

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS 13

The principal things contained in this chapter, enjoined the saints, are the duties of subjection to magistrates, love to one another, and to all men, and temperance and chastity in themselves: it begins with duties relating to the civil magistrates, requiring obedience of everyone unto them, (^{<513D>}Romans 13:1), and that for these reasons, because the civil magistracy, or government, is by divine appointment; wherefore to obey them in things of a civil nature, is to obey God; and to resist them is to resist God; and also because of the pernicious consequence of such resistance, damnation to themselves, (^{<513D>}Romans 13:2), for the magistrate not only causes terror by penal laws, but he inflicts punishment on delinquents, and is the executioner of God's wrath and vengeance on such, (^{<513D>}Romans 13:3,4), and likewise because of the profit and advantage to obedient subjects; such not only have the good will and esteem of their rulers, and are commended by them, but are defended and protected in their persons and properties, (^{<513D>}Romans 13:3,4), moreover, the apostle enforces the necessity of subjection to them, not only in order to avoid punishment, but to answer a good conscience; this duty being according to the light of nature, and the dictates of a natural conscience; which if awake, must be uneasy with a contrary behaviour, (^{<513D>}Romans 13:5), and for the same reason he urges the payment of tribute to them, as well as on account of the reasonableness of it, taken from magistrates spending their time, and using their talents, in an attendance on the service of the public, (^{<513D>}Romans 13:6), and which is further confirmed by the general rule of justice and equity, or of doing that which is just and right to everyone, of which particulars are given, (^{<513D>}Romans 13:7), and then after a general exhortation to pay all sorts of debts owing to superiors, inferiors, or equals, the apostle passes to the debt of love owing to one another, and to all mankind; which is exhorted to on this consideration, that the performance of it is a fulfilling the law, (^{<513D>}Romans 13:8), which is proved, by showing that the several precepts of the law, of which an enumeration is given, are reducible to, and are included in love to our neighbours as ourselves, (^{<513D>}Romans 13:9), and since it is the nature of love not to work ill, but to do good to the

neighbour, the conclusion follows, that it must be as asserted, that love is the fulfilment of the law, and ought by all means to be attended to, as a principal duty of religion, (^{<6130>}Romans 13:10), next the apostle proceeds to exhort the saints to a watchful, chaste, sober, and temperate course of life; as being perfectly agreeable to the privileges they enjoyed, to the present condition they were in, and to that future state of happiness they were in expectation of: he exhorts to be watchful and sober, and not indulge sleep and slothfulness, in consideration of the time in which they were, and with which they were acquainted, it being not night, but day; at least the one was wearing off, and the other coming on; the time of life being short, and the day of salvation approaching nearer and nearer, (^{<6131>}Romans 13:11,12), wherefore such actions should be done, as are agreeable to the day, and not the night, to light, and not darkness; and particularly such works of darkness are dissuaded from, which are contrary to temperance and sobriety, as rioting, and drunkenness; and to chastity, as chambering: and wantonness; and to peace and concord, as strife and envying, which frequently follow upon the former: and the chapter is concluded with an exhortation to faith in Christ, and an imitation of him, expressed in a figurative way by a metaphor, taken from the putting on of garments; and with a dehoration from an immoderate provision for the flesh, so as to promote, excite, and cherish, the lusts of it, (^{<6133>}Romans 13:13).

Ver. 1. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers*, etc..] The apostle having finished his exhortations to this church, in relation to the several duties incumbent upon both officers and private Christians, as members of a church, and with reference to each other, and their moral conduct in the world; proceeds to advise, direct, and exhort them to such duties as were relative to them as members of a civil society; the former chapter contains his Christian Ethics, and this his Christian Politics. There was the greater reason to insist upon the latter, as well as on the former, since the primitive saints greatly lay under the imputation of being seditious persons and enemies to the commonwealth; which might arise from a very great number of them being Jews, who scrupled subjection to the Heathen magistrates, because they were the seed of Abraham, and by a law were not to set one as king over them, that was a stranger, and not their own brother, and very unwillingly bore the Roman yoke, and paid tribute to Caesar: hence the Christians in common were suspected to be of the same principles; and of all the Jews none were more averse to the payment of taxes to the Roman magistrates than the Galilaeans; (see ^{<4457>}Acts 5:37 ^{<2131>}Luke 13:1). And this

