

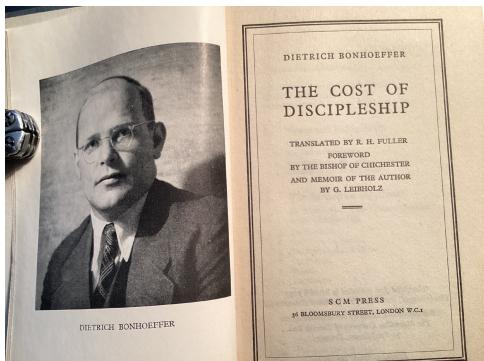


DEBTS and DUTIES

I am debtor [under obligation, NAS] to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. -- Rom. 1:14 (KJV)

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another, for he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law. -- Rom. 13:8 (NAS)

Study 21a: The OBLIGATION of OBEDIENCE (15:14-19)



15:14-16 Despite Paul's stress upon preserving the unity of the body of Christ (note "brethren", v.14), why will he continue to write "very boldly" (v.15) to the Roman church? (12:1,2)

Only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes ... For faith is only real when there is obedience, never without it, and faith only becomes faith in the act of obedience. **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** *The Cost of Discipleship* p.56

15:17-19 What, for Paul, is the entire purpose of "the gospel of Christ" (v.19) and of the "signs and wonders in the power of the Spirit" with which God authenticated Paul's gospel? (2 Cor. 12:12; Matt.28:18-20 -- NOTE: the apostles are given Christ's authority)

Study 21b: WHAT IT MEANS to LOVE the BRETHREN (15:20-33)

15:20-24 Often its hard enough to love the brethren in our own church. But how far-reaching is the love the Lord has given Paul? (1:11; 5:5; 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17)

Quoted from Isaiah lli. 15 (LXX) ... We have already had ample evidence of the way in which this whole section of the book of Isaiah served as a source of gospel *testimonia* ... -- **F.F. Bruce**, *op.cit.*, p. 262

15:25-27 Paul considered himself a debtor to the Gentiles (1:14,15) in that Christ's mercy toward him was with the express purpose that through Paul the gospel of grace may reach the Gentiles (1 Tim.1:12-16). Of what debt does Paul now remind his Gentile audience? (11:17,18)

That is why he had come to attach so much importance to his personally accompanying the Gentile delegates to Jerusalem, there to present this offering to God, perhaps by an act of worship at that very place in the temple where once Christ had appeared to him and sent him "far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts xxii. 21). -- **F.F. Bruce**, *op.cit.*, p. 264

But Paul cannot come directly to the Roman brethren; he has yet one **duty** to perform: "to minister to ... the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." The epistles to the Corinthithians show how Paul's heart was set on this contribution. Macedonia did its part (2 Cor. viii. 1-5); Corinth had been urged to attend to the matter; Galatia, not mentioned here for some reason, contributed (1 Cor. xvi. 1). It may be that the Galatian funds had already been forwarded to Jerusalem.

"It hath pleased them," This clause is repeated from the twenty-sixth verse, that Paul may show that there is another side to this act than mere benevolent pleasure. A man is not simply "pleased" to pay what he owes; it is his **"duty."** This contribution was a debt due from the Gentiles to the Jews for the reason here given. And that debt is still due these same Jews. But for their unparalleled sufferings in all time, the world would have had no Bible and no gospel. -- **J.M. Stifler**, *op.cit.*, p. 258 (emphasis added)

The Gentiles had received *spiritual* wealth from the Jews. They now returned *material* wealth, paying their debt. Paul considered himself a "debtor" to the whole world (Rom. 1:14). He also considered the Gentile Christians debtors to the Jews, for it was the Jews who gave to the Gentiles the Word of God and the Son of God. We Christians ought to feel an obligation to Israel, and to pay that debt by praying for Israel, sharing the Gospel, and helping in a material way. Anti-Semitism has no place in the life of a dedicated Christian. -- **W.W. Wiersbe**, *op.cit.*, p. 170

15:28-33 Paul asks of the churches financial sacrifice and prayer, an "offering of the Gentiles" (v.16) and "fruit" of the "love of the Spirit" (vv. 28,30). But how far will Paul himself go to fulfill the law of love?

... the undying name received from his friendly mention is a type of the eternal blessing which belongs to those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." -- **J.M. Stifler**, *op.cit.*, p. 262

16:1-16 Though these names be obscure to us, they are known to God and memorialized here. They are plainly dear to Paul as well. What do we note most have in common? What is the tie that binds them in unity?

... (this Christian woman bore, without change, and without reproach, the name of the Moon-Goddess of the Greeks,) ... -- **H.C.G. Moule, op.cit.**, p. 426

The chief interest of this passage centres in the apostle's incidentally revealed consciousness of the inter-relationships of the saints as being dependent upon their common relationship to Christ. The phrases which indicate this are scattered through the paragraph, "In the Lord. ... In Christ Jesus ... unto Christ ... in Christ ... in the Lord ... in the Lord ... in the Lord ... in the Lord." ... What a glorious picture of the unity of the Church is here afforded! The only realisation of that unity possible at any time must come by individual abiding in close relationship with the Lord. -- **G. C. Morgan, op.cit.**, p. 239, 240

In my own reading of Christian biography, I have discovered that the servants whom God has used the most were people who could make friends. They multiplied themselves in the lives of their friends and associates in the ministry. While there may be a place for the sec-

-luded saint who lives alone with God, it is my conviction that most of us need each other. We are sheep, and sheep flock together. -- **W.W. Wiersbe, op.cit.**, p. 172

16:17-20 What does Paul suggest is Satan's method with the church? (2 Cor. 2:5-11 -- NOTE: **obedience** is stressed in both contexts)

Excommunication? Imprisonment? Torture of the heretics? No; simply "avoid them," turn away from them, freeze them out by not listening to them. -- **J.M. Stifler, op.cit.**, p. 268

16:21-27 What is the end or goal of both Old Testament prophecy and New Testament gospel? Should salvation therefore be the chief preoccupation of the church? (1:5-7, 16-17)

A city officer, Erastus, the chamberlain salutes. His faith in Christ did not debar him from a civic function. The view that a Christian cannot hold an office of the state wrecks on this passage. -- **J.M. Stifler, op.cit.**, p. 270

The Goal of the Gospel -- Obedience of Faith



[on Romans 1:5] *Unto the obedience of faith.* These words express the object of the apostleship; [pisteos] is either the genitive of apposition, "obedience which consists in faith;" or it is the genitive of the source, "obedience which flows from faith;" or it is the genitive of the object, "obedience to faith;" i.e., to the gospel ... The obedience of faith is that obedience which consists in faith, or of which faith is the controlling principle. The design of the apostleship was to bring all nations so to believe in Christ the Son of God that they should be entirely devoted to his service.

Charles Hodge *The Epistle to the Romans* p.21