

Debt and Obligation

Our Passover Responsibility

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The radio personality, Charles Osgood, told of a news item out of Miami in which a young man working as a valet parking attendant at a hotel was routinely handed a tip for fetching a man's automobile. Later, after the man drove off, the young man looked at the tip and discovered that the man had given him a thousand dollars. The tip-giver was unaware of his mistake until he was well on his way back to West Virginia. He immediately turned around and drove back to the hotel. He found that the young man had turned the money into his supervisor after correctly deciding that a mistake had been made.

Charles Osgood's story centered on the young man's honesty, and rightly it should, but as Osgood was telling the story I began wondering whether the West Virginia man was going to feel obligated to give the attendant a nice tip. Well, he did. He gave the young man a much larger tip than he otherwise would have, but it was still a very small percentage of what he almost lost.

I wondered about this because we live in a time when many have, at the very best, a weak sense of obligation. The dominant concept seems to be, "I have this coming to me," or "It is owed to me." Entertainers and professional athletes are clear examples of people who do not feel obligated to conclude their existing contracts, so if they have a good year, or if they have a big hit, they want to re-negotiate to a better contract before the old one expires.

Have the United States and Canada ever seen a time in their history when peoples' sense of obligation to conclude what they are bound to, especially obligation to family, to nation, or to community, was ever at a lower ebb? Although these three institutions give us so much more than we will ever be able to give back, it seems so easy for so many to feel no obligation to them. Unfortunately, some even lack recognition of their obligation, of their indebtedness to these institutions.

I think it fairly obvious that human nature is so self-centered it clearly does not naturally become equipped with a sense of obligation which is a quality, a virtuous character trait one must learn and build primarily within the family, and secondarily, within the community.

We come under obligation when a service is rendered us, thus producing indebtedness to the one who performed the service. In many cases, at the very least, a heartfelt "thank you" is in order. True obligation is a deep conviction that we owe somebody something. It is closely related to accountability and responsibility, making one feel required to respond by repaying the indebtedness. This sense is very important to the proper understanding of the Days of Unleavened Bread, and especially Passover.

The word "obligation" does not appear in the King James Version at all, and only three times in the New King James Version; however, its sense appears *scores* of times through other words

and combinations of words such as: because, for, therefore, wherefore, or thus. These words frequently precede a Christian requirement in terms of conduct or attitude, an exhortation to obedience, or instruction as to cause and effect.

I Peter 1:15-16 But as He which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conduct: Because it is written, Be you holy; for I am holy.

Do you see the obligation there? Because God, our spiritual Father (whom we represent here) is holy, we are under obligation to be holy. Peter's instruction draws upon our sense of obligation to the Father, to exhort us to obedient conduct. He then intensifies our sense of obligation by reminding us that we owe our lives to Christ because He redeemed us.

I Peter 1:17-21 And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: [There is an obligation. Here comes the reason.] Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain conduct received by tradition from your fathers: But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Though one might understand that the word "you" (which appears in the phrase "forasmuch as *you* know" in verse 18) might be taken in a general sense as obligation for many, it has far more impact if we see it as aimed directly at us personally; that is, Christ would have died if only *you* had sinned and needed to be redeemed.

These verses help us to understand something important about our spiritual well-being, that one's sense of obligation is in direct proportion to one's ability to contrast the peerless quality and pricelessness of the gift given as compared to the worthlessness of the purchased possession—you and me.

A billionaire might consider one thousand dollars as pocket change. To a person destitute and bankrupt, it is a fortune; thus evaluations vary according to perspective. The apostle Paul wailed verbally in Romans 7, "O wretched man that I am!" He did this when he had been an apostle for about twenty years. Think about the way that he looked at himself. He expressed that there: "O wretched man that I am!"

Put more directly, our sense of obligation rests on a thoughtful and true assessment of ourselves and our self-centered aimless corrupt and sinful lives as compared to the purity possessed and displayed by our Redeemer in His sacrifice for us, and for the life that was lived *before* that sacrifice.

We are going to turn to Luke 7.

Luke 7:36-40 And one of the Pharisees desired him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto you. And he said, Master, say on.

This portion of a paragraph introduces a parable which will help us understand not only how a sense of obligation is produced, but will provide a sterling example of how deep it should be.

Luke 7:41-50 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged. And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, See you this woman? I entered into your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has washed My feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. You gave Me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil you did not anoint: but this woman has anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And He said unto her, Your sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgives sins also? And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you: go in peace.

