

The Debts of a Justified Sinner

We Owe Our All

By Geoff Banister

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Romans 1:14

Preached on: Sunday, November 9, 2003

Indianapolis Free Presbyterian

1702 South Franklin Road

Indianapolis, IN 46239

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/indy

Romans chapter 1 beginning in verse 14.

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. 15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

And then if you would look in chapter 8, beginning with verse 11,

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

And then in chapter 15, beginning with verse 25,

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

We'll end our reading in verse 27 of Romans 15, and we know that the Lord will add his blessing to this reading from his word for his name's sake.

Paul's epistle to the Romans is without doubt the most thorough and systematic exposition of the gospel in all the Bible. In order for a person to understand the gospel aright, in order for the person, for a person, for a Christian to understand the gospel with any appreciable depth of understanding, I think it becomes very necessary to apply ourselves to Paul's epistle to the Romans. I found it amazing in the course of my studies that there was actually disagreement between some commentators as to what the theme of the book really ought to be. Some have suggested that the theme ought to be the righteousness of God and certainly that is an emphasis in the book and those that hold that that is the theme will point out that that word "righteousness" occurs some 35 times in the book, in the epistle. So there certainly is an emphasis on righteousness. Others have suggested that the theme of the book ought to be justification by faith and again, I think you could perhaps build an argument for that, but I think that you can become even more concise than that by defining the theme of the book to be simply the gospel and the gospel really is the gospel of justification by faith.

Now, some Christians may regard it as a little simplistic, I suppose, to use what is called the Romans Road. Are you familiar with the Romans Road as a tool for witnessing where you draw some key verses from this epistle to the Romans and you just have them handily in your mind so that you can use them to try to convince a person of a sin, to convince him of the truth of Christ, and to convince him of the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. I believe that for our own spiritual growth and effectiveness, and especially would this apply even in the realm of witnessing, that we've got to do more than simply memorize isolated texts from Romans. That may be valuable. I wouldn't discourage anyone from doing that, but I would encourage you to go a step further, which would be to simply learn how to follow Paul's argument for the gospel as he develops it in this epistle.

He begins, you see, with the guilt of mankind. The heathen, he says, are condemned by the law of their conscience, that law being stamped on their hearts by God himself, so that they're without excuse. They have a knowledge of God. They have a knowledge that he's the Creator. They have a knowledge that they're accountable to him and that law is stamped on their heart and they violated that law, so they're guilty. And then Paul goes on to demonstrate that the moral man, the Jew, in particular, is condemned by the revealed law of God. He has more than the law of conscience. he has the oracles that were committed to that people by God. He knows so much more than the heathen, but like the heathen, he sins against what he knows, and for two and a half chapters, Paul labors the point to establish the guilt of every conceivable person in the world.

You know, this is perhaps the hardest point and the easiest one to overlook when it comes to our witness for Christ. It's not too difficult to attempt to present Christ as the good friend, Christ the provider of the abundant life, Christ who loved the world and gave his only begotten Son. It's not too hard to present him in those settings, but to look upon him and to present him as the Savior of sinners becomes very often a more daunting task. But only after Paul has thoroughly expounded man's guilt does he begin the positive exposition of the gospel, which begins in chapter 3 and verse 21, where we read, "But

now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." And again in verse 28 of chapter 3, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." And the emphasis here is that a sinner can be declared righteous apart from the law, apart from the law that he has failed to fulfill, apart from the law that he has transgressed time and again. There is a way for the sinner to be declared just by God without any reference to the law and yet, the gospel is in accordance with righteousness. God hasn't compromised his righteousness in order to bring salvation to the guilty sinner.

Paul next demonstrates how God can justly declare a sinner to be righteous without any reference to that sinner's merit or demerits. And how can God justify a sinner? That becomes something that we all really need to know for the sake of our own peace, as well as our own ability to communicate the gospel and the answer is given in chapter 3, verses 24 and 25, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness." Christ our propitiation, or in other words, the appeaser of God's wrath. So as a preacher I must declare that God will judge sin, but the good news is that God has judged sin and that's really the meaning of Christ being our propitiation. Our judgment fell upon him. He propitiated or appeased the wrath of God. If you're a believer tonight and you've been pardoned, you've been pardoned because Christ was judged in your place. God has not skirted the issue of judgment in order to pardon you but God rather sent one to bear that judgment in your place. The fury of God's wrath fell upon him. This is why God can be merciful to you without compromising his justice. Through the gospel, and Paul emphasizes it, saying it twice, God declares his righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God. "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," chapter 3, verses 25 and 26. God declares his righteousness in the saving of sinners.

