

PAUL'S GREAT I.O.U. TO THE WORLD

[Romans 1:14](#) "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians, both to the wise, and to the unwise."

We seem to be surrounded by an ocean of debts and we often wonder whether they will ever be paid. Our government has greater debts than ever before in our history, our churches are deeply indebted, our families have many bills to pay.

The debts we owe to our parents, and especially those we owe to God for creation and salvation, can never be repaid.



Debts, like the poor, we have always had with us. In [Matthew 18](#) we learn of a servant who owed his king the staggering sum of ten thousand talents, but the king forgave him the entire debt. The same servant found a fellow man who owed him a small debt, and because he could not immediately repay, he had him thrown into prison. This story illustrates what Jesus meant in the Lord's Prayer by, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," (Matt.6) .

Paul, in our text, speaks of another debt which he owes, an unusual and different kind of a debt. What does he mean?

PAUL'S GREAT I.O.U. TO THE WORLD

1. A DIFFERENT KIND OF A DEBT

"I am debtor," says Paul. But it is not a debt of real estate, or of services rendered, or of education. Nor does he have social or political debts in mind. What then does the Apostle mean? What can he give or

bring to Rome, the richest and most glorious city of his day? Paul is writing to people whom he has never seen, and yet he tells them that he owes them something. Paul is a Hebrew, writing in Greek, to Latin people, which shows that what Paul has, is for all the world, and for all people. The Apostle has a heart full of mercy and love for the lost world and he is anxious to tell them how God loved the world and gave His Son to die on the cross so that all men can be saved by faith in the Savior. Paul feels deeply obligated to preach this Gospel to them by virtue of his call by Jesus to be the apostle to the Gentiles. "I.O.U. the Gospel because I love you and because Jesus loves you and died for all of you," are his thoughts in our text.

It is true, there is a difference between Paul and us in this respect for he was called directly by Jesus to be an apostle to the Gentiles and he felt a personal obligation toward them. But we also owe the world the gospel by virtue of the command and instructions given us by our Lord, "Preach the gospel to every creature"—"Teach all nations"—"Go into all the world." The moment we are converted we assume the responsibility to preach the saving truth to the rest of the world. **So all of us have our own little I.O.U.s to pay, as did the Apostle Paul.**

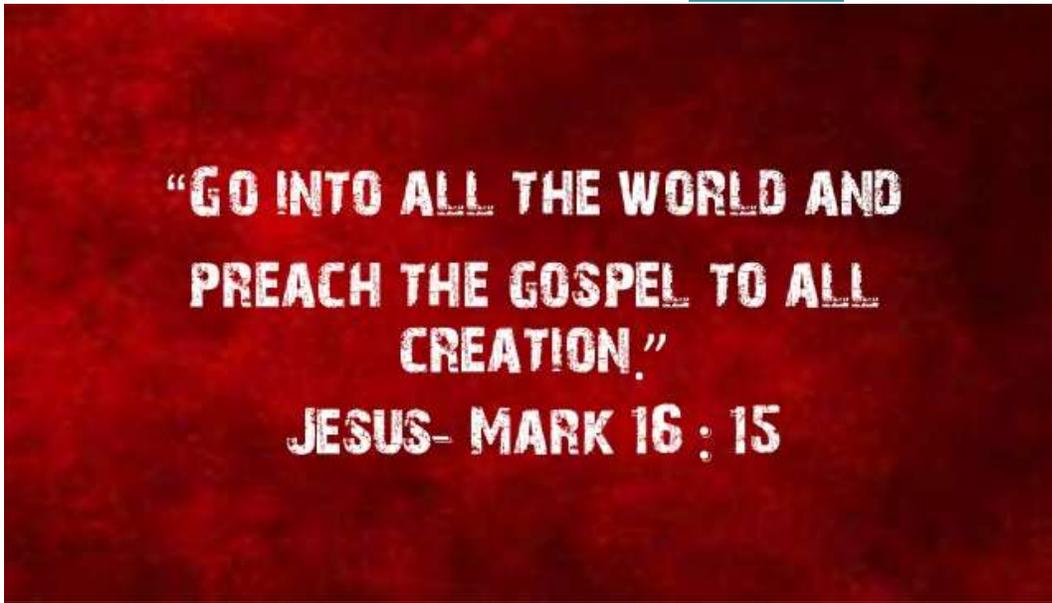
Sometimes we think we have all bills paid and then one turns up which we overlooked. Did we overlook this one, too? Remember, it is a debt which Jesus placed upon us and He expects us to assume it in all seriousness. How are we ever going to make good on this great debt? What can we do?

2. A DIFFERENT KIND OF A PAYMENT

Our text continues, "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." Paul finally arrived at the city of Rome, but as a prisoner. What could this Hebrew, coming with empty hands, give to this great city? The world has had many liberal givers and benefactors, but none can compare with Paul who carried no earthly treasures with him. Nevertheless, he had something to give which is more precious than all the gold and silver in the world, he had something which all the treasures of the world could not buy.

Paul brought eternal life with him for the Romans and the world. His treasure was the gospel which is free to all. God is not angry with us, He gave His Son to die in our stead, He paid for all sins. Heaven is free, without cost, there is nothing to pay or buy. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" ([Acts 16](#)) was the way he cancelled his debt to the world. What a gift Paul brought to the city of Rome!

