

In Debt to Everybody

by Dr. Paul S. Rees

No, this has no reference to the feeling that momentarily seizes us when the first of the month rolls round and the bills pour in! As a matter of fact our creditors only seem numerous; they are actually few.

But there once lived and labored a fiery-spirited Christian who announced that every man was his creditor. In the Phillips rendering of Romans 1:14 we read: "I feel myself under a sort of universal obligation I owe something to all men, from cultured Greek to ignorant savage." Is there a spirit in us akin to that of the Man Paul? Are we disturbed and driven by it?

When once it really dawns on us what kind of world it is that God has created for us and what kind of Saviour He has provided for us in Jesus Christ, we shall understand what Detroit's princely preacher, Dr. M. S. Rice, meant when once he cried in my presence: "We (Christians) are not here to collect our dues; we are here to pay our bills!"

Let's take a closer look at this sense of universal obligation by which Paul was motivated and mastered.

First of all, we see in him an unlimited recognition of debt. "I am debtor," he freely acknowledges, "both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish." By "Greeks" is meant the whole-Greek-speaking civilization of Paul's day, and by "barbarians" is meant all other peoples and tribes.

Here is a facing up to debt that climbs ever racial barriers and burrows under cultural differences. The old Paul of pre-conversion days, the patriotic Hebrew and proud Pharisee would have said to Gentiles. "You are in debt to me!" But the new Paul, the "man in Christ," says, "I am in debt to you!"

Observe, in the next place, that Paul gives us an unrivalled reason for debt. The curious and the casual will want to toss Paul the query: Why should you feel obligated to a man on the other side of the planet who doesn't even know that you exist? What has he done to put you in debt to him?

And Paul the Christian replies in effect, It isn't what he has done at all. It is what God has done in Jesus Christ our Lord! It has all come about, argues the Apostle, because three absolutely tremendous and unprecedented things have taken place in our world.

For one thing, the supreme Person has been revealed, and He is the Son of God, named Jesus the Christ. Thus in this first chapter of Romans Paul starts right off by saying that he is going to write about "the gospel of God" (v. 1), which is the good news "concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead" (vv. 3,4).

God has come in Christ. The Supreme Person of the ages has acted. His action was a birth, a life, a death, a resurrection, all of which, because of its redemptive purpose, has put a new chord into the music of life.

Second, the supreme Power has been released, and that is the "power of God unto salvation" (v. 16). The power of man, look where we will, turns out to be power unto destruction. But the power of God, demonstrated and offered in the death and resurrection of Jesus, saves men: saves the conscience from the despair of unforgiven guilt, saves the will from the ruin of false loyalties, saves the emotions from being wasted and warped by worry and fears, saves them into wholeness and purposefulness.

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The Call to Holiness

by Samuel Chadwick

"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (I Thessalonians 4:7).

There is no doubt about the call. It is on every page of the Scriptures, and the reason for it is in the nature and character of God. Holiness is not optional, but it is imperative. Because God is holy, his people must be holy. Without holiness no man can see the Lord. It is imperative. It must be possible. He who wills the end must provide the means. The will of God is our sanctification. The command of God is that we be holy. If sanctification is his will, and holiness his command, he must have made it possible, otherwise he would mock us and call us to an unequal and unfair task. Life would be doomed to disappointment and dissatisfaction, failure and condemnation.

When God calls us to holiness it is frankly admitted that the demand is beyond us. We cannot attain unto holiness. God gives what we cannot gain by any will or effort of our own. Sanctification is not attained; it is obtained. For it is of grace through faith, and not of merit by works. It is without price, because it is priceless, and it is not of works, because it is beyond man's possibility. He who wills our sanctification is himself the Sanctifier.

THE WILL OF GOD

God wills our sanctification. Of that there is no doubt. It is not a doctrine of man to be accepted or declined. We are called unto holiness, and God requires his people to be holy because he is holy. His holiness is the pattern, and his people are to be holy because he is holy. Absolute holiness belongs to God alone, and when he commands that his people be holy as he is holy, it means that every quality of holiness in him must be in them, even as Jesus commanded, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." What he wills, he commands, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit" (I Thess. 4:7, 8). To reject the call is to reject God—to despise God. To deny the call is to deny the Holy Spirit.

The will of God is our sanctification. Will implies purpose, purpose is dependent upon power, and power assumes provision. What God wills to be he must be able to do; what he requires he must make possible. Will implies freedom, our freedom as well as his. God cannot make saints as he makes worlds. When he wills man's sanctification, another will is involved. Man cannot be sanctified even by God apart from consent and without cooperation. The thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel is the chapter of God's "I wills." At the end of the chapter God says, "I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it," and immediately adds another "I will"; "Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God's will waits for man's will; and God's power is conditioned upon man's consent. He will is plainly our sanctification.

THE ACT OF GOD

Saints are God's workmanship. Sanctification is the act of God. Concerning this, the Word of God is decisive and emphatic. Saint Paul prays in the Thessalonian Epistle that the "God of peace sanctify you wholly." It is the Lord who separates the godly unto himself, and he alone can make that which is separated to be holy in nature and character. There is cleansing required, that is beyond man's power, and there is a sanctification to be wrought that God alone can do. The carnal mind is rooted in