This woman perceived a greatness in Jesus that motivated her to abase herself—to *so* abase herself that a proper sense of obligation worked to produce a very valuable and perhaps the single most valuable virtue a Christian can have: unabashed humility. Notice her emotion, her *demotion*, that she seems oblivious of public opinion while performing the task of a slave *way over and above* what would even be expected of a slave. A slave was not required to kiss a visitor's feet, or anoint them with oil, or to cry over them.

I think we can safely guess that Jesus played a huge part in turning this woman from bondage to sin. I am sure that at first she may have simply seen Him among the crowd and was convicted by His messages. She must have thought deeply and personally on the difference

between her life and His words. When she heard that He was nearby, she rushed to Simon's home, ignoring the scorn of others, to express her gratitude to the One who has set her aright. Her deed expresses her love and gratitude springing from a recognition of His greatness as compared to her unworthiness, and she felt obligated to respond in a way so memorable that God recorded it for all humanity for all time, for every one of us to witness.

Make note of the fact that the Bible shows human lips touching Jesus only twice. One was Judas' kiss of betrayal. This is the other one. From top to bottom. Which one was better?

Notice the contrast with Simon the Pharisee. I think that it is evident he was a man of some substance and also a man with some measure of aggressiveness that resulted in him moving to invite the celebrity Jesus into his home. But at the same time, he was a man who was so self-concerned and inhospitable that he did not even offer Jesus the customary services a host normally provided to visitors in his home.

I think it is safe to assume that he felt himself at least Jesus' equal. His conclusion that Jesus was no prophet probably indicates that he felt he was better than Jesus, and that Jesus was really nothing more than an interesting celebrity, and that he would gain certain recognition in the community for having Him in his home. It begins to look like he invited Jesus only for his own glory.

I think that you can tell that his evaluation of himself in relation to Jesus produced no sense of obligation, no gratitude, no humility, no acts of love, let alone common courtesy. Had he a heart at all? He was scandalized by this scene taking place at his respectable table. Here she was, performing an act so awesome that God had it recorded for all of humanity for all time to witness, and yet Simon said, "She is a sinner." No, Simon. She *was* a sinner, and therein lay a major clue as to the reason for the difference between the two.

In Jesus' parable, Simon and the woman have something in common. There was something that Simon did not grasp, but the woman did. Both were debtors to the same Creditor, and neither one of them could pay the debt. It is interesting to note that in the model prayer in Matthew 6:12 that sin is expressed by Jesus under the image of debt. "Forgive us our debts," He said. That is a true metaphor, because duty or obligation is a debt that is owed to God—a debt that must be discharged by paying the penalty. Now all have sinned, and the wages of sin is death. All of us are under a peculiar form of indebtedness that we cannot pay and still have hope.

Simon and the woman are each a portrait of a class of sinners. Although we are all sinners, some have incurred more debt than others through the way their lives have been lived. There are those who are outwardly respectable, decent, and clean-living. I believe that the overwhelming majority of us fall into this category. There are also those who have fallen into gross sensual, immoral, open transgression of the streetwalker type, of drug dealers, murderers, and rapists. We could go on and on naming this kind which even the good people of society, who are sinners, look upon with scorn, and that these people are some kind of parasite that needs to be crushed out of existence.

Though in regard to this kind of sinner, Simon was a great deal better than the woman who was coarse and unclean. She had been wallowing in filth while he obtained respectability through his rigid morality and punctilious-observed civility. Oh, he was a nice guy in the community, but he

was still a sinner, so he had far less to answer for than she. He had received in this life a great deal more than she did. He was amply rewarded by God for the kind of righteousness that he did have for his morality. God is not unfair to bless people for what they have done that is right, but the point is, that regardless of the relative size of each one's debt, nobody is able to pay his own and still live.

We are all sinful, and we all stand in the same relation to God as these two debtors. The one sin may be blacker and more numerous than another's, but when we talk about degree of guilt and consider some of the complex motivations that go into each one's sins, we might not be so quick to judge the harlot's sin as being worse than Simon's.

Really, is there anything worse than a Christian who is also a hypocrite giving people a false image of himself and of God? And yet they are respectable—a lying respectable Christian. Looked at from this perspective, they were equal. His sins were clothed with a self-righteous respectability, but he still could not meet his debt. They, Jesus said, had nothing to pay, and that precisely describes our position too in relation to each other.

