

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Theme: Forgive Us Our Debts.

Sadly, there have been many deadly diseases throughout history. People through the ages were able to identify and diagnose them - but were not able to treat them. On the discovery of antibiotics, many people felt a new era of perfectly healthy lives was possible. Antibiotics have been overused and now there are deadly diseases which are becoming more resistant to antibiotics and scientists are wondering what the future will hold. Scientists are seriously looking for ways to once and for all deal with such deadly diseases.

It is said that Christianity is the only world religion that takes sin seriously. Because of that people have said that Christianity is pessimistic. Yet Christians are to take sin seriously because the Bible says that we are to - for our God and our Saviour regard sin as serious. Sin is **the** incurable “disease” that is destroying all mankind, no person has an answer to it or a cure for it. Society will try and treat its symptoms by legislating against it, by redefining things as normal and acceptable. Our society does this and they disparage Christians and Christianity as being hopeless and pessimistic. Yet we are not, for we know the only remedy for the devastating and deadly thing sin is.

We are carrying on looking at the petitions in the Lord’s Prayer. We’ve seen that the first three petitions are bound together, not only as they concern God, but also by the phrase “*on earth as it is in heaven*”. The second set of 3 petitions are also bound together, intertwined, but by the phrase “*Give us today*”. Regrettably the NIV obscures, removes the connection by omitting the word “*and*” (which is present in the original) at the start of this 5th petition, but then correctly includes it at the start of the 6th petition. We are to ask our Provision for **today**, God’s Pardon for **today** and His Protection for **today**. All three of these are necessary for us on a day by day

basis and should be included in our deliberate and conscious praying each day.

It is important to note in this model prayer that there is just **one** petition for our material needs, but two petitions for our souls' needs. We need to remember this, for we can be so over concerned for our material welfare and neglect our spiritual welfare needs. The well-being and excellency of our souls should be uppermost in our minds and hearts and must have the pre-eminence over our physical needs. The Puritan writer Thomas Watson wrote of two reasons why this should be so - the soul is an immaterial substance more precious than the body and it is immortal and therefore never ends. Have we realised that about our own soul? Or do we focus on the here and now where we have a limited best by date and certainly have an end date? Shouldn't we pay a lot more attention to our eternal soul and its well-being? In dealing with this petition I'm going to do so looking at three areas:

1. The Timeliness of This Petition
2. The Timelessness of This Petition.
3. The Time It Takes to Pray This Petition.

Let's start to look at these 3 areas and consider only the 1st one today:

1. The Timeliness of This Petition.

Remarkably this is placed after the petition regarding our material needs. We might have felt that this one should have been before the 4th petition. We are to realise there is a right and proper place to pray for our physical needs. The Lord Jesus follows the right petition for our daily bread - our provision, with this for the forgiveness of sins - our pardon. Surely here the Lord Jesus is showing us that even when our physical, mental, emotional needs are met and satisfied, we still have a greater need. We can have all and yet **have nothing** if we do not know God's forgiveness. The Lord Jesus asks the

question in Matthew 16:26 *“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?”* Imagine a condemned man and he is about to be executed and yet a special courier comes and delivers a letter, he opens it with trembling hands and discovers he has just won the lottery of £200 million - he would be so disappointed as he longed for a letter of pardon or reprieve!

While it is right and important to pray for our daily bread, our material needs, it is **far more** important we pray this petition for pardon from God and know its reality in our lives. I feel the Lord Jesus puts this petition here to remind us that we are more than just animals, that we have more than just a physical, emotional and mental existence, but we have an eternal spirit or soul, something within us which is far more precious than our bodies. The Puritans would describe the body as a glorious jewel casket, so wonderful and glorious and yet the eternal jewel of our soul it contains is far more wonderful and glorious. Our daily bread may let us live comfortably, but forgiveness of sins will let us die comfortably as well as enable us to live at peace. Note 2 things:

A. Our Bankrupt Condition.

The Lord Jesus here speaks of us having debts. What He refers to is the wrong things we think, desire, say and do against God’s glory and holy standards. The Bible word that summarises all these things is “sin”. At this point someone may want to switch off as they feel I am having a downer against everyone’s enjoyment and happiness. We wouldn’t switch off if a doctor was telling us about the disease or illness we had and the cure available. The Bible presents sin and sins in various ways - as breaking God’s law, deviations from God’s ways, shortcomings of God’s standard, rebellion, pollution, missing the target. Here the Lord Jesus deals with our sins as debts.

Mankind was made to live for God and His glory and to do so with tireless love and loyalty - 1st of all to God and then to other people.

We are to do so each and every day and all throughout each and every day. Regrettably, we fail to do so and because of this we fail to pay God what is rightfully His and therefore we are in debt to Him and His holy standards. There are 2 types of sin - there are **sins of omission** - where we have not done those things we really should do. Then there are **sins of commission** - doing what we should not to do. Also, we fail to give other people the duty we owe them, let alone what we should give to God.

Our debt to God is serious because as we sin, we are in debt to His justice which we cannot satisfy at all and the punishment for such is an eternal punishment in hell! Yet even in hell we will continue to sin, so will still keep on being in debt to God. The moment we are in debt to God we are totally and completely bankrupt and not only run up this debt, but we have nothing with which to pay – our good deeds do not cancel out any of our sins. Sadly, even our best efforts are spoiled and polluted by sin. In fact, the Bible shows us we were declared bankrupt in Adam when he fell in the Garden of Eden.