Now, continuing on with our survey analysis, so to speak, of Paul's argument after dealing with some anticipated objections to the gospel, Paul then goes on to declare the blessed results of this glorious gospel, we are freed from the law's condemnation, or to use Paul's phrase, "saved from wrath through him," chapter 5 and verse 9. We are freed from the bondage of sin and Satan, "For he that is dead is freed from sin," chapter 6 and verse 7. "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace," chapter 6 and verse 14. We're secure in a perfect standing of righteousness before God for time and eternity because of our union with Christ. We are at peace with God and we enjoy access to God because we've been justified by faith. Surely such blessed results of the gospel describe our liberty or our freedom, freedom from the dread of God's wrath, freedom from the dominion of sin and freedom from the debt of sin.

I can remember several years ago while I was a student still down at Bob Jones, it wasn't easy to keep up on the school bill while trying to work and get through college, and there were times when that financial debt to BJ seemed overwhelming, a large financial debt, but I can remember consoling myself during those days by saying, I have an even larger debt than that, but that debt has been paid in full. It's the sin debt. And the other debts really peel into insignificance in comparison to how large that one was. How unusual,

then, for the Apostle Paul, who knew and could expound this glorious freedom from sin's debt, to make such statements as we've read this evening. Chapter 1, in verse 14, he says, "I am a debtor." Chapter 8, in verse 14, he says, "therefore, brethren, we are debtors." And in chapter 15, in verse 27, "It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are," with reference to a debt that Paul is saying the Gentiles owed to the Jews. "I am a debtor, therefore, brethren, we are debtors, and it hath pleased them verily, and their debtors they are," and these verses teach us that while the gospel releases us from debt, it carries with it a debt of its own and this is important to note when the tendency of the day and of the flesh is to shrug off any responsibility to anyone or anything.

Think for a moment, if you would, on the magnitude of God's grace. We go to Christ again and again for forgiveness of sins, and we attain it because we read where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. So we gain forgiveness every time we need it. We plead for grace against our hard hearts, against our lukewarmness. We plead for grace against wasted opportunities and thank God his grace abounds. But brothers and sisters in Christ, let's not forget that like Paul, we have acquired a debt in the process which is a debt to grace because of this grace, that comes fully and comes freely we acquire a debt to that grace. And so that you may understand this evening something of the nature of this debt and that we might know how this debt is to be paid, I would invite you to think with me in the closing moments tonight the debts of a justified sinner. The debts of a justified sinner.

Consider with me, first of all, our debt to the world. We acquire a debt to the world. Look with me in chapter 1 and verse 14 where Paul writes, "I am debtor," you see this debt we're talking about is a debt that we share with Paul. "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise." What an unusual debt Paul's confessing here. Ordinarily for a person to acquire a debt there must be some sort of correspondence with another party during which that party supplies something to the person for which he becomes indebted but Paul says he's a debtor to the Greeks, or in other words, he's a debtor to the highly cultured and educated segments of that society. And isn't it ironic that for all their culture and philosophy, they could add nothing to Paul for which he would become indebted to them? What did he gain from their wisdom? By their wisdom, they didn't know God. The world by wisdom knew not God. The Greek philosophers by their wisdom didn't know God. Well, what did they add to Paul, then, that would bring Paul into their debt? The best they could do, and we saw this earlier in our studies in Acts, that the best they could do was to erect an altar that acknowledged that God was unknown to them.

So how could Paul be indebted to them, and if the Greeks or the wise men, the philosophers of the day, added nothing to Paul, how much less did the Barbarians, as they're called in the verse, or in other words, the unwise, the foreigners, the non-Greek speaking segment of society? We have an example of this category of people in Acts chapter 14. You might recall in that chapter that we have the account of Paul healing the man at Lystra, and following that miracle, we read how the people in their own tongue proclaim, "The gods have come down to us," and they take Barnabas to be Jupiter and they take Paul to be Mercury, and you may recall from our study in that chapter or from

your reading that chapter, how Paul and Barnabas had to exert great effort to restrain the Barbarians, so to speak, from offering sacrifice to them. And yet, you remember the account when the trouble-making Jews arrived on the scene, they were able to incite these same Barbarians to stone the Apostle Paul. Quite a contrast, isn't it, when you think about it, from being regarded as a god to being stoned as a criminal in the space of such a short time? And yet, as Paul records in our text in Romans, he was a debtor to this kind of people too.

