Paul calls us to see the age in which we live.** ¹¹*And you are to do this knowing the time, because the hour for you to be woken out of sleep is already here, for now our salvation is nearer than*

when we first believed. The coming of Jesus is the central event of all history. It was Jesus' coming that made the world different. The Christian is living in the last epoch of time before final salvation comes. These are the 'last days', the time for living upon the full experience of the grace of God. **The age in which we live is a time for spiritual wakefulness.** Since we are people who have seen God's kingdom dawn in the coming of Jesus Christ, we should not be sleepy as if it were still night-time. The time of Jesus' coming and of our glorification and our being awarded a level of glory according to the way in which we have lived is near at hand. In biblical thinking the 'day of the Lord' is always near. The day of the Lord can be anticipated. Jesus' 'coming' might be experienced by way of foretaste even before the very final second coming itself.

Paul tells the Christians to put on the armour of light. ¹²*The night is nearly over: the day is near. Therefore let us put off the works of darkness, putting on the armour of light.* Since we belong to the day we are to throw off the clothing of the old way of living and put on some clean clothes! We have an 'armour of light', an armour that belongs to the soldiers of the coming new day. It is foolish and illogical to be living in the past, when we have been radically changed, discharged from condemnation and transferred to a new realm, such that we now belong to the coming kingdom of God. He is wanting to motivate us to take action. 'Let us put off the works of darkness . . .' Paul asks us to get rid of anything that could be called 'works of darkness'. 'Darkness' speaks of sin.

The negative is followed by a positive appeal. Put on the armour of light, says Paul. We need protection. Paul calls it the 'armour of light'. When we start living for God, we rouse the opposition of Satan and we have to put on spiritual armour to resist him. The breastplate is 'faith and love'. The Christian life begins with faith but it works out as love. The helmet is the hope of final salvation.

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Paul comes to details. ¹³*As people walking in the daylight, let us walk with decency, not in feasting and drunkenness, not in immorality and debauchery, not in strife and jealousy . . .* First of all Paul asks us to be living our life in the sight of others in a way that they can see is good and right. Then we live ‘not in feasting and drunkenness’. The first word refers to excessive feasting. The second word, ‘drunkenness’, goes with it to make a pair. We live ‘not in immorality and debauchery’. The first word refers to sexual promiscuity. The second word refers to other kinds of sexual looseness. Then we live ‘not in strife and jealousy’. There are many who would be shocked at the thought of drunkenness, immorality or sexual looseness, but seem not to be shocked at all by strife and jealousy.

Paul cannot end with something negative. He has to go on to say: ¹⁴*. . . but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to carry out its desires.* The righteous life is putting Jesus on to our life like a suit of clothes. We get close to him and live out the kind of life that he wants us to live.