Yet more than that, sin is also a debt of treason for when we sin, we rebel and go against the King of Kings and His infinite majesty and person. Every sin strikes at God - sin and the sinner would not only overthrow God, but un-God Him and people would want to murder God and do away with Him and His rule. Any sin is so serious that it is an infinite debt against the infinite God.

We are to note that this petition says “*Forgive us our debts*”. We have a vast number of debts in every area of our lives - thoughts, words, desires, behaviour and all of them are against the holy God. Our debts are such against God that we cannot deny them and even if we did, God can and will certainly one day prove our debts to us. We cannot blame our debts on anyone else - our circumstances, our upbringing, our lack of opportunities or education etc. we are the

debtors and we will have to give a personal account to God and yet we have nothing to pay with as we are completely bankrupt.

We may often read of those who are in serious debt who will flee the country, or go into hiding or even in their desperation they might take their own lives. Yet with God we cannot hide or get away from Him and death will only bring us to the day of accounting the sooner. What an awful state to be in - having these debts to God, unable to pay, totally bankrupt and in this desperate state.

B. Hope Is Found.

The psalmist in Psalm 49:7-9 says *“No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him - the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough - that he should live on for ever and not see decay.”* We all know and realise that all of us will have to die and then the Bible says that we have to face God in judgement, and all our debts will have to be settled. God will not turn a blind eye to our debts because we were nice, had a hard time in life etc. God will not lower His standards, otherwise He would pollute Himself and cease to be God. Left to ourselves we have no hope and it may cause despair at the thought of meeting God and His judgement on our death.

Psalm 130v4 (NKJV) says of God *“But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.”* Isn't that great news! Yet He does not compromise His purity and holiness, but He has magnificently made a way where the payment of our debts can be made and would fully satisfy His justice. Only a creditor can remit the debt and God is one who has made a way in which He delights to forgive us our debts. We even find this declared in the OT in Micah 7:18-19 *“Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry for ever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you*

will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”

Both OT and NT declare magnificent things about God, the awesome, the Almighty, the totally holy and pure God who is so holy and pure that He cannot even look on sin. Yet He has made a way for people like us to have our debts forgiven, be accepted by Him and have homes in heaven. We cannot earn or deserve this, but the God who is full of grace and mercy has made this way possible to forgive us our debts and satisfy His justice and His holy and pure character. Why then is He to be feared if He will forgive our sins? If He has made a way for us to be forgiven and we know it, but ignore or reject such, then consider how much worse it will be for us!

The way God made for us to be forgiven focuses exclusively on the Lord Jesus - He is the only Way to God. He is the spotless, pure Son of God, who lived a perfect and sin free life. He is the righteous One. Yet on the cross of Calvary He took all our sin on Himself, He was made sin and took our punishment, in our place upon Himself on the cross. The apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians 5:17ff *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, **who reconciled us to himself through Christ** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that **God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.** And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: **Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**”* There is a way for us to be right with God, to be reconciled and all our debts against Him to be removed.

No longer will we be bankrupt in time or eternity, but we will be eternally solvent, not just solvent, but have all the riches of Christ’s

righteousness eternally credited to our account. An old chorus we used to sing in my home chapel *“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 (all day long), Christ Jesus paid the debt I could not pay.”*

C. Time to Settle Up.

Have we seen, or do we see our debt to God? God wants us to see our debts to Him and not to ignore them, but to sorrow over them, confess our debts to Him. Have we sorrowfully realised this debt and that we can do **nothing at all** to pay it? We have to realise that Jesus paid all our debt, the price we owe. He came to give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28) and gave His life as a ransom for all who believe in Him (1 Timothy 2:6). When we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, our debt is not only cancelled, but we have credited to our account in heaven and our life now all the righteousness, purity and holiness of the Lord Jesus. He paid all we owe and will ever owe and we are always in credit with God.

Perhaps for someone here, young or older, it is time to settle up with God – not by what you do or try to do, but by trusting all Jesus has done on your behalf. Do so today. If you want to know more, ask someone here and we will point you to Jesus and all He did on our and your behalf. We do not then treat sin lightly and think that because we are fine it does not matter what we do. We do not trade on God’s grace as if it is a cheap thing – it is free to us, but cost God His one and only Son and it cost Jesus dearly as He died under the punishment our sins deserved.

If we have trusted the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, as young or old as we are, whether recently or a long a time ago, then tell someone here today. If that is the case then realise we have become God’s child for ever – He makes and owns us as His. All this is involved in our conversion, being born again. There has to be a realisation of and a

sorrow for our sin, confession of our sin to God, repentance (*a turning from sin and a turning to the Lord Jesus*). The Bible teaches us that at that moment a divine transaction happens in heaven. All our sin's guilt, debt and condemnation are eternally taken away from us and we are given, credited and imputed with Christ's righteousness and legally declared forever righteous by God. At that moment we have peace with God and more importantly He is at peace with us.

We need this forgiveness of sin, our debt of sin removed from us forever. If we have life in our bodies we need pardon from God before food. No man can grant us forgiveness – I cannot, no man or woman of whatever religious order can grant it. That is why you need to go to God through the Lord Jesus directly – to own your sin, confess your sin and trust the Lord Jesus to welcome and save you. You may feel you do not need to do this because you are a nice person, religious etc. Listen, none of us are perfect – no matter how good we are and if you feel too good to do this, then you are guilty of the sin of pride straightaway and you need forgiveness! You need to go to Jesus with an awareness of your wrong and sin, do so with sorrow and He will forgive us. The Bible says that today is the day of salvation. Do not delay but call on Him while it is still today.

God willing, we will go on and look at the other 2 areas of this petition next week, but please pray it and mean it first and foremost for your own debts to God and your own life.