Well, I think we can figure out that this debt Paul owed was a debt to these people only indirectly. The real debt was and is owed to God and God is pleased to transfer this debt to all the unsaved world, and let me point out to you that this is a debt that we all owe. It's a debt to the lost. We owe them the gospel. And there is in this debt to communicate the gospel, really a recognition of our common humanity, or indeed we could say further, a recognition of our common depravity with men of all classes. We would do well when we're abhorred by the atrocities of sin to remember that apart from God's saving grace, we would condone and engage in the same sin. We share a common humanity and depravity with sinners.

There is also in this death the recognition of God's purpose to save all kinds of sinners. I won't take the time to read it for you tonight, but take a look at Psalm 107 sometime and analyze that Psalm in terms of the categories of sinners that can be found there, and you'll find that there are wandering sinners who drift aimlessly through life, there are darkened and rebellious sinners who sit in darkness and are bound in the iron affliction of sin, and there are foolish sinners who go against the deepest law of their conscience by living as if God didn't see their sin. Surely everyone here either now or at some time fit into one or more of these categories. We've been darkened sinners, we have been foolish sinners, we have been wandering and rebellious sinners along the course of our lives and alas, how prone we are, I'm afraid, to forsake our debt of giving out the gospel to sinners in these categories because of what we deem the unlikelihood of the sinner being saved.

Well, not so with the Apostle Paul. We find in him an eagerness to pay the debt. Look at verse 15 again in chapter 1, "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." Underscore that word "ready." It's a word that is really comprised of two Greek words, a compound Greek word, the word "forward" and the word "mind." You could read it, "I am of a forward mind to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." One version translates it eager, "I am eager to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome." The Amplified Version says, "I am eagerly ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome." The phrase describes Paul's disposition, his eagerness to pay what he acknowledges is his debt. He was always looking for an opportunity to pay this debt. He considered it his greatest joy to pay this debt.

Look with me in chapter 15, if you would, still in Romans, Romans chapter 15, and look at verse 19 where he says, "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation." And then jump

down to verse 23, "But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; Whosoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you." Having no more place in these parts, you see the great zeal through which Paul paid the debt. He couldn't find any other place to pay the debt. "I've taken the gospel to every conceivable place I can," he's saying in effect. Oh, that God would instill in our hearts such an eagerness to pay this debt, that the truth of our own justification would so grip us that we would find, like Paul, an energy within that could not be restrained. And you know, that's really what it boils down to at the end of the day. If I have the sense of my own salvation, if I have it stamped on my heart by the Spirit of God that I really am justified, that my sins are forgiven, that I do have a home in heaven, that everlasting life is my portion, there will arise within my breast a motivation that will have to find release through making the name of Jesus Christ known.

It really boils down to understanding our own justification and that becomes, I suppose, a means to meeting the obligation. If you find yourself negligent or hesitant in wanting to meet the obligation of your debt, then consider again what debt has been removed by the blood of Christ. You should know that with or without your heart overflowing with the joy of the gospel, we are debtors nonetheless to give out the message of the gospel. So Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing the glory of, for necessity is laid upon me. Yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel for if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward. But if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me." He writes in 1 Corinthians 9 verses 16 and 17. We discover from this text that as well as the motivation that sprang from the joy of the gospel, Paul also recognized the motivation that springs from human needs. There are those that need the gospel; whether I feel like it or not, their need is great and that has to be an addition to our motivation. I'm motivated by joy, but I'm motivated by a need as well and that need is there whether I'm feeling joy or not. So the obligation is strong. And even without either of these motivating forces, Paul expresses the motivation that springs from a sense of responsibility, of dispensation, or a ministry is committed or entrusted unto me, he says.