Do you know what it means, in practical application, in regard to Jesus Christ, to *our* sins? No matter how much we feel our guilt, no matter what the amount of tears is, no matter the self-flagellation we go through or the discipline we put ourselves under, no amount of change of life can work this into a payable debt. Please understand that it is not that some of these things are not required of God, because they are, and are certainly good to do, but as to forgiveness—the payment of our debt incurred through our own personal sin—we all stand on exactly the same level.

We are saved by grace through faith. It is by God's mercy, through the blood of Jesus Christ that our sins are paid for. We absolutely cannot pay it ourselves and still have hope of eternal life. If we could, God would owe us something. The tables would be turned. He would be indebted to us. He will never allow that to happen.

George Bernard Shaw, an agnostic, wrote a book titled *Major Barbara*. The character "Cusins" in this book says, "Forgiveness is the beggar's refuge. We must pay our debts." But Shaw does not tell us how to pay it. If a man is honorable today, he has not changed the fact that he was dishonorable yesterday.

History is stories of things that occurred in the past, and historians try to write accounts that will make their nations' actions and motives appear to be pure. But is it realistic to believe that history can be cleansed? Is it realistic to believe that virginity can be restored? Is it realistic to believe that a murder can be undone, that a slander can be recalled, or that a lie can be purified so that it becomes truth?

Do you get the point? Once a sin occurs, it has occurred, and if we have to pay for that sin, life stops. "That is all she wrote." It is over. The past cannot be changed, and when we have sinned in the past we have incurred a debt that we absolutely cannot pay. Can we just wipe things from our memory? We cannot return to the past and undo things that have already been done. Oh, we can mend our ways in the present, but that does not touch the past. We may hate the evil and that might help to keep us from doing it in the future, but it does not accept the responsibility for what we have already done. We have to be realistic regarding our sins,

because there we stand with the death sentence written all over us.

Turn to Hebrews 2:2 to something we need to consider.

Hebrews 2:2-3 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; [In other words, the penalty carried out.] how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him.

We, like the two people in Jesus' parable of Luke 7, have nothing with which to pay the debt anymore than they did. We stand before God in penniless insolvency, with empty pockets in hand. There is no justification on our part that will clear what we have done.

Do you know what? It is not all bad, because this is good in terms of the Kingdom of God because we must recognize our insolvency if we expect to be forgiven and if we want to be like Him. It is the door through which every single one of us has to pass or there is no hope. We are indebted to Him because *He* paid the debt. We absolutely cannot and have life continue.

If we are going to pay the debt at all, we die, and "that is all she wrote." If He is going to forgive, we must let Him forgive it all on *His* terms and His term is *we must change*. It has to be one or the other, and we must choose which of the two it will be. If we choose the one, the payment is death without hope. If we choose the other, it puts us under obligation to the One who pays our otherwise unpayable debt. But to what then are we obligated? Jesus begins to answer that with a question, and we are going to go back to Luke 7 and re-read some of those scriptures.

Luke 7:42-43 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged.

So Simon perceived the correct answer. We are obligated to love Him. Do you see that? "Who will love him the most?" That is what Jesus is looking for. He is looking for love out of us. This is a generality, but nonetheless this is where we begin. We are obligated.

Luke 7:47 Wherefore I say unto you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.

Jesus reinforces what he said earlier. We are obligated to love Him, and if we catch the picture here, we are virtually driven to do so because we grasp the enormity of what we have been saved from in conjunction with what we are now free to pursue: eternal life and being in the Kingdom of God.

Is it possible brethren, like the Ephesians church in Revelation 2, that maybe we have left our first love because we no longer make the effort to remember these things? Has our obligation to Him slipped our mind? What is the intensity and depth of our feeling for Him? Is it something that is brought to mind often, or do we only think of it once a year when Passover rolls around? Is it possible we have taken Passover many times without really considering what it is that we are being called upon there to do? Well, the person who knows that he has been forgiven much feels much more obliged to the One who has paid the debt than the one who thinks that his indebtedness was small. The one forgiven much feels obliged then to live the way the One who has paid his debt tells him that he should.

Jesus is telling us that those of us who are most conscious of forgiveness will be the most fruitful in love. Perhaps the depth, fervor, and growth of our Christianity depends more on the clearness of our consciousness of this contrast than upon any other thing because it produces humility. This humility enables us to submit rather than fight Him. Rather than resist, we submit.

