

“Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God’s law. Romans 13:8 NLT

lectio // Romans 13:1-7

You owe me. No, really, as a believer and follower of Jesus, YOU OWE ME! And....I owe you. The Apostle Paul spends a few passages writing about authority and governmental accountability as well as paying taxes, writing “pay your taxes...government workers deserve to get paid!” Whoa. Then Paul uses the “debt” theme to challenge the churches of Rome. What a brilliant conversation about money management the meanders into soul care of another. Don’t be in debt to someone, oh - unless is the debt of love due to each other because of the mercy of God and the way the kingdom of God does transactional relationships. Normally, we are NOT called to be transactional, we are called to be transformational. We give to give, not to get. However, Paul reveals a critical exception - LOVE. It’s not that we give love to get love, but we are already in debt to our brothers and sisters in Christ because of the enormous sacrifice that Jesus paid for our sin and the redemption of all our relationships. When we say “yes” to Jesus we became stewards of this enormous gift (debt) called LOVE. So much so, that Paul equates it to fulfilling all the requirements of the law! That’s a lot of love. So, you owe me... and I owe you - love. I can get out of deep, dark debt by loving you, by loving my neighbor. I have done some horrible, evil things in my life, but those debts (that must be paid) can be adjudicated (judged) in God’s eyes by love? As a believer in Christ, who has come to God through faith and not works, I can love as Jesus loved and fulfill the old covenant. But, get this, I don’t love you or my neighbor to work off my debt anyways. I don’t do it to fulfill the requirements of the law. I do it because it is a joy to love. I do it because God first loved me. I do it because God is love and when I behave like him I see the world as he sees it. I see humans as he sees humans. I love owing you love! Do you see how hard it is to hate you, gossip about you, wish bad things on you, hold back forgiveness from you and want to see you fail when I am in your debt to love you? For love to COVER a multitude of sin, it seems that it pays the debt owed because of sin.

Dad,

I am reminded how good it feels to pay off a debt. Whether it’s a school loan, a credit card or lunch with a friend who pays, it’s such a weight lifted off my shoulders when it’s over. I have never felt the oppression of this debt of love, but always have been excited about the opportunity to give. I feel MOST like you when I give. Thank you for loving me and showing me how much I love the obligation of loving others.