So whether you're stirred by the need, whether you feel the joy or not, the fact is God commits to us this gospel. He entrusts us with it and that carries with it a responsibility that in spite of our feelings, we have a debt that must be paid through the communication of this gospel and so, brethren, we have a debt, we have an obligation, we have an entrustment, we must therefore ever be seeking opportunities to give out this gospel. Now, as this first debt, you might say, is of an external nature, the next debt is of an internal nature, for we see next not only a debt to the world, but a debt to the Spirit. Look with me at chapter 8 and verse 12, where Paul says, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Paul's employing a rhetorical device in this expression where less is said than intended, but the meaning is very clear. We are debtors not to the flesh but by implication we're debtors to the Spirit.

And look with me if I could just read these verses again and notice the emphasis on the Spirit. In Romans 8, look at verse 11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your

mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Do you see the contrast between the Spirit and the flesh? And we are debtors, Paul says, not to the one, but by implication to the other, not to the flesh, but to the Spirit.

Now the nature of this debt becomes clear when you recognize the forces, or what you might call the spiritual laws that are in motion in the believer and Paul expounds those laws in chapter 7. Look with me at verse 21 in Romans chapter 7 where he says, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." Continuing on, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." There's a battle taking place within the Apostle's soul. The law of the presence of evil, which is called the law of sin, and you have the law of God, or as it's called in verse 23, the law of the mind and a battle is described in this section within the believer. The battle is between the old nature and the new and chapter 8 makes it clear that it is the Holy Spirit who becomes the determining factor in the outcome of this battle. Paul describes the Spirit's work as a law also, if you would look in chapter 8 and verse 2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." If you could just consider that in the context of the preceding verses in chapter 7 where Paul concludes that chapter by saying, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There is within me this law, the law of sin, the law of the flesh, the law of the presence of evil, and it's warring against the law of my mind, and it's brought me to the point where the things I desire to do I don't find myself doing and the things that I know I shouldn't do, somehow I find myself doing them anyway. And that leads to the statement in verse 24, "O wretched man that I am!" This battle within the heart of the believer between the flesh and the new nature can bring us to a point of wretchedness. What will determine the outcome of the struggle? And he says it in Romans chapter 8 and verse 2. It's the Holy Spirit, it's "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

Now in stating our indebtedness, then, to the Spirit, Paul is emphatic in expressing where our debt does not lie. We are not in debt to the flesh. We are to walk not after the flesh, verse 4. We are to mind not the things of the flesh, verse 5. We are to live not after the flesh, verse 12. The flesh, of course, speaks of our sinful nature. We are not to be in debt to this nature because this nature is the nature of death, verse 6, and because the carnal life is enmity against God, verse 7, and because this nature cannot please God, verse 8. So we're not indebted to the flesh.

Our sinful nature, you know, would be a cruel taskmaster that seeks to enslave us to our passions and drive us to destruction by those passions. Do we not see the full force of such a power in the world around us, the drunkard, the drug user, the immoral man, fulfilling lusts, forsaking responsibilities, striving at first for pleasure, but eventually striving just to escape the misery. Small wonder that was such a force that would drive a man to death and hell, Paul would emphasize the fact that we are not debtors to the flesh,

but rather are debtors to the Spirit. It's the Spirit, you see, that ministers life and peace to our souls by ministering Christ to our hearts. It's the Spirit that frees us from the law of sin and death. It's the Spirit that will raise our mortal bodies from the grave. It's the Spirit that guides and directs us, that ministers assurance to our hearts that we are indeed the children of God. It's the Spirit that moves us to cry, Abba, Father, and who moves us to groan within in anticipation of the redemption of our bodies. It is the Spirit that helps our infirmities and makes intercession for us.

And so we're indebted to the Spirit, which then raises another question, how do we pay the debt? We're indebted to the Spirit, not to the flesh, how do we pay the debt? And the answer is very simply, it's to be paid by cooperating with the Spirit. Look at verse 13 with me in chapter 8, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." We mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit, but what I want you to see from the verse is the precision of the doctrine of sanctification. It is through the Spirit, it is with the Spirit's help, it is with dependence upon the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body but would you note that it is ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body. It's something that you do. Oh, you don't do it in your own power and strength; you must have the Spirit, but you do it by the Spirit. We're dependent on the Spirit, but we are active working with the Spirit of Christ.