being the name by which Christ and his followers were commonly called, might serve to strengthen the above suspicion of them, and charge against them. Moreover, some Christians might be tempted to think that they should not be subject to Heathen magistrates; since they were generally wicked men, and violent persecutors of them; and that it was one branch of their Christian liberty to be freed from subjection to them: and certain it is, that there were a set of loose and licentious persons, who bore the name of Christians, that despised dominion, and spoke evil of dignities; wherefore the apostle judged it advisable especially to exhort the church of Rome, and the members who dwelt there, where was the seat of power and civil government, so to behave towards their superiors, that they might set a good example to the Christians in the several parts of the empire, and wipe off the aspersion that was cast upon them, as if they were enemies to magistracy and civil power. By “the higher powers”, he means not angels, sometimes called principalities and powers; for unto these God hath not put in subjection his people under the Gospel dispensation; nor ecclesiastical officers, or those who are in church power and authority; for they do not bear the temporal sword, nor have any power to inflict corporeal punishment: but civil magistrates are intended, (see ^{<401>}Titus 3:1); and these not only supreme magistrates, as emperors and kings, but all inferior and subordinate ones, acting in commission under them, as appears from (^{<412>}1 Peter 2:13,14), which are called “powers”, because they are invested with power and authority over others, and have a right to exercise it in a proper way, and in proper cases; and the “higher” or super eminent ones, because they are set in high places, and have superior dignity and authority to others. The persons that are to be subject to them are “every soul”; not that the souls of men, distinct from their bodies, are under subjection to civil magistrates; for of all things they have the least to do with them, their power and jurisdiction not reaching to the souls, the hearts, and consciences of men, especially in matters of religion, but chiefly to their bodies, and outward civil concerns of life: but the meaning is, that every man that has a soul, every rational creature, ought to be subject to civil government. This is but his reasonable service, and which he should perform from his heart, and with all his soul, cheerfully perform. In short, the sense is, that every man should be subject: this is an Hebraism, a common way of speaking among the Jews, who sometimes denominate men from one part, and sometimes from another; sometimes from the body or flesh, thus “all flesh is grass”, (^{<231>}Isaiah 40:6), that is, all men are frail; and sometimes from the soul, “all souls are mine”, (^{<232>}Ezekiel 18:4), all belong to me; as

here, “every soul”, that is, every man, all the individuals of mankind, of whatsoever sex, age, state, or condition, ecclesiastics not excepted: the pope, and his clergy, are not exempted from civil jurisdiction; nor any of the true ministers of the Gospel; the priests under the law were under the civil government; and so was Christ himself, and his apostles, who paid tribute to Caesar; yea, even Peter particularly, whose successor the pope of Rome pretends to be. “Subjection” to the civil magistrates designs and includes all duties relative to them; such as showing them respect, honour, and reverence suitable to their stations; speaking well of them, and their administration; using them with candour, not bearing hard upon them for little matters, and allowing for ignorance of the secret springs of many of their actions and conduct, which if known might greatly justify them; wishing well to them, and praying constantly, earnestly, and heartily for them; observing their laws and injunctions; obeying their lawful commands, which do not contradict the laws of God, nature, and right reason; and paying them their just dues and lawful tribute, to support them in their office and dignity:

for there is no power but of God; God is the fountain of all power and authority; the streams of power among creatures flow from him; the power that man has over all the creatures, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fishes of the sea, is originally of God, and by a grant from him; the lesser powers, and the exercises of them, in the various relations men stand in to one another, are of God, as the power the husband has over the wife, parents over their children, and masters over their servants; and so the higher power that princes have over their subjects: for it is the God of heaven that sets up kings, as well as pulls them down; he is the King of kings, from whom they derive their power and authority, from whom they have the right of government, and all the qualifications for it; it is by him that kings reign, and princes decree justice.

The powers that be are ordained of God. The order of magistracy is of God; it is of his ordination and appointment, and of his ordering, disposing, and fixing in its proper bounds and limits. The several forms of government are of human will and pleasure; but government itself is an order of God. There may be men in power who assume it of themselves, and are of themselves, and not of God; and others that abuse the power that is lodged in them; who, though they are by divine permission, yet not of God's approbation and good will. And it is observable, that the apostle speaks of powers, and not persons, at least, not of persons, but under the name of

powers, to show that he means not this, or the other particular prince or magistrate, but the thing itself, the office and dignity of magistracy itself; for there may be some persons, who may of themselves usurp this office, or exercise it in a very illegal way, who are not of God, nor to be subject to by men. The apostle here both uses the language, and speaks the sentiments of his countrymen the Jews, who are wont to call magistrates, “powers”; hence those sayings were used among them; says Shemaiah ^{f235},

“**twçri [dwt t l a**, “be not too familiar with the power”.”

that is, with a magistrate, which oftentimes is dangerous. Again,

“says ^{f236} Rabban Gamaliel, **twçrb ^ryrh wyh**, “take heed of the power” (i.e. of magistrates), for they do not suffer a man to come near them, but in necessity, and then they appear as friends for their own advantage, but will not stand by a man in the time of distress.”