A person can be very gifted and yet not grow as much as one less gifted but more aware of his obligation to Christ. Why? Because the second person will simply be more motivated. Then again, there are some who do come along this way, like the apostle Paul. He was both greatly gifted and constantly conscious of his obligation to Christ.

I Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet [fit] to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Was Paul lying there? Was Paul bragging there? No. This is the Word of God. It is true. This is really the way he saw himself.

I Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: [That is just as true as verse 9.] yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Paul produced a mountain of good works and here he is, laying much of that responsibility for what he has produced on the way that he thought about himself, that he was the least of the apostles. But he said, "I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

It is possible, that since Christ, there has been no finer example than Paul. He never forgot what he had done, where the contrast between the immensity of that which he had been forgiven and offered, and Paul responded to God with great energy and enthusiasm. He did so apparently without much consciousness of what others thought of him for doing so.

There is another part of this picture that requires examination, because I Corinthians was one of the earliest of Paul's writings. It was written somewhere around the timeframe of 52 AD.

We are going to look at another part of this picture in one of the last epistles Paul wrote and

that is in I Timothy. Was there a change in Paul later in life? Did his sense of indebtedness wane?

I Timothy 1:12-15 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry: Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief [foremost].

This is probably the next to the last epistle Paul wrote and it shows that very late in his life as an apostle he was still very much aware of the enormity of what he had been forgiven. I think that he purposely kept it alive so as to not take any chance of losing his sense of responsibility to be obligated to Christ. He understood human nature well, and he did not want to take any chance of losing the right perspective that had been given him at the very beginning. He did not carry it about like some burdensome load of guilt, but rather had a realistic recognition of his indebtedness to all that he was and to all that he had accomplished.

Let us look at another verse written by this man. Turn to Philippians 3:6. Paul is again talking about himself.

Philippians 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Here is a stark contrast to what we just saw. Here he says he was blameless, talking about his former life "BC"—before conversion. Is there a contradiction? No. I do not think that Paul, before conversion, was a great deal different from Simon the Pharisee. I think that they were probably pretty much alike, and I have included most of us in that category too. We were all fairly respectable people, civil to our neighbors, and we were not going about murdering, raping, or anything of that nature. We were nice people.

Paul was clothed with that respectability, but yet when God's time came and He called him, Paul became very aware, very conscious of his indebtedness to all that he was and to all that he had accomplished. All that he was is at least touched on generally in Romans 7. He said, "The law came. Sin revived, and I died." He did not die literally but the "old man" died, as Paul saw himself in stark reality as to what he looked like to God. He accepted it and changed. He repented.

He knew that he was guilty of many deeds and attitudes of the very things Jesus denounced the Pharisees for, because he was one of them. He was a whited sepulchre. He was of the mind of those who killed the prophets, which he admitted. He tried to kill the Christians and maybe he was responsible for the deaths of some of them. I do not know.

In Philippians 3, in verse 6 mostly, he is looking back on what he thought of himself *then*. He thought he was blameless. However, he saw himself, in God's eyes, in Romans 7, as a man struggling with sin but rescued from it through Jesus Christ. He became then a man whose faith

was in God's grace and he did what he did largely out of sense of grateful obligation. Paul was full of wonder and gratitude when thoughts of what Christ had done, was doing through and for him.

I do not know whether you have ever heard of G. K. Chesterton, a very famous man in this world's Christianity. He was an atheist. He converted to Catholicism and he made a very interesting comment regarding this circumstance about the subject of this sermon. He said, "It is the highest and holiest of paradoxes that the man who really knows he cannot pay his debt will forever go on paying it." That is what Paul did, and that is what we need to do.

Paul was driven by obligation, and it was not an obligation that he hated. He loved it! He loved being obligated to somebody so good, so pure, and so kind. He loved being obligated to the One so expansive in His generosity that He would open up to him, a sinner and one who killed Christians, the Kingdom of God because he was forgiven. He now had access to God and he believed it.

In I Corinthians 9 this same apostle shows the way he responded.

I Corinthians 9:26-27 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly: so fight I, not as one that beats the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

That is the way Paul responded. He did not feel the law was done away. He was happy to be able to keep it. He did not feel burdened but he was obliged to do so because he loved the One that he was doing it for, to glorify Him.

