**“The Christian a Debtor” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times 6, 12.**

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“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.” {BEST June 15, 1891, par. 1}

The apostle Paul had no sympathy with those who would say, “The world owes me a living.” For such persons he had only the sharpest rebuke. His command was “that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” 2 Thessalonians 3:10. In the language quoted above, we have the sentiment of the true missionary-one who has given his life to the service of others. {BEST June 15, 1891, par. 2}

But Paul did not take any credit to himself for his labor for others. He considered that he was simply working out a debt. To the Corinthians he wrote: “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel.” 1 Corinthians 9:16. {BEST June 15, 1891, par. 3}

In the very beginning of his epistle to the Romans, Paul declared himself a servant of Jesus Christ. As we have already learned, this means that he was the life-long bond slave of Christ, yet his service was a willing service of love. He had given himself wholly to Christ, and was so closely identified with him that he was counted as a son and a brother. This is the position of every Christian. “Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price.” 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. First of all, then, the Christian owes himself and all that he has to Christ, because Christ has bought him with his own blood. {BEST June 15, 1891, par. 4}

But the fact that we owe ourselves to Christ, and that if we acknowledge that obligation we are to identify ourselves so completely with him that the service will not be ours but his (1 Corinthians 15:10), makes us debtors to all men. For Christ “died for all;” and in carrying out his work for men, he assumed an obligation to all men, although no man had of right any claim upon him. Paul says that although he was in the form of God, he “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.” Philippians 2:6, 7. And we are expressly exhorted to have this mind in us. Jesus himself said: “Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:26-28. {BEST June 15, 1891, par. 5}

Christ gave his life “for the life of the world” (John 6:51); therefore everyone who yields himself to Christ, to become identified with him and his work, becomes, like him, a servant, not alone of the Lord Jesus, but of all for whom he became a servant. In other words, the Christian is Christ’s servant; but as Christ’s work is for the world, he who becomes a sharer of that work must become the servant of the world. Paul felt this to the utmost. He felt that he owed service to everybody that was in need; and so he did. The servant owes his service to the one who pays for it. Christ had bought the service of Paul by the sacrifice of himself; and when Paul recognized that debt to Christ and gave himself to the discharge of it, the Lord turned his service in the direction in which he himself labored. The only way to be a servant of Christ, is to serve those for whom he died. Wesley had some of the same spirit that Paul had, when he said, “The world is my parish.” {BEST June 15, 1891, par. 6}

The second great commandment in the law is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Our neighbor is everyone with whom we come in contact, who is in need. Says Paul: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Galatians 6:10. “As we have opportunity.” That indicates that we are to seek occasion of serving men, and so Paul did. {BEST June 15, 1891, par. 7}

To the Romans Paul said in another place: “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself.” Romans 15:1-3. Thus again we learn that the work of Christ is to be the example for us; and he “went about doing good.” Acts 10:30. Again Paul says: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2. {BEST June 15, 1891, par. 8}

The trouble with too many who profess to be followers of Christ is that they do not feel any great sense of obligation. Sometimes they talk about “getting a burden” for the work, but what is that burden? It is nothing else but a sense of the debt which we owe to Christ, and consequently to the world. If a man owes a great deal of money, and has no means with which to pay it, he will necessarily feel as though he had quite a load upon his shoulders-a burden. So all that is necessary to enable a man to have a burden for souls, is for him to realize how much Christ has done for him. {BEST June 15, 1891, par. 9}

The one to whom much is forgiven will love much. Paul felt himself to be the chief of sinners, and so when he felt the pardoning love of God, he felt that he owed much service. And he never forgot how much had been forgiven him, nor how great was his dependence upon God, and so he always felt the burden of debt resting upon him. Those who have felt the burden of their sins, and who know that they are removed, will not have to strive to get a burden for souls. They will feel like Paul, that necessity is laid upon them, and it will be the joy of their lives to discharge that obligation. {BEST June 15, 1891, par. 10}