Moreover, after this manner they explain ^{f237} (~~2188~~ Proverbs 5:8),

““remove thy way far from her”, this is heresy; “and come not nigh the door of her house”, **twçrh wz**, “this is the power”. The gloss on it is, magistrates, because they set their eyes upon rich men to kill them, and take away their substance.”

And a little after it is observed,

““the horse leech hath two daughters, crying, give, give”, (~~2188~~ Proverbs 30:15): it is asked, what is the meaning of give, give? Says Mar Ukba, there are two daughters which cry out of hell, and say in this world, give, give, and they are heresy, **twçrhw**, “and the civil power”.”

The gloss on this place is,

“Heresy cries, bring a sacrifice to the idol; “Civil Power” cries, bring money, and gifts, and revenues, and tribute to the king.”

Nevertheless, they look upon civil government to be of divine appointment. They say ^{f238}, that

“no man is made a governor below, except they proclaim him above;”

i.e. unless he is ordained of God: yea, they allow ^{f239} the Roman empire to be of God, than which no government was more disagreeable to them.

“When R. Jose ben Kisma was sick, R. Chanina ben Tradion went to visit him; he said unto him, Chanina, my brother, my brother, knowest thou not that this nation, (the Romans) *hwkyl mh μymçh* ^{^m}, “have received their empire” from God? for it hath laid waste his house, and hath burnt his temple, and has slain his saints, and destroyed his good men, and yet it endures.”

Nay, they frequently affirm ^{f240}, that the meanest office of power among men was of divine appointment. This is the apostle's first argument for subjection to the civil magistrate.

Ver. 2. *Whosoever therefore resisteth the power*, etc..] The office of magistracy, and such as are lawfully placed in it, and rightly exercise it; who denies that there is, or ought to be any such order among men, despises it, and opposes it, and withdraws himself from it, and will not be subject to it in any form:

resisteth the ordinance of God, the will and appointment of God, whose pleasure it is that there should be such an office, and that men should be subject to it. This is not to be understood, as if magistrates were above the laws, and had a lawless power to do as they will without opposition; for they are under the law, and liable to the penalty of it, in case of disobedience, as others; and when they make their own will a law, or exercise a lawless tyrannical power, in defiance of the laws of God, and of the land, to the endangering of the lives, liberties, and properties of subjects, they may be resisted, as Saul was by the people of Israel, when he would have took away the life of Jonathan for the breach of an arbitrary law of his own, and that too without the knowledge of it, (^{<0945>}1 Samuel 14:45); but the apostle is speaking of resisting magistrates in the right discharge of their office, and in the exercise of legal power and authority:

and they that resist them, in this sense,

shall receive to themselves damnation; that is, punishment; either temporal, and that either by the hand of the magistrate himself, who has it in his power to punish mutiny, sedition, and insurrection, and any opposition to him in the just discharge of his duty; or at the hand of God, in righteous judgment, for their disobedience to an ordinance of his; as in

the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who opposed themselves both to the civil and sacred government of the people of Israel, (^{<0409>}Numbers 26:9); and were swallowed up alive in the earth, (^{<0410>}Numbers 26:10): or eternal punishment, unless the grace of God prevents; for “the blackness of darkness is reserved for ever”, (^{<0413>}Jude 1:13), for such persons, who, among other of their characters, are said to “despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities”, (^{<0418>}Jude 1:8). This is another argument persuading to subjection to magistrates.

Ver. 3. *For rulers are not a terror to good works*, etc..] That is, to them that do good works in a civil sense; who behave well in the neighbourhoods, towns, cities, and countries where they dwell. The apostle seems to anticipate an objection made against governors, as if there was something very terrible and formidable in them; and which might be taken up from the last clause of the preceding verse; and which he removes by observing, that governors neither do, nor ought to inject terror into men that behave well, obey the laws, and keep a good decorum among their fellow subjects, not doing any injury to any man's person, property, and estate. The Jews ^{f241} have a saying,

“that a governor that injects more fear into the people, than is for the honour of God, shall be punished, and shall not see his son a disciple of a wise man.”