Look at verse 15 where we see the same principle again, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." It is through the spirit of adoption that we cry and that it is by the spirit of adoption that we cry. Verse 23, it is we ourselves that groan for redemption to be consummated. We do so because we possess the firstfruits of the Spirit. In recognizing this active role of the believer in his salvation, Paul wrote to the Philippians that they were "to work out your own salvation for it is the Spirit of God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

This truth, you know, stands in stark contrast to what I'm afraid may become all too common a notion that we're passive in our Christian walk, we're waiting for the frills and the thrills of some mystical experience and then thinking holiness and spirituality are gained through that experience. But, brethren, we pay our debt to the Spirit by refusing to pay the flesh and by cooperating with the Spirit. As the battle becomes hot and you feel yourself caving in too easily to the flesh, consider your debt. You're a debtor not to the flesh, but to the Spirit.

And before we leave this point, I should point out to you that the payment of this debt is essential and I'd have you understand very clearly what I'm saying. Now I'm not saying that the payment is essential for earning salvation, we could never earn salvation, but it is essential. The payment of this debt to the Spirit is essential for proving salvation to ourselves and to others. Look at verse 1 again, chapter 8 and verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The mark of a man who has escaped condemnation is that he'll pay this debt. He walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Where the Spirit of Christ indwells the believer, he prompts that believer to pay his debt to the Spirit, and where the Spirit of

God is absent, the believer, so called, has little or no concern for the debt but is content to go the way of the flesh and the way of the world.

Look at verse 9, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Verse 14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Without a willingness to pay the debt to the Spirit, really a man has no right to consider himself a Christian. He's merely trying to escape, I suppose, the consequences of sin without feeling any obligation to escape the sin itself and so let every man examine his own heart. Have you entered the battle against fleshly lusts? Are you moved to pay your debt to the Spirit by praying to God as your Father? Do you groan under the sins that beset you? We are debtors not to the flesh, but to the Spirit, and where the Spirit dwells, this debt will most willingly be paid.

It remains for us then to consider one more debt of the justified sinner very quickly, for we see the word debtor one more time in chapter 15, if you would turn to that with me. Romans 15, verses 26 and 27, "For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things." This statement may be taken as something of an unusual statement for Paul to make, for he's been stressing throughout this epistle the unity between Jews and Gentiles, or in other words, the Jew and the Gentile were both on the same spiritual plane. Let me illustrate that for you with some other verses in Romans if you would look with me in chapter 2, verse 28 and 29, where Paul says, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." The child of God is identified by an inward working of the spirit rather than an outward association.

Look in chapter 4 and verse 16, where Paul says, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all." Those who have this inward working in their hearts are referred to as the seed. Paul is saying that the promise of inheriting the world belongs to all the seed, which includes Jews and Gentiles who have this much in common, that they believe in Jesus Christ.

And then look at one more passage, if you would, in chapter 9, verses 6 to 8, where Paul now specifically is dealing with the Jewish issue. What about the Jews? What about those of Paul's nationality? Are they gone? Are they forsaken? Have the promises of God to them been null and void? And look what he says in chapter 9 and verse 6, "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Children of promise counted for the seed, just as Isaac was miraculously born and was promised to

Abraham and Sarah, so every child of God is miraculously born from above according to the covenant promise between Christ and God his Father.

You could say that you and I are children of promise. We were promised from the Father to the Son if he would accomplish redemption for us by his atoning death. It's no wonder then that Paul came under such fire from the Jews. Here was Paul, a Jewish missionary with Jewish scriptures, was told of a Jewish Messiah and was filled with Jewish promises, and Paul now takes these things to the Gentiles and tells them that by believing in Christ they are grafted into the tree of this Jewish heritage, while unbelieving Jews are broken off. Paul could see that the promises of God applied to a spiritual seed that was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. What our text, however, in chapter 15 and verse 27 points out is that in spite of this unity, this spiritual unity between Jews and Gentiles and a single body, the Gentiles were nevertheless debtors to the Jews for salvation had come from them and the lesson of the text then becomes very simple, we acquire a debt to those that are the instruments of God that are used to convey spiritual blessings to us.