In Romans he gives advice to you and me. It is simple advice but something that we should be able to understand, that we accept this obligation when we allow Christ's blood to forgive our sins.

Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! [Certainly not!] How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Why should we re-incur that debt? This is instruction to Christians.

Romans 6:13-15 Neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: But yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid.

In Romans 12 he gives us a foundation for producing the righteousness in our lives so that we

begin to accrue to us the character, the virtues of Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

To properly grasp this, one must see these two verses in the position within the book. The whole of the book of Romans preceding these verses is the doctrinal foundation and prelude to the last four chapters. These two verses serve to bridge the gap between the doctrinal foundation in the first eleven chapters, and the practical daily application in the last four chapters.

In these two verses he is essentially saying, "In light of what I have told you, preceding this, this is what you are obligated to do to serve, that is to love, Christ. First, Christians, we must operate by these two principles: You must sacrifice your whole being 24/7 to these pursuits. Second, you must yield yourselves so as not to merely be conformed to this world, but to be transformed into a new being so the benefits of this way of life are evidence to you and in you."

As we go along in chapter 12, it primarily concerns relationships within the church, but secondarily, it also applies to relationships with those *outside* the church. You can read through that on your own and you will see that the remainder of that chapter has to do with relationships. Then in chapter 13 it begins by stating our obligation to submit to civil government, to pay taxes, and to respect those who are in authority. In chapter 13 there are three or four verses that I want to read, beginning in verse 7. Here comes an obligation.

Romans 13:7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due: custom to whom custom: fear to whom fear: honor to whom honor.

In one sense this verse summarizes the preceding six verses that have to do with submitting to civil government, but it also provides a bridge to what follows it. Remember, "Render therefore to all their dues." Now look in verse 8. Here is a due.

Romans 13:8 Owe no man any thing but to love one another.

That is an obligation. He is not talking about money obligations here. He is talking about conduct. He is talking about attitude. He is talking about how to improve relations. He is talking about how to build them, and how to begin them so that they have the right foundation and that they grow in the right direction.

Romans 13:8 Owe no man anything but to love one another: for he

that loves another has fulfilled the law.

Remember, for about half way through this sermon up to here, what I am showing you is that we are obligated to Christ because He paid the penalty to love—to love Him and to love each other. Are we like the Ephesians who left their first love? Is that why we have relationship problems within the church? Is this why some are so touchy, and others do not care what they say or how they say it, or what they do, or whatever? How do we accept offense against us? How often are we the contributor of offense?

In verse 9 he starts going through some of the commandments, showing that these things are *not* expressions of love.

Romans 13:9-10 For this, You shall not commit adultery. [That is good if you do not.] You shall not kill. [That is good if you do not.] You shall not steal. [That is good if you do not.] You shall not bear false witness. [That is good if you do not.] You shall not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

This summary statement (actually from verses 8 through 10) captures the breadth of our obligation, and then the remainder of the chapter is an exhortation to not let down! Sustain it! How are we going to sustain it? Well, for the subject of this sermon, one is to keep alive the intensity of feeling how much we owe Him.

What Paul has done in verses 8-10 is extending and intensifying the concept of obligation, and we must be more scrupulous within the limits of the customary concept of indebtedness and we must infinitely widen the range within which they operate.

Now was it not our failure to meet our obligations to God and man that accrued the unpayable debt in the first place? Now that the debt has been paid, we are under obligation not only to strive not to fall into the same trap, but to expand and perfect the giving of love. The paradox here is more apparent than real, because love is not merely one's duty added to others, but is the inclusive framework within which all duties should be performed. Think on that for a while. It is the motivating power that frees us and enables us to do services and sacrifices not with a sense of resignation, but with largeness of heart and generosity of spirit.

As long as we are viewing love as merely the keeping of God's law, we are stuck on a low level "letter of the law" approach to righteousness. Do not get me wrong. That most assuredly is a vital and necessary aspect of love, but that is not all there is to love. That level of love can be maintained merely as one of compulsion. It can be done in *anonly because God says so* attitude, or "I must love this person, but I do not have to like him." Now that will suffice for a while, but by drawing upon Christ's teaching here, Paul is giving an entirely new significance to the concept of obligation.

Consider again the fallen woman who washed Christ's feet with her tears, wiped them with her

hair, kissed His feet with her lips, and anointed them with her oil. Was her love merely to keep a commandment or was it one of the most exquisite expressions in biblical history of a heart free to give all? *There* is love. That is an aspect of love that we have a hard time with.

