

WHAT WE OWE

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:7-8).

Every man is a debtor. Whether he acknowledges his obligations or not, he has obligations resting upon him from which he cannot escape. Commercially speaking he may be out of debt. His spiritual debts are heavy, they are constantly increasing, and they are not transferable. No one else can pay them. And he is accountable for them.

I. To Whom Are We Indebted?

1. To others.

(1) Every man is indebted to his ancestors.

He has come into a world which others made for him; he has inherited blessings which others have won for him; he has built and is building upon foundations which others have laid for him. Hardy pioneers have gone before him blazing trails through the forests, subduing the wilderness, building communities, and constructing highways. Inventors have followed harnessing to man's use the forces of nature and multiplying his power. When he comes into the world he comes into a place made ready for him.

(2) Every man is indebted to his parents.

They are responsible for bringing him into the world, and have more to do with shaping his life than any others.

(3) Every man is indebted to his instructors.

No man is self-made. What he does for himself, were it not connected with what others do for him, would amount to little. Through ministers, teachers, and books the garnered knowledge and wisdom of the past is transmitted to him. He begins where others left off and the utmost he can do is to make a slight addition to the stores already accumulated.

(4) Every man is indebted to his country.

Not only for the protection of life and property, and for the stability of government is he indebted, but also for the rights for which others have toiled and bled, and for institutions into which countless lives have been wrought. Let the debt which a man owes his country once be recognized and there is kindled within his breast a spirit of patriotism which leads him to make any sacrifice that may be demanded to defend and perpetuate its life.

(5) Every man is indebted to society.

As a social being man is dependent upon others. The social life around him is the soil in which he is nourished. His daily wants are met by the multiplied ministries of his fellow men. Even if he should so desire, man cannot escape from the responsibility of his social debts.

2. To God.

We are indebted to God for life itself. Everything that we possess we actually owe to God. From Him we receive the air that we breathe, the water that we drink, the food that we eat, the clothing that we wear, and the house in which we dwell.

We are indebted to Him for the Bible from which we have received information about the way of salvation. He provided a Saviour for us, and from Him we have received salvation. In His Word He has taught us how to live victorious and useful Christian lives. From Him all blessings flow -- even those that have been ministered by human hands. We shall never know how much we are indebted to Him. Our debt is mountain high.

II. What Do We Owe?

1. To others.

(1) Good will.

"Honor all men" (I Peter 2:17). Respect the rights of others, and do not entertain evil thoughts of them.

(2) Kind words.

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren" (James 4:11). "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (I Timothy 2:1).

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

(3) Good deeds.

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

2. To God.

(1) Fear.

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

We should fear God because of His sovereignty, justice, and power.

(2) Adoration.

We should adore God because of His wisdom, mercy, and eternity.

(3) Love.

We should love God because of:

a. His excellency.

"His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely" (Song of Solomon 5:16).

b. His love for us.

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:8-10).

(4) Desire.

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psalm 73:25).

We should desire God because He is the ocean of happiness in Himself and the fountain of happiness to us.

(5) Trust.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

We should trust in God's promises because of His freedom in making them and His faithfulness in keeping them.

(6) Gratitude.

"In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18).

We should be thankful to God for His creation, preservation, redemption, and salvation.

We should exclaim with Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant" (Genesis 32:10).

(7) Obedience.

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice" (I Samuel 15:22).

Our obedience to God should be:

a. Sincere.

"Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Romans 6:17).

b. Constant.

"That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve

Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:75).

III. Why Should We Pay What We Owe?

1. God commands it.

"Render therefore to all their dues."

2. Failure to do so is robbery.

It is to rob God, others, and yourself. It is to rob yourself of a good conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, and the favor of God.