



Worship – Part 20
Acts of Worship – Part 8
Prayer: Forgive Us Our Debts
GCSP – 09/22/2007

Those of you, who receive the daily email devotional thoughts, know that I am currently working through a series entitled, "Money & Possessions." I got started on this series for two reasons; because I found myself to be finally ready to seek out and follow God's principles for handling the finances and material goods He allows me to be the steward over, and because in God's perfect and divine timing, I found myself face-to-face with **Proverbs 23:4-5** (the passage I was on in my devotional study through the Book of Proverbs).

The writer of this Proverb had this to say: "**Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens**" (NASB).

In the progression of following the Holy Spirit's leading through passages of Scripture that deal with money and possessions, I was drawn to the topic of debt. I know I have read these passages before several times and listened to them on tape or CD several times. I have been through a Bible study on financial concerns that has spoken of these passages, and even led others through this particular study twice. Yet through all of that, I did not see what the Spirit revealed to me this time through. Debt is a curse from God for disobedience to His Word!

Deuteronomy 28:43-45, outlines this curse God promises to His people if they choose to disobey His Word.

I was floored by this revelation, but once my eyes were opened to this truth of Scripture it made perfect sense. Jesus said to us in His Sermon on the Mount, "**You cannot serve God and mammon**" (**Matthew 6:24b** - NKJV). The word mammon is a transliterated word from the Greek because there is no single English word that can convey the full meaning of the Greek word, "*mamonas*." Most modern translations call it money, but it means money, property, wealth, possessions and everything associated with it.

When we are disobedient to God we are not serving Him. When we are not serving Him we are serving some other god or idol of our life; we are choosing to do things our own way; we have become self-sufficient, relying on our own devices and provision. We are choosing to serve mammon when we are disobedient to the Lord.

With this choice, God allows us to suffer the consequences of a life defined by serving mammon. He allows us to accumulate debt. He allows this because our master that is mammon is never satisfied. Enough is never enough for mammon and we will be driven by our master to get more and more stuff, and bigger and better houses, and shinier and more expensive cars, and fancier clothes, and more expensive gadgets and toys, and on and on. And when you can't satisfy the ever increasing hunger to have more stuff, you will borrow to temporarily appease your appetite. But it will only be a temporary satisfaction. Your new master will not let you rest and your appetite will progressively grow out of control. Debt will become a way of life.

But you won't only be accumulating a financial debt; you will also be accumulating a spiritual debt; a debt of sin; the sin of disobedience.

And this is the kind of debt I want to talk about this evening.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Matthew 6**.

As most of you know by now, we are working our way through a passage that is commonly known as the Lord's Prayer. I have been taking the time to look at each phrase of this model prayer to help us gain a better understanding of how we are to pray.

Matthew 6:9-13

"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen'" (NASB).

Let's pray.

We have already covered the proper attitude of humility that is needed in our prayers; we have gained an understanding of the fatherhood of God, and how He longs to have an intimate relationship with us our *Abba*, or daddy in the phrase, "**Our Father**"; we studied the holy and righteous God of the universe in the phrase, "**Hallowed be Thy name**"; we have seen the importance of longing for and looking forward to the coming of God's Kingdom in the phrase, "**Thy kingdom come**"; we discovered the immense aspect of desiring God's will to be accomplished and not our own in the phrase, "**Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven**"; and last week we looked at the aspects of God as the provider of all our needs in the phrase, "**Give us this day our daily bread.**"

The first three requests in this model prayer were focused on God, and rightly so. Our primary focus in prayer is to bring glory and honor to God. Our prayers must first and foremost be about God and not us. The next three requests are focused on our needs, with one being for our physical needs, which we covered last time, and the other two dealing with our spiritual needs. And our first and greatest spiritual need is forgiveness of our sins.

v. 12a

"And forgive us our debts..."

There are five Greek words that are used frequently in describing sin.

"*Hamartia*" is the most common of the five. If you went to any good Bible college you could take a course called Hamartiology, which is the study of the doctrine of sin. The root meaning of this word is "missing the mark." All sin misses the mark of complete righteousness required by the holiness of God.