But to the evil; to wicked men, who make no conscience of doing hurt to their fellow creatures, by abusing their persons, defrauding them of their substance, and by various illicit methods doing damage to them; to such, rulers are, and ought to be terrors; such are to be menaced, and threatened with inflicting upon them the penalty of the laws they break; and which ought to be inflicted on them by way of punishment to them, and for the terror of others. R. Chanina, the Sagan of the priests ^{f242}, used to say,

“pray for the peace of the kingdom, for if there was no **harwm**, “fear”, (i.e. a magistrate to inject fear,) one man would devour another alive.”

Wilt thou not then be afraid of the power? of the civil magistrate, in power and authority, to oppose him, to refuse subjection to him, to break the laws, which, according to his office, he is to put in execution.

Do that which is good: in a civil sense, between man and man, by complying with the laws of the land, which are not contrary to the laws of God; for of doing good in a spiritual and religious sense he is no judge:

and thou shalt have praise of the same; shall be commended as a good neighbour, a good citizen, and a good commonwealth's man; an honest, quiet, peaceable man, that does not disturb the peace of civil society, but strengthens and increases it.

Ver. 4. *For he is the minister of God to thee for good,* etc..] He is a minister of God's appointing and commissioning, that acts under him, and for him, is a kind of a vicegerent of his, and in some, sense represents him; and which is another reason why men ought to be subject to him; and especially since he is appointed for their "good", natural, moral, civil, and spiritual, as Pareus observes: for natural good, for the protection of men's natural lives, which otherwise would be in continual danger from wicked men; for moral good, for the restraining of vice, and encouragement of virtue; profaneness abounds exceedingly, as the case is, but what would it do if there were no laws to forbid it, or civil magistrates to put them in execution? for civil good, for the preservation of men's properties, estates, rights, and liberties, which would be continually invaded, and made a prey of by others; and for spiritual and religious good, as many princes and magistrates have been; a sensible experience of which we have under the present government of these kingdoms, allowing us a liberty to worship God according to our consciences, none making us afraid, and is a reason why we should yield a cheerful subjection to it:

but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid: of the punishment of such evil threatened by law, and to be inflicted by the civil magistrate;

for he beareth not the sword in vain. The "sword" is an emblem of the power of life and death, the civil magistrate is invested with, and includes all sorts of punishment he has a right to inflict; and this power is not lodged in him in vain; he may and ought to make use of it at proper times, and upon proper persons:

for he is the minister of God; as is said before, he has his mission, commission, power and authority from him; and is

a revenge to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil; he is a defender of the laws, a vindicator of divine justice, an avenger of the wrongs of men;

and his business is to inflict proper punishment, which is meant by wrath, upon delinquents.

Ver. 5. *Wherefore ye must needs be subject*, etc..] To the higher powers, to the civil magistrates; there is a necessity of it, because magistracy is God's ordinance, it is for the good of men; and such that oppose it will severely smart for it: but subjection to it from Christians should be,

not only for wrath; through fear of punishment, and for the sake of escaping it; either the wrath of men or of God, in this or the other world:

but also for conscience sake: to keep conscience clear, to exercise a good one void of offence towards God and men; for natural reason, conscience itself, dictates that there ought to be such order among men, that civil government should take place, and ought to be submitted to.

Ver. 6. *For, for this cause pay you tribute also*, etc..] To show that we are subject to the higher powers, and as a proof and evidence of our subjection to them, we do and ought to pay tribute to them, to support them in their office and dignity; and this is done not for fear of trouble, of distress on goods and estate, or imprisonment of person, but for conscience sake: payment of taxes is not a mere matter of prudence, and done to avoid dangerous consequence, but is and ought to be a case of conscience; whatever is anyone's due, and of right belongs to him, conscience dictates it ought to be paid him; as therefore it tells a man, that whatever is God's should be rendered to him, so whatever is Caesar's, should be given him; and indeed to do otherwise, to refuse to pay tribute, or by any fraudulent means to deprive the civil magistrate of his due, is not only to do an injury to him, but to the whole body politic, which has a greater concern therein than he himself; and such a person forfeits all right and claim to his protection:

for they are God's ministers. This is another reason why tribute should be paid them, not only to testify subjection to them, and keep conscience clear, but because they are called unto, and put into this high office by God; for promotion to such honour and high places comes not from east, west, north, or south; but is by the providence of God, who puts down, and sets up at pleasure; they are his vicegerents, they act under him, are in his stead, and represent his majesty; and therefore, in some sort, what is done to them is done to him:

attending continually upon this very thing; not of laying, collecting, and receiving tribute, but of service and ministry under God, for the welfare of their subjects; for rightly to administer the office of magistracy requires great pains, care, diligence, and assiduity; and as great wisdom and thoughtfulness in making laws for the good of the body, so a diligent constant concern to put them in execution, to secure the lives of subjects from cut throats and murderers, and their properties and estates from thieves and robbers; and they are not only obliged diligently to attend to such service at home, but to keep a good lookout abroad, and penetrate into, and watch the designs of foreign enemies, to defend from their invasions, and fight for their country; that the inhabitants thereof may live peaceable and quiet lives, enjoying their respective rights and privileges; and since therefore civil government is a business of so much care, and since our rulers are so solicitous, and constantly concerned for our good, and which cannot be done without great expense, as well as diligence, we ought cheerfully to pay tribute to them.

Ver. 7. *Render therefore to all their dues*, etc..] To all princes, magistrates, and officers, that are placed over us, from the supreme governor to the lowest officer under him, should we render as a due debt, and not as a mere gift, whatever belongs to them, or is proper for them for the due discharge of their office, to encourage in it, and support the dignity of it, whether external or internal:

tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom. These two words include all sorts of levies, taxes, subsidies, etc.. and the former may particularly design what is laid on men's persons and estates, as poll money, land tax, etc.. and the latter, what arises from the exportation and importation of goods, to and from foreign parts:

fear to whom fear; not of punishment; for a good subject has no reason to fear the civil magistrate in this sense, only the man that does evil, the malefactor; as for the good neighbour, citizen, and subject, he loves the magistrate the more, the more diligent he is in putting the laws in execution against wicked men; but this is to be understood of a fear of offending, and especially of a reverence bore in the mind, and expressed by outward actions, and such as has going with it a cheerful obedience to all lawful commands:

honour to whom honour; there is an honour due to all men, according to their respective rank and station, and the relation they stand in to each

other; so servants are to honour their masters, children their parents, wives their husbands, and subjects their princes; all inferior magistrates are to be honoured in their place, and more especially the king as supreme, in thought, word, and gesture; (see ~~1~~1 Peter 2:17).

Ver. 8. *Owe no man anything*, etc..] From the payment of dues to magistrates the apostle proceeds to a general exhortation to discharge all sorts of debts; as not to owe the civil magistrate any thing, but render to him his dues, so to owe nothing to any other man, but make good all obligations whatever, as of a civil, so of a natural kind. There are debts arising from the natural and civil relations subsisting among men, which should be discharged; as of the husband to the wife, the wife to the husband; parents to their children, children to their parents; masters to their servants, servants to their masters; one brother, friend, and neighbour, to another. Moreover, pecuniary debts may be here intended, such as are come into by borrowing, buying, commerce, and contracts; which though they cannot be avoided in carrying on worldly business, yet men ought to make conscience of paying them as soon as they are able: many an honest man may be in debt, and by one providence or another be disabled from payment, which is a grief of mind to him; but for men industriously to run into debt, and take no care to pay, but live upon the property and substance of others, is scandalous to them as men, and greatly unbecoming professors of religion, and brings great reproach upon the Gospel of Christ.

But to love one another. This is the only debt never to be wholly discharged; for though it should be always paying, yet ought always to be looked upon as owing. Saints ought to love one another as such; to this they are obliged by the new commandment of Christ, by the love of God, and Christ unto them, by the relations they stand in to one another, as the children of God, brethren, and members of the same body; and which is necessary to keep them and the churches of Christ together, it being the bond of perfectness by which they are knit to one another; and for their comfort and honour, as well as to show the truth and reality of their profession. This debt should be always paying; saints should be continually serving one another in love, praying for each other, bearing one another's burdens, forbearing each other, and doing all good offices in things temporal and spiritual that lie in their power, and yet always owing; the obligation to it always remains. Christ's commandment is a new one, always new, and will never be antiquated; his and his Father's love always continue, and the relations believers stand in to each other are ever the

same; and therefore love will be always paying, and always owing in heaven to all eternity. But what the apostle seems chiefly to respect, is love to one another as men, love to one another, to the neighbour, as the following verses show. Love is a debt we owe to every man, as a man, being all made of one blood, and in the image of God; so that not only such as are of the same family, live in the same neighbourhood, and belong to the same nation, but even all the individuals of mankind, yea, our very enemies are to share in our love; and as we have an opportunity and ability, are to show it by doing them good.