The book of I Corinthians is a tragic story of gluttony, drunkenness, class distinction, and party spirit all within the framework of the love feast of a Christian congregation. Now why were some guilty of these sins? Is it because they did not really love their brother? To what then did Paul reference them to correct their abominable behavior?

I Corinthians 11:17-29 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that you come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you: and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one takes before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise you the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: This is My body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

What is the answer to the question I asked you? What kind of an answer did Paul give these people who were guilty of these sins of gluttony and drunkenness and so forth? The Passover service is what he turned to and with it Christ's death. Christ's death is the supreme example of unselfish and sacrificial service in behalf of the guilty who did not deserve it. It is *THE* extreme example of love.

John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The Father and the Son freely gave of themselves out of the beneficent goodwill for the sake of our well-being. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. He did not wait for us to become good. And so for those of us still in the flesh, this beneficent goodwill has a foundation from which it can begin to be exercised when we are able to make a true evaluation of ourselves in relation to God, when

we can properly judge ourselves in terms of what we are in relation to what was paid, freely given, and sacrificed that we might be forgiven and eventually be given eternal life.

Let us go back to the book of Job. Job was another respectable man.

Job 42:5-6 I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees you. Wherefore I abhor [hate] myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Though Job was one of the most upright of men, all his life he held a wrong evaluation of himself in relation to God and other men. So when God allowed him to see himself, he was devastated. His vanity was crushed and he repented. *NOW* he was ready to love.

I Corinthians 11:24-25 And when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, Take eat: This is My body which is broken for you: This do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

I am going to change, alter, "in remembrance of me," because it more literally can be translated into English, "Do this for *remembering* Me," or "Do this in case you have forgotten." And so we do it every year to remind us of the debt that we are obligated to do all we can to repay even though He has already paid it, just like G. K. Chesterton said.

God does not want to let this sacrifice ever get very far from our minds. It is not that He wants maudlin sentimentality from us; rather He wants to come to our mind often what His sacrifice represents, and that is the measure of His love and our worth to Him; that we might always carry with us this sense of obligation, not as an overbearing burden, but a wondering awe that He would pay so much for something so utterly defiled.

It is not merely the personality Jesus that we are admonished to remember, it is the sum, the whole package, of His connection to the Old Testament Passover, His violent bloody death for the remission of the sins of mankind, the sacrificial connection to the New Covenant, and who He was—our sinless Creator. It is *this* which becomes the foundation of all loving relationships possible for us with God because it gives us reason to hope that our lives are not being spent in vain. It motivates us to do what we failed to do and got us into debt in the first place: the failure to love.

He goes on to tell us in verse 29 that to eat or drink in an unworthy manner is to treat His sacrifice with disrespect, or better still, to treat it without due appreciation as shown by our life. It means that the person who does this is not showing much love in his life because he has not seen his sins and taking them to God for forgiveness. That person is not really free to love because he is still wrapped up in himself.

When we take the Passover this year, let us strive to remember that our fellowship at that special time is first with Him and that those others who are there to participate in the service

are at that time only incidental to our relationship with Christ. The Passover is not an hour of instruction, though some things are undoubtedly learned. It is a communion. It is a fellowship in which we are to be "at one" with the One who died for us. It is an act within the framework of a ritual, and if we are in the right spirit of devotion, we are in the very closest possible relationship with our Savior. He is not only the Host and the Giver of the feast. He is the feast itself. He *is* the peace offering and any other food or fellowship for that service is at least a distraction from the intended communion with God. I will prove this to you in John 6.

John 6:53-57 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoso eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me.

Brethren, what a Savior! What a sacrifice! What an example! What a purchase price to be obligated to! Nothing better could ever happen to us in our life because of what it erases and what it opens up to us. It erases death, and it opens up life.

Passover is intended by God to teach us these things so that we can begin each year by once again getting turned about from where we have deviated to in our understanding and application, and getting us jump-started once again in the right direction with the right attitude, with the right understanding.

Brethren, the world does not revolve around us. That is the point. It revolves around the Father in heaven and His Messiah—our Creator, our Savior, our Redeemer. As we approach this Passover season, let us cry out to God for a better understanding of what we are, and what Christ's and did for us so that we might be filled with an awesome sense of our indebtedness and our obligation.