"*Paraptoma*" is another Greek word used to describe sin, and it most often translated as trespass. It is the sin of slipping and falling, and results more from carelessness than from premeditated disobedience of God's Word.

"*Parabasis*" refers to stepping over the line or going beyond the limits prescribed by God. This word is often translated as transgression; it is more conscious and intentional than the other terms we have looked at so far. When you transgress you know beyond any doubt that you are engaging in sin.

"*Anomia*" means lawlessness. It is an even more intentional and flagrant sin. It is direct and open rebellion against God, His ways, and His Word. This word is usually reserved for those who have never come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

The last word is "*Opheilema*" and it is the word used by Matthew in our passage tonight. It literally means a moral or spiritual debt to God that must be paid. When ever we sin we are in

essence borrowing from God's mercy. We accumulate moral and spiritual debt when we commit sin. These debts cannot go unpaid. You cannot file for bankruptcy against your sin debt – it simply has to be paid.

For the true Christian, the ones who have confessed their sins to God, asked for forgiveness, trusted in the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead, and made Christ the Lord of their life, the ultimate sin debt has been paid in light of eternity. All of our past, present, and future sins will have absolutely no bearing on our acceptance into God's Heaven. That debt has been paid in full and will never see the light of day again for all eternity.

And tonight, if you find yourself still carrying that debt, Jesus is calling for you to allow Him the privilege of eliminating your debt as well. You can choose to carry the debt and make payment on your own, but you will have to pay the debt. Jesus still has sufficient resources to pay for all of your sins, and He is ready, willing, and able to do so if you will simply ask. But He will also allow you the choice to pay for them yourself, but please understand that the payment is eternal death and separation from God in the pits of hell.

Jesus already paid with His life and He was temporarily separated from God the Father when He was covered with the sins of the world while hanging on the cross. Jesus Himself never sinned and this fact allowed Him to be the perfect sacrifice and the complete payment for your sins and mine. When you accept His gift of life by repenting of your sins, believing in Him, and making Him the Lord of your life, your sins will be eternally paid for.

But even though all of our sins are paid for in regards to eternity, payment is still required for the sins we commit on a daily basis in another respect. And it is in this respect that Jesus speaks in our verse tonight.

"And forgive us our debts."

Sin dominates the hearts and minds of mankind. Every human being to ever walk this earth has been contaminated or infected with the fatal disease of sin. The power of sin is responsible for every disease, every illness, every disaster, and every form of evil and unhappiness the world has ever known. Misery, depression, pain, dissatisfaction, and guilt are caused by sin. Sin is the common denominator of every crime, every murder, every rape, every lie, every immoral act, every disgusting perverted thought, every ugly word, and every sorrow. It is the germ that grows into the moral and spiritual disease of which there is no cure. The ultimate effects of sin are death and damnation.

Turn with me to the Book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 13:23

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good who are accustomed to doing evil" (NASB).

In other words, the unregenerate man can will himself to do good things on a permanent basis, as easily as it is for a black man to will his skin to change color, or a spotted leopard can will his spots to go away. It's impossible.

The sad thing is mankind doesn't want a cure for this disease. **John 3:19b**, says, "...men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil" (NASB). The cure is readily available but it has been rejected by the overwhelming majority of people who have ever walked this earth. They prefer living in the filth and rotteness of sin's disease than to have the healing and purity of God's cure.

But since this model prayer is for God's redeemed children, we need to move on to what this other debt of sin means to us, and how we are to deal with it. And it is important that we understand that our continual need for forgiveness is immeasurably more important than our daily need for bread and any other physical need that we touched on last time. Sin is our greatest adversary and that makes forgiveness our greatest gift.

Theoretically, you can live the rest of your life free of sin. Practically it is absolutely impossible, but if we can live one moment full of the Holy Spirit in perfect righteousness, we can live another moment, and another, which theoretically says we can continue this process on end. But since we are in a constant battle that wages between our flesh (our sin nature) and the Holy Spirit which lives within us (**Galatians 5:17**) we will commit sin to varying degrees on a daily basis. This debt of sin will also require payment.

