

Forgive Us Our Debts

Jason A. Graham: The Disciples' Prayer Series

Matthew 6:9-13 (NKJV) ⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. ¹³ And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

This prayer, taught to the Disciples by Jesus, can lead us into revelation about God and about ourselves.

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Forgive Us Our Debts

- That we all have (or in many of our cases now: we all HAD) a debt.
- That this debt can be forgiven for us rather than paid by us.
- That it must be God's will to forgive this debt or God would not have told us to ask for it.

What were we Debtors to?

Well first, what is debt? Simply put a debt is an obligation—something you owe—even if it is not monetary. For example, a person who has spent time in prison is said to have “paid their debt to society” in the currency of time.

So, what were we Debtors to? I have heard people say, and have said myself in the past, that we owed a debt to sin. I have come to realize that this is not correct. If you break the law, which is sinning, you do not owe your sin anything. For example, if you were to break the speed limit and be given a ticket, then you do not owe your act of speeding the money for the ticket—which is to say you don't owe a debt to your sin—you owe the Law. If you break the law, then you owe a debt to the Law.

We are all, when not under grace, in constant indebtedness to the law simply because we always “owe it to the law” to obey it. Obedience to the law is our obligation. So, before grace what were we debtors to specifically: The Law of Moses, which is also called the Law of Sin and Death:

Romans 8:2 (NIV) because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

- This explains to us what we owed specifically—What we would have been required to pay is Death (to the Law for our sin).
 - That is why it is called The Law of Sin and Death.
 - **Romans 7:4-13 (NIV)** ⁴ So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. ⁵ For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶ But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. ⁷ What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." ⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. ⁹ Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. ¹⁰ I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. ¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. ¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. ¹³ Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.
 - Here we understand that The Law, which in itself is Holy, was given to expose Sin. The knowledge of sin aroused evil desires in man. This bore fruit for Death, spiritual death now, and ultimately the Eternal Second Death.
 - **Revelation 21:8 (NIV)** But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."
 - That is why the Law of Moses is called the Law of Sin and Death. Not because it was sinful (the law itself is holy), but because it brought understanding of sin to us, which further exposed our inward desire to break the law and still sin, which brought spiritual death to us, and ultimately demands the Eternal Second Death from us.
 - THAT IS THE DEBT THAT WE OWED—DEATH, AND WE OWED IT TO THE LAW.
 - So, how was our Debt paid? Through the DEATH of Jesus. That is why it can simply be forgiven for us—rather than paid by us.

This is why the Bible points out that we can still be Debtors to the Law. The Law is what we owed a debt to in the first place.

Galatians 5:3 (NIV) Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

James 2:10 (NIV) For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

- These two scriptures do not speak of our requirement to keep the law, as some people interpret them.
- They speak of our Indebtedness to the Law if we try to live by it.
- We will remain Debtors to the Law as long as we attempt to live by it, and we will be guilty of breaking all of the law if we fail in one point.
- This reveals the harshness of the Law of Sin and Death.

- Praise the Lord that we do not have to live by this Law anymore.

The Year of Jubilee

Not only did Jesus tell us to ask to be Forgiven of our Debts—He paid the price and paved the way for it to happen. It is important for us to understand what Jesus proclaimed about the time in which we are now living. In telling us to ask for forgiveness of Debts, Jesus was telling us to accept what He came to do.

Luke 4:17-21 (NIV) ¹⁷The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, ²¹and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

- "The Acceptable Year of the Lord" is agreed upon by every commentary and scholar that I have read to mean "The Year of Jubilee".
 - **Deuteronomy 15:1-2 (NIV)** ¹At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. ²This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel the loan he has made to his fellow Israelite. He shall not require payment from his fellow Israelite or brother, because the Lord's time for canceling debts has been proclaimed.
 - The Year of Jubilee was a year at the end of every 7 years in which, among other things, All slaves were set free, and ALL DEBTS WERE FORGIVEN!!!
- The passage of scripture that Jesus was reading, Isaiah 61:1-2, has the phrase "and the day of vengeance of our God" after "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."
 - Jesus rolled up the scroll before reading "the day of vengeance of our God" because that time is not until later. We are in a perpetual Year of Jubilee until the Day of God's Vengeance—the time of Judgment.
- The Year of Jubilee was originally only for Israelites. The "aliens" in the land did not get their debts forgiven. Spiritually speaking, this is exactly how it is now—only those who have accepted the Sacrifice of Jesus have entered into this Kingdom and exist under this new Law of the Spirit.
 - Now we, who are Spiritually Jews or Israelites, have been forgiven of our Debt to the Law of Moses. Those who do not accept the sacrifice of Jesus are not Spiritual Israelites and are not free of their Debt to the Law.
 - **Romans 2:28-29 (NIV)** ²⁸A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.
 - Jesus was proclaiming this a Year of Jubilee for all mankind—we participate in it if we accept His sacrifice as atonement for our sins.
 - We are now the children of Abraham—Spiritual Israelites.
 - **Galatians 3:6-9 (NIV)** ⁶Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." ⁷Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. ⁸The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." ⁹So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Even now, as awesome as all of this is, WE ARE STILL UNDER LAW...

We are Now Debtors Again

The scriptures give a few different names for, and explanation of a New Law that we are under. Even in grace, we live according to the Law: The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus

Romans 8:2 (NIV) because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

1 Corinthians 9:19-21 (NIV) ¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.

Galatians 6:2 (NIV) Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

James 1:25 (NIV) But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

James 2:8 (NIV) If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.