The Apostle was burning with such zeal and love for Christ and the lost world that he could hardly wait to arrive in the great metropolis. When he did get there in chains he still preached to all who would listen to him. Naturally, one man could not tell everyone and be everywhere, but Paul did his utmost, and the Lord does not expect more than that. "As much as in me is," was Paul's only limitation. He was faithful in the use of his talents and gifts which the Lord had given him. "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" ([1 Cor 4:2](#)).

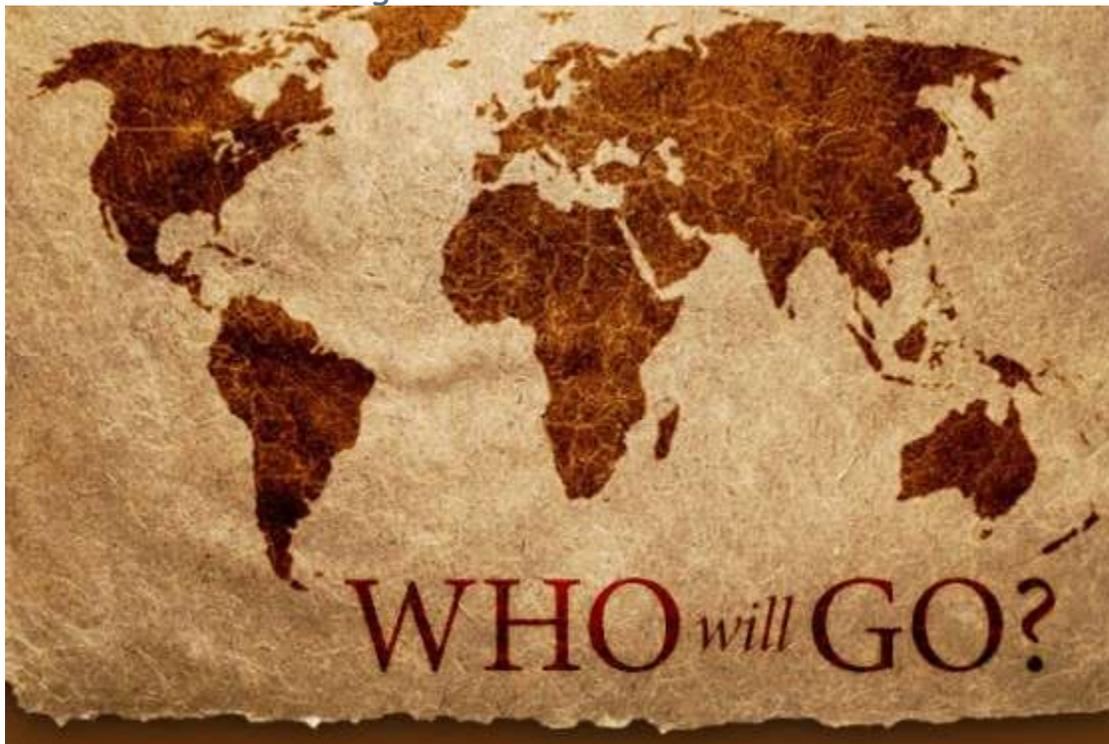


**"GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND
PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL
CREATION."
JESUS- MARK 16 : 15**

O that we had some of the zeal and love for Jesus which this energetic man had. Are we doing all in our power to spread the saving gospel throughout the world? Was it necessary for the Christians to take so long to bring the message of salvation to every nation? Just a few Pauls in every century might have accomplished the task and paid off the debt long, long ago.

Are we all taking this debt seriously? When we buy a house most of us cannot pay cash for it. Usually the cost of the house is so large and the debt so great that it takes a period of many years before we can finally burn the mortgage .

The same thing holds true for the huge mission debt which we owe to the world and our Savior. Like a house, this large debt cannot be wiped out at once, it will take many years to do so. The only way it can be done is to make regular installments every week in our mission envelopes. The debt will not be paid with miserably small installments, but only with honest and liberal payments. We fear that many of our church members are actually preventing missionaries from going to far away places because they contribute little or nothing for the work of missions. And we must continue to pay off on our mission debt all the days of our lives. It is a privilege and an honor for us that the Lord entrusts us with this great and blessed work.



One of the best ways to pay off our mission debt is by prayer. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest, "[\(Matt 9:38\)](#). Daily we pray, "Thy kingdom come."

Personal mission work in our community is still another way to please the Savior and help pay off our I.O.U.s. Are there no more neighbors to invite to come to worship with us? Are there no more children to be gained for Jesus?

We can reach out into the world the farthest through our Synod and the Church at large with its far-flung mission fields. Let us gladly support this mission program with our prayers and our gifts.

God, for Jesus' sake, is willing to forgive all our debts of sin and remember them no more, but He is not willing to cancel this debt of love which we owe the lost people throughout the world. Brethren, if we feel our obligations, if we love our Savior, if we have any love for lost souls, then we will do all in our power, as Paul did, to pay our I.O.U. to the world. To this end, help us, dear Lord. AMEN.

PRAYER. O heavenly Father, as Thou dost daily forgive all our debts for Jesus' sake, help us by Thy Holy Spirit to forgive all who are indebted to us. By the same Spirit give us some of Paul's zeal and love for lost souls that we may strive with greater might to bring the Gospel unto the ends of the earth. Hear us, for the glory of our Savior Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. AMEN.