

“You Shouldn't Have”

A number of times in my life, I have received a gift from someone I never really expected one from. I have also given gifts to others or done things for others just because I wanted to, not because I owed them anything. Invariably their response is “you shouldn't have.” I say the same thing when I get an unexpected gift. It's part of our nature.

When someone has done something for me, I often feel I owe them a debt and need to repay that debt by reciprocating—doing something for them. I “pay them back” for the gift or favor they have done for me. Somehow that makes me feel better—I don't owe them anything.

Grace has been described all of my life as “God's unmerited favor.” God looks us in a positive way, something we certainly don't deserve and can't earn. We are all sinners, **Romans 3:23** tells us, and undeserving of God's grace. But in spite of that, God gave us the gift of His Son so that He could die and cleanse us of the sin that had alienated us from our Father. He didn't have to. He didn't owe us anything. We deserved death, He gave us life. Why? Because He wanted to. Paul says in **Romans 5:6-8**:

“You see, at just the right time, when we were powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

“You shouldn't have!” we would tell God, and we'd be right. He really shouldn't have. But He did because he wanted to. Peter explains it this way in **2 Peter 3:9**:

“(God) is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

God didn't HAVE to sacrifice His Son for us, He WANTED to. Because of His love and grace, He gave us forgiveness through the gift of his Son.

We do owe Him something in exchange for His gift. His gift demands reciprocation. Although we can't possibly pay Him back for what He did for us, we can give of ourselves to others. Although we may think they may be undeserving, Jesus says in **Luke 6:35** to “do good” to our enemies. Paul tells us in **Galatians 6:10** that we are to take every opportunity to “do good” to others. In **Ephesians 2:10**, Paul

tells us that the reason we are here on this earth is to "do good works." God is pleased, the Hebrew writer says in **Hebrews 13:16**, when we "do good" and "share with others." That sharing includes telling them of the undeserved gift of salvation.

"He paid a debt He did not owe, I owed a debt I could not pay" Now that He had paid our debt, we owe Him a life of service.