All of these sins we still commit, even after the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives, can be forgiven, or paid for, simply by confessing them to God. God is eager to forgive. The Father is one the edge of heaven, so to speak, ready to forgive at the exact moment we speak the words, "Father forgive me."

I have quoted **1 John 1:9** often because it is a verse written to Christians in need of daily forgiveness: "**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**" (KJV). It does not matter to God what sin you commit in this regard, He will forgive if you repent and confess it to Him. There is no grey area here. Confession equals forgiveness, period.

Now your sin may disqualify you from certain aspects of ministry, and you may still suffer the consequences of your actions, but forgiveness is available any and every time you fall.

To use a recent example, Pastor Ted Haggard is absolutely and completely forgiven if he has confessed his sin before God, but the magnitude and public nature of his sin disqualifies him from ever being the pastor of a church again. Some church may ignore the Bible's mandate and call him to be their pastor some day, and Mr. Haggard may accept the position as others in his shoes have done in the past, but in God's eyes the man is no longer qualified and his ministry will never be what it could have been if he had not sinned in this way.

So what happens if a genuine Christian does not confess his or her sins? The debt of sin still exists. The consequences of that sin still exists. The only difference is that the disease of sin is now left to grow and infect and contaminate and pollute your soul and your body; and it will affect those around you and it will greatly affect the ministry of your church.

Unconfessed sin is the primary reason that churches across this world are by and large ineffective and powerless.

On a personal level, unconfessed sin blocks the blessing of God in your life. You will in essence be attempting to pay for the sin yourself, unsuccessfully, by living your life apart from God's blessing and provision; and this circles back to my opening remarks concerning God's promise of the curse of physical debt for those who disobey His Word.

On a side note, just because you have debt it does not mean you are necessarily being cursed by God. God does not forbid borrowing money; He just strongly warns us about the perils of indebtedness and He cautions us to stay as debt-free as possible. But I would guess many Christians are suffering this curse of God to one degree or another because God's blessing and abundant provision is being withheld due to unconfessed sin.

Peter tells us in **1 Peter 3:7** that if a husband has the unconfessed sin of not treating his wife as God's Word commands, his prayers will not be heard.

David says in **Psalm 66:18**, **"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"** (KJV).

Proverbs 28:13a, says, **"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper"** (NASB). The converse of this Proverb is that if you confess your sin and live a righteous life you will prosper – you will not have the curse of debt upon you.

The surest antidote of the horrific effects of the disease of sin is the disciplined practice of consistently and constantly rooting out sin in your life; baring your soul before the Lord and confessing the sin at the exact moment you are made aware of it.

We must submit ourselves to spiritual surgery on a daily basis to make sure our lives are free of the cancerous effects of sin.

Turn with me to the Book of **Hebrews** as we close this evening.

Hebrews 4:12-16

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (NASB).

One of these days I am going to spend a month on this passage alone, but for now just grasp the significance of what the writer of Hebrews has said to us in how it relates to our discussion tonight.

He speaks of how the Word of God is the sin detector in our lives. It penetrates to the deepest level of our soul and it exposes and lays bare our sin before our very eyes. Sin is like a hidden tumor buried deep within your body. The Word of God is like the skilled surgeon with the most advanced equipment that can find and root out even the most minuscule tumor. And then we are to come boldly before God's throne of grace for He is the only One who can eliminate that tumor before it grows and spreads.

Beloved, if you found out tonight that you had a very small cancerous tumor within you, would you put it on your to-do list to someday stop by the doctor's office when you can find the time? Or would you drive down to the hospital immediately to get the necessary surgery and treatment started right away?

If we are going to see this church grow, if you want to see what your life could be like totally sold out for God, if you want to experience the infinite power of God in your life, if you want to have the blessings of God poured out on your life like the waters of Niagara, and experience unspeakable joy, then you must, you must, you must take seriously this issue of unconfessed sin.

Let's pray.