# LIVING DEBT FREE

Did you hear about the gift of Robert F. Smith, founder of Vista Equity Partners, and a self-made billionaire? He was giving the commencement address to the 396 members of the 2019 graduating class of Morehouse College. At the end of his speech he declared:

“This is my class – 2019! I and my family have decided to give a grant to eliminate the entire student loan of every graduate.” It took a moment to sink in, but suddenly everyone realized what he had just said. All 396 graduates were suddenly debt-free of all their student loans (totaling over $10,000,000).

Some of you who are still paying off student debts years after graduating from college know their feeling of joy. My, what a gift that was! Of course, any of us would be ecstatic over such a gift, right? But if you are a Christian you have been granted a far greater gift.

Ellis J. Crum put into words that feeling of ecstasy we felt when we were baptized into Christ to forgive us of our debt (Acts 2:38). He wrote:

He paid a debt He did not owe;I owed a debt I could not pay; I needed someone to wash my sins away.And, now, I sing a brand new song,“Amazing Grace.” Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.

He paid that debt at Calvary.He cleansed my soul and set me free. I’m glad that Jesus did all my sins erase.I, now, can sing a brand new song,“Amazing Grace.” Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.

One day He’s coming back for me*,* To live with Him eternally. Won’t it be glory to see Him on that day!I, then, will sing a brand new song,“Amazing Grace.”Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay. Yes, Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.

Ellis J. Crum (1977)

I love those words: He paid a debt He did not owe. I owed a debt I could not pay. That song is beautifully based on the words of Romans 6:22-23. Read it. Slowly. Thankfully. Feel the joy in being debt free.

“But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

I was drowning in debt and had no hope of relief. Suddenly, while nailed to a cross, Jesus made it possible for all men to receive a Presidential Pardon. Jesus’ parable explains how I feel so perfectly.

*23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him* ***ten thousand talents****. 25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ 27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.* (Matt. 18:23-27)

Can you picture a common servant telling a king that he could repay his IOU of millions of dollars? That’s laughable on the very surface of it. Jesus was “*moved with compassion*” to forgive me of a debt I could not pay. The estimate by some who are much smarter than me have said it would literally take thousands of years for a working-class man to pay off such a massive debt.

In my lifetime I have signed off on two 30-year mortgages. I bought a house in Texas, and one in Minnesota. Putting my signature on those documents was overwhelming, causing many sleepless nights. One was for $53,000 at 10% interest, and one was for $95,000 at 7% interest. I know, I know. Anyone looking to buy a house today would feel like they had won the lottery to have such a small payment. But at the time I signed for that debt I was making what would today be considered below the poverty level. I have lived to pay off both mortgages! The burn-the-mortgage day was ecstatic for Benita and me! “Debt Free” is the greatest feeling in the world.

While you might not ever pay off all your earthly IOU’s, the one that can be marked “Paid In Full” this very day is the greatest debt that even Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, Jeff Bezos and every other billionaire in the world combined could not pay off – the debt of your sins. But this is your lucky day. Like Robert F. Smith forgiving the student loans of all 396 graduating seniors at Morehouse College in one day, so now Jesus Christ is stepping forward to forgive all 7 billion 500 million sinners who each owe 10,000 talents in debt. Just as I cannot imagine one of those 396 graduates declining his offer of forgiveness, neither can I imagine the 7,500,000,000 sinners declining God’s offer. And yet, “many are called, few are chosen.” It’s so sad. They choose to live in debt.

“Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe.   
 Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.”

He tore up my IOU and wrote “Paid In Full.” I’m debt free! It’s the greatest feeling in the world and God is offering this “burn-the-mortgage” and “student-loan-forgiveness” to you this very moment. God loves you. Jesus died for you. Accept their offer of living debt-free.

* Rick