

Romans 8:12-17

12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh 13 for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ — if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him (NRSV).

This week I was feeling a bit sentimental and was reflecting on the existing human need within our community and was thinking about how limited we are in our ability to help. On our end, there is an imbalance, as the need exceeds our resources. That is because in our society, the resources exceed the need, but is not shared by those who control those resources. As I was thinking about that I got a sense of great pride. I am not only glad to be here, I am proud to be here. This ministry is full of love, on track with the gospel message, and following the teaching of Jesus. Yours is a generous spirit. You serve the Lord through your worshiping experience and by serving others.

The Apostle Paul wrote to Rome in order to establish a relationship with the people that he planned to visit. He address the Christians there as brothers and sisters. He identifies them, and all Christians, as siblings that are children of God. We are in God's debt for saving us. As God's children we live by the Spirit of God. We live in a world that lives in the flesh.

The main point that the Apostle Paul makes is our debt. What the Lord has done for us we can never repay. The Lord only asks us to make an effort. Let the Lord set your goals in life. Instead of more for the self, offer the self for more. That is what Jesus did and that is who we claim to follow. We live by the spirit because of our gratitude for the release of the tremendous debt that we owe. We can't help but appreciate the forgiveness of a debt that was so huge we were unable to pay for it. God's love is so great that God made the payment for us. The children of God are led by the Spirit of God. We live in the spirit the spirit lives in us. The nature of the spirit is not slavery or forced compliance. The nature of the spirit is not fear of punishment as a consequence of choice. The nature of spirit is love, compassion, kindness, and empathy. The children of God are joint heirs with Christ.

I'm sure you have heard the *pay it forward* concept. Well, what Jesus has done for us, we need to pay it forward. Acts of kindness can never be paid forward enough. It is easy to pay it forward in the checkout line and the person in front of you is a little short. Many of us have done the so, we do it on many different occasions without credit or the desire for praise. This illustrates our devotion to pass on kindness and the spirit behind it.

I read a story about a person that went grocery shopping and was short four dollars and the man in line behind paid it. No name was given. The paper ran article about a local charity that received a four dollar check "For the man who helped me." This is a good human interest story. People praise it and talk about it. There are two people in the story. The man helped when he saw the need. It was a reflex response based on faith. He helped without wanting any credit. He valued the person more than the money. Jesus

teaches us to love people not money. The woman that needed help released back what was already given to her. Her investment into the care of humanity is zero. The man gave out of generosity; the woman gave due to debt. We all owe the debt. We all need to pay back that debt. However, the real lesson is one of compassion and generosity. Help when you see the need and love when you see the hate.

There was an article in *The Secret Place* about a girl named Amber that went on a mission trip. When she got off the back of the truck, she took her shoes off and a little girl came up to her said "This one fits, where's the other?" Amber held her other shoe in her hand. The girl saw it and asked "Can I have that shoe?" Amber expected to give away clothing to help the needy on this missionary trip. She did not expect to give away her own clothing. She looked at the girl and notices she was dirty, and wore clothing of rags. Amber said "Yes, let me help you put it on." You experience God's love through your own sacrifice. God sacrificed God's own son for us, what do we sacrifice for God?

Christian living includes movement towards the goal of the end result. Several eyewitnesses saw and heard Jesus and they confessed their testimonies to others. These people, in turn, confessed what they learned from the eyewitnesses and passed down what they learned through the generations. When we look at the generations some have suffered and died for the faith. But when it comes to our own suffering, we have sacrificed little compared to those that were flogged, beaten, imprisoned, enslaved, and killed in order for the gospel message to be available for us here today.

Compare what you do for Jesus with what Jesus did for you. When you focus on Christ everything else becomes clear. We can never repay God what we owe. This does not mean that we do not owe God and effort. We can pay on the debt. We can love God's people and show acts of grace, mercy, and justice. We are in debt for everything. Our response should correlate according to our debt. As children of God we are joint heirs with Christ. We are to look, act, behave, think, and love according to our heritage as children of God.