For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law; that is, not who loves some one particular person, but every other person besides himself, even his neighbour, in the largest sense of the word, including all mankind, and that as himself; such an one has fulfilled the law, the law of the decalogue; that part of it particularly which relates to the neighbour; the second table of the law, as the next verse shows: though since there is no true love of our neighbour without the love of God, nor no true love of God without the love of our neighbour; and since these two involve each other, and include the whole law, it may be understood of fulfilling every part of it, that is, of doing it; for fulfilling the law means doing it, or acting according to it; and so far as a man loves, so far he fulfils, that is, does it: but this is not, nor can it be done perfectly, which is evident, partly from the impotency of man, who is weak and without strength, yea, dead in sin, and unable to do any thing of himself; and partly from the extensiveness of the law, which reaches to the thoughts and desires of the heart, as well as to words and actions; as also from the imperfection of love, for neither love to God, nor love to one another, either as men or Christians, is perfect; and consequently the fulfilling of the law by it is not perfect: hence this passage yields nothing in favour of the doctrine of justification by works; since the best works are imperfect, even those that spring from love, for love itself is imperfect; and are not done as they are, in a man's own strength, and without the Spirit and grace of God. Christ only has fulfilled the law perfectly, both as to parts and degrees; and to him only should we look for a justifying righteousness.

Ver. 9. *For this, thou shalt not commit adultery,* etc..] The apostle here reckons up the several laws of the second table, with this view, that it might appear that so far as a man loves his neighbour, whether more near or distantly related, he fulfils the law, or acts according to it. He omits the first of these, the fifth commandment, either because he had urged this

before, so far as it may be thought to regard magistrates; or because, according to the division of the Jews, who reckon five commands to each table, this belonged to the first: and he puts the seventh before the sixth, which is of no great moment; the order of things being frequently changed in the Scripture, and which is often done by Jewish writers, in alleging and citing passages of Scripture; and with whom this is a maxim, *hrwtb rj wamw mdqwm ^ya*, “that there is no first nor last in the law”^{f243}; that is, it is of no importance which stands first or last in it: it follows,

thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; which are the sixth, eighth, ninth, and tenth commands of the decalogue, (^{<2013>}Exodus 20:13,15-17):

and if there be any other commandment; of God, respecting the neighbour, either in the decalogue, as there was the fifth, (^{<2012>}Exodus 20:12), or elsewhere, the apostle repeating this by memory:

it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself; (see ^{<2018>}Leviticus 19:18); this is the summary and epitome of them; so Christ reduces the laws of the first table to the head of love to God, and those of the second to the head of love to the neighbour, (^{<2027>}Matthew 22:37-39), as the apostle does here, and in (^{<2054>}Galatians 5:14), and the Apostle James, in (^{<2018>}James 2:8).

Ver. 10. *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour*, etc..] That is, the man that truly loves his neighbour, will contrive no ill against him, nor do any to him; he will not injure his person, nor defile his bed, nor deprive or defraud him of his substance; or do hurt to his character, bear false testimony against him, or covet with an evil covetousness anything that is his; but, on the contrary, will do him all the good he is capable of:

therefore love is the fulfilling of the law: so far as a man loves his neighbour, he acts agreeably to the law, and the particular precepts of it above mentioned: what the apostle says of love to the neighbour, the Jews frequently say of love to God;

“he that loveth God (they say^{f244}) *^ryma rç[μyyqm*, “hath fulfilled the decalogue”, both above and below.”

And again^{f245},

“there is no service like the love of God, R. Abba saith it is **atyrrwad al l k**, “the sum of the law”; for the ten words of the law **wl yl kta akh**, “are herein comprehended”, or “fulfilled”.”

and elsewhere ^{f246} they observe,

“that **hbhab hl wl k hrwth l k**, “the whole law is comprehended”, or fulfilled “in love”.”