I remember several years ago, I've only had the opportunity to do this once, I don't know that I'll ever have the opportunity again, but as a student in the theological hall, I was able to travel over to Ulster during that time. I think that would have been about 1985, that long ago. And I was able to spend, I forget just how long it was, two or three weeks, but I was able to spend in Ulster touring the various churches and then taking part in the minister's week of prayer over in Ulster. And one of the greatest thrills to my soul in having the opportunity to be there was to acknowledge, and I did it in every church I visited, whenever I had an opportunity to speak, I acknowledged what I took to be a debt of gratitude to the people of Northern Ireland for sending some of their best men to America, men like Dr. Cairns and John Greer and Frank McClelland and others. And I could do that sincerely. I have benefited from those men and I acknowledge a debt of gratitude to those that have ministered to me and I'm obligated to pay such a debt as that.

In the case of our text, this debt was paid materially by an offering for the poor saints at Jerusalem. We find Paul receiving such a gift from the Philippians in Philippians 4. He rejoiced to receive such a gift, not so much because of the gift itself, but because of what the gift revealed about the compassion and the dedication of the Philippian believers. The payment of this debt done with the right spirit indicated to Paul a high degree of spiritual maturity. The Corinthians, on the other hand, didn't possess that level of maturity and Paul refused to receive anything from them. He held this debt over them, however, in another way. Look with me in 1 Corinthians, just a few pages forward, 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 15 and 16, where Paul says, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." And he's really hitting them now with a sense of debt, a sense of obligation and here's how he would have it paid, verse 16, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me." Be ye followers of me, he says. He would have the Corinthian Christians pay their obligation to him, pay their debt to him by following him. And what was Paul doing, after all? He was following Christ.

So pay the debt to those that minister to you by following them as they follow Christ, and here is how a debt is paid to a teacher or a preacher, simply by following him in the gospel. And this is not to say that we make any man a pope, but it is to say that we follow him in prayer. We follow him in knowing Christ. We follow him in serving Christ. We follow him in seeking after Christ. Paul expresses the payment of this debt in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 6, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."

Oh, there is nothing so satisfying or rewarding to a teacher or a preacher as to realize, "I've been used of God." It's humbling and it's satisfying to think the Lord blessed his people through something that I would have brought out from his word. I was talking to Adam Osworth about this. I think that young man has a glowing testimony for his willingness and even his desire to be among, oh, less than a dozen people in Mercer County, primarily one extended family, the Fitchner family and their parents and their son and his wife, but all basically one family. And Adam was telling me just how satisfying and rewarding he found it to be able to perceive as they communicated back to him that Christ was meeting with them, that Christ was blessing them, that they were so thankful for the ministry of the gospel. That, you could say, as Paul elaborates it in Galatians 6 and verse 6, is one of the ways in which that debt is paid.

So we see, then, the debts of a justified sinner to the world, to get out the gospel, to the Spirit, to follow Christ, to our spiritual contributors for their ministry of Christ to our hearts, and the thing to keep in mind is that underlying these debts is the knowledge of our sin debt being fully paid through the blood of Christ. Can you perceive this day something of his becoming poor in order that you might be made rich? If you can, then through those riches you've gained from him. Pay the debts of a justified sinner.

Let's close, then, in a word of prayer.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee this evening that our sin debt has been blotted out by the blood of Jesus Christ. Lord, this was an exceeding great debt, and it was a debt that we had no power to pay ourselves. We couldn't atone for a single sin, much less the multitudes of sins that are laid to our account but we thank thee, Lord, that Jesus paid it all. And we confess, O Lord, with the hymn writer, "All to him we owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, he washed it white as snow." O Lord, I pray that Thou wilt help us to be willing to pay the debt to the world; we have something that they desperately need. And Lord, Thou hast committed the task to Thy people of giving out this gospel. Help us to pay that debt. We ask of Thee, Lord, that Thou would impress upon us the truth that we're not in debt to the flesh, but our task rather is to mortify the flesh. Lord, help us to cooperate with the Spirit by ministering the gospel to our own souls and finding the motivation to overcome the world and the flesh and the devil. And then help us, Lord, to communicate to one another; as we minister to one another, may we communicate, O Lord, the blessings that we gain. We ask, O Lord, that in the process Thou will build us up in the faith and unite our hearts in the fear of God and love of Christ. So, Lord, take our thanks for Thy goodness and mercy to us and help us, O Lord, to enjoy the peace and

the freedom that are our portion and help us as well, O Lord, to meet the obligations that come along with those glorious freedoms. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.