Ver. 11. *And that knowing the time*, etc.] That it is day and not night, the Gospel day, the day of salvation; in which the grace of God shines forth, like the sun in its meridian glory; life and immortality are brought to light, righteousness and salvation are revealed; and so a time not for sloth and sleep, but business; in which the saints should active in the exercise of grace, and discharge, of duty; owing no man anything but the debt of love; and that the dawn of grace, and day of spiritual light had broke in upon their souls, and dispelled the darkness of sin, ignorance and unbelief; that the darkness was past, and the true light shined, and the sun of righteousness was risen on them: all which they full well knew and were conscious of, and therefore should observe,

that now it is high time for us to awake out of sleep; since sleep is for the night, and not the day; the Alexandrian copy reads, “for you”. This is to be understood, not of the dead sleep of sin, in which unconverted persons are, to be awoke out of which is a work of divine power; but of the carnal security and drowsy frame of spirit which sometimes attend the churches and children of God, the wise as well as the foolish virgins; and lies in grace being dormant in, the soul; in a backwardness to duty, and a slothfulness in the performance of it; in resting in the outward duties of religion; in lukewarmness about the cause of Christ; in an unconcernedness about sins of omission and commission; and in a willingness to continue in such a sluggish frame: all which arise from a body of sin and death, and an over anxious care for the things of the world; from a weariness in spiritual exercises, and an abstinence from spiritual company and ordinances and from outward peace and liberty: such a frame of spirit, when, it prevails and becomes general is of bad consequence to the churches of Christ; the spirit of discerning, care and diligence in receiving members, are in a great measure lost, and so they are filled with hypocrites and heretics; Christ absents himself from them; leanness of soul is brought upon them; and they are in danger of being surprised with the midnight cry: the methods God

takes to awaken his people out of such a sleep are various; sometimes in a more gentle way, by the discoveries his love, which causes the lips of those that are asleep to speak; sometimes by severe reproofs in the ministry of the word; and sometimes by sharp persecutions in providence; and at last it will be done by the midnight cry: the argument, showing the reasonableness of awaking out of sleep, and that it was high time to do so, follows,

for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed; by which is meant, not temporal salvation, or a deliverance from the persecution the saints endured in Judea, from their own countrymen, by the departure of them from Jerusalem, a little before its destruction, by the destruction of that city, and the peaceful times of Vespasian; but a spiritual and eternal salvation: not Christ the author of it, who was come to effect it; nor that itself, as obtained, which was now done, finished, and completed; nor the application of it to their souls, which also had been made; but the consummate enjoyment of it in heaven, the salvation of their souls at death, and both of soul and body at the resurrection; consisting in a freedom from every evil, and in a full possession of all that is good and glorious: this is brought nearer to the saints, to their sight and view, as their faith grows and increases; and they are nearer the enjoyment of that than when they first believed; and which is a strong reason why a sluggish, slothful frame should not be indulged; what, sleep, and heaven so near at hand! just at their Father's house, ready to enter into the joy of their Lord, into his everlasting kingdom and glory, and yet asleep!

Ver. 12. *The night is far spent*, etc..] Not of Jewish darkness, which was gone, and was succeeded by the Gospel day; nor of former ignorance in Gentilism and unregeneracy, for that was past, and the true light shined; much less of security in the latter day, which was not yet come on; rather of persecution and distress for Christ's sake; but it is best of all to understand it of the present time of life; so it is called by the Jews ^{f247}, *hl yl l hmwd hzh ml w[h*, “this world is like the night”: and which, in the best of saints, is attended with imperfection and darkness, errors and mistakes, in principle and practice, in doctrine and conversation; however, it is far spent, and in a little time will be over:

the day is at hand; not the Gospel day, for that was already come; nor the day of grace, and spiritual light and comfort to their souls, for that also had taken place; nor the latter day glory, which then was at a distance; rather

the approaching day of deliverance from present persecutions; but it is much better to understand it of the everlasting day of glory, which to particular persons was then, and now is at hand; a little while, and the night of darkness, affliction, and disconsolation will be over, and the day of glory will succeed, when there will be no more night, no more darkness, no more doubts, fears, and unbelief; but one continued series of light, joy, and comfort, and an uninterrupted communion with Father, Son, and Spirit; and which is another reason why the saints should not indulge themselves in sleep, but be active, since the halcyon days are at hand, as well as a reason why they should attend to the following exhortations:

let us therefore cast off the works of darkness; as the apostle had made use of the metaphors of night and day, and of sleep, and awaking out of sleep, and rising in the morning to business, so he continues the same; and here alludes to persons throwing off their bed clothes, and covering of the night, and putting on proper raiment for the day. By “works of darkness” are meant evil works, which are opposite to the light; to God, who is light itself; to Christ, the light of the world; to the word of God, both law and Gospel, which is a light to our paths; to both the light of nature, and the light of grace: and which spring from the darkness of the mind, and are encouraged to by the god of this world, and by his angels, the rulers of the darkness of it; and which are generally done in the dark, and are such as will not bear the light; and, if grace prevent not, will end in outer darkness, in blackness of darkness, reserved by the justice of God, as the punishment of them. “Casting [them] off” expresses a dislike of them, a displicency with them, and an abstinence from them. Some copies read, “the armour of darkness”, which agrees with what follows:

and let us put on the armour of light; the whole armour of God, the use of which lies in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty; particularly good works are designed here, which though they are not the believer's clothing, his robe of justifying righteousness, they are both his ornament and his armour; by which he adorns the doctrine of Christ, and defends his own character and principles against the charges and calumnies of them: these being performed aright, spring from the light of grace in a regenerate man, and are such as will bear the light to be seen of men; and are the lights which are to shine before men, that they beholding them, may glorify God; so virtue was by Antisthenes^{f248}, called *αναφαιρετον οπλον*, “armour which cannot be taken away”: the allusion is thought to be to the bright

and glittering armour of the Romans; the Alexandrian copy reads, “the words of light”.

Ver. 13. *Let us walk honestly as in the day*, etc..] Being under the day of the Gospel dispensation, and the day of grace having dawned, and the daystar of spiritual light and knowledge being risen in our hearts, and we being exposed to the view of all men in broad daylight, ought not to lie down and sleep, but to arise and be active, and walk decently with the armour of light on us, as becomes the Gospel of Christ; not naked and unclothed, which would expose us and the Gospel to shame and contempt:

not in rioting; the Syriac and Arabic versions read, “in singing”, or “songs”; meaning lewd ones, sung at riotous feasts and banquets, made not for refreshment, but for pleasure and debauchery, what the Romans ^{f249} call “comessations”; feasts after supper in the night season, and design all sorts of nocturnal revels: “Comus”, the word here used, is with the Heathens the god of feasts, perhaps the same with “Chemosh”, the god of the Moabites, (⁴¹¹¹³1 Kings 11:33).

And drunkenness; which always attended such unseasonable and immoderate festivals:

not in chambering; in unlawful copulations, fornication, adultery, and all the defilements of the bed:

and wantonness; lasciviousness, unnatural lusts, as sodomy, etc..

not in strife and envying; contention and quarrels, which are usually the consequences of luxury and uncleanness.

Ver. 14. *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*, etc..] As a man puts on his clothes when he rises in the morning: the righteousness of Christ is compared to a garment, it is the best robe, it is fine linen, clean and white, and change of raiment; which being put on by the Father’s gracious act of imputation, covers the sins and deformities of his people, defends them from divine justice, secures them from wrath to come, and renders them beautiful and acceptable in his sight: which righteousness being revealed from faith to faith, is received by faith, and made use of as a proper dress to appear in before God; and may be daily said to be put on by the believer, as often as he makes use of it, and pleads it with God as his justifying righteousness, which should be continually: moreover, to put on Christ, and which indeed seems to be the true sense of the phrase here, is not only

to exercise faith on him as the Lord our righteousness, and to make a profession of his name, but to imitate him in the exercise of grace and discharge of duty; to walk as he walked, and as we have him for an example, in love, meekness, patience, humility, and holiness:

and make not provision for the flesh; the body: not but that due care is to be taken of it, both for food and clothing; and for its health, and the continuance and preservation of it by all lawful methods; but not so as

to fulfil the lusts thereof; to indulge and gratify them, by luxury and uncleanness: it is a saying of Hillel ^{f250}, *hmr hbrm rqb hbrm* “he that increases flesh, increases worms”; the sense his commentators ^{f251} give of it is, that

“he that increases by eating and drinking, until he becomes fat and fleshy, increases for himself worms in the grave:”

the design of the sentence is, that voluptuous men, who care for nothing else but the flesh, should consider, that ere long they will be a repast for worms: we should not provide, or be caterers for the flesh; and, by pampering it, stir up and satisfy its corrupt inclinations and desires.