James 2:12 (NIV) Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom,

- We will all be judged—those who do not obey the Law of Liberty (of Christ, of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus) will be judged by The Law of Sin and Death.
- Those who do obey the Law of Christ and become born again will be judged by The Law of Liberty.
- Just a few verses earlier James explains that the important factor for being judged by this Law is that we keep what He calls the “royal law”—to love our neighbors as ourselves.

1 Peter 4:17 (NIV) For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

- God’s gospel must be obeyed—it is a commandment for all men to repent.
 - **Acts 17:30 (NIV)** In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.
 - **2 Thessalonians 1:3-9 (NIV)** ³We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. ⁴ Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. ⁵ All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. ⁶ God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you ⁷ and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. ⁸ He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power
 - Once again, the Gospel requires obedience.

Matthew 5:19 (NIV) Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

- Here Jesus Himself demands obedience to the Commandments, but it is important to note that he is referring to His commandments that He is expounding on during this sermon. He said “these commandments”. This passage is what is traditionally called “The Sermon on the Mount,” and it is the sermon in which Jesus establishes His standard of Living—what is often referred to as Christianity 101 or The Constitution of Christianity.
- It is also important to know that Jesus Himself explained what the two greatest commandments of all were, and that He explains to keep these two commandments is to fulfill all of the Law of Moses and the Prophets:
 - **Matthew 22:35-40 (NIV)** ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

The Two Laws in Contrast

It is interesting to note that on the First Day that the Law of Moses—The Law of Sin and Death—was introduced that 3,000 people died.

- **Exodus 32:28 (NIV)** The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died.

On the other hand, on the First Day that The Law of Christ was proclaimed—The Gospel—3,000 received life.

- **Acts 2:36-41 (NIV)** ³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” ³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” ⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

These two laws are most clearly contrasted with one another in Romans chapters 7 and 8. Here is a portion of that passage to explain a few final things.

Romans 8:1-14 (NIV) ¹ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. ⁵ Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and

peace; ⁷ the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. ⁹ You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. ¹² Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

- Ultimately we Do still have an obligation—a debt.
- This debt is fulfilled by walking after the Spirit instead of our flesh.
- So, the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, which set us free from the Law of Sin and Death, did not set us free from all obligation.
- We still have a debt to keep the Law of the Spirit, but we are—in the meantime—free from the curse of the Law of Sin and Death.
 - We can rest assured that our Sin does not automatically equal Death for us anymore—we are now under a new Law that is Spirit and Life, not Sin and Death.
- IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THIS: UNDER THIS NEW LAW WE DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO SIN.
 - Some may argue, “But we have the Right of Choice—Freewill.” And I would say that you are correct.
 - We have the Choice to Sin—WE DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO SIN.
 - The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus gives us an Obligation to walk after the Spirit and to put away the works of sinful flesh.
 - We have a debt to pay—we must walk in the Spirit while we are under the Law of the Spirit.

So, to summarize the question “How do we fulfill the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus?”

- According to the passages of scripture listed above:
 - We obey Jesus—His written words, and spoken words to us now.
 - We are told to Hear, Do, and even Teach others His ways.
 - We love our God with everything and love our neighbors as ourselves
 - We bear one another’s burdens
 - We are obedient to the Gospel
- It seems that the important thing is to Obey God and treat others with the Love of Christ—that is how we fulfill the Law of Christ. It is all based on a system of Love and Liberty—not Sin and Death.

A Final Word on the Judgment of Believers

In James 2:12 we are told to behave like those who will be judged according to the law that gives liberty. I wanted to point out some passages of scripture that address the judgment of believers by God.

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NIV) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

So, we all will appear before Christ to receive what is due to us—whether good or bad. If we have done good works, we will receive rewards in heaven; if we have done bad works we will suffer loss, but will still be saved (if we are believers):

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 (NIV) ¹⁰By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. ¹⁵If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

In my zeal to express that, in regards to salvation, no one can earn anything, I have made the statement that “the only thing we can earn is death” because “the WAGES of sin is death, but the GIFT of God is eternal life.” I’m thankful to my friend Larry Coker who pointed out to me that this statement could be confusing, because it does not address the fact that we do EARN rewards that we will receive in judgment. It had not been my intention to convey that we were not reward for good works, but rather that we could NOT EARN SALVATION through good works. No one can earn salvation or boast in himself, however scriptures make it clear that it is Christ’s intention to give rewards and honor for good works in the Millennial Kingdom.

Believers are not judged with those who go to the lake of fire.

Those whom Jesus bought with his blood have been made priests who will reign with him on the earth:

Revelation 5:9-10 (NIV) ⁹And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

They are later seen reigning with Christ along with all the martyrs, who are specifically highlighted in this scripture, but not to the exclusion of other believers, as some have incorrectly surmised:

Revelation 20:4-6 (NIV) ⁴I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

So, the saints reign with Jesus during this 1,000 year period. We have already been judged and given rewards according to the scriptures above at this point. Then AFTER the thousand years, those who are “dead” (not the saints reigning with Christ) are brought before the Great White Throne for Judgment and condemnation to the lake of fire. The believers (saints) will not be judged at this judgment. As stated in Revelation 20:6, we have been raised in the first resurrection, and the second death has no power of us.

Revelation 20:11-15 (NIV) ¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

In Summary

- We have been under the Law of Sin and Death—the Law of Moses.
 - We owed this Law a Debt
 - It could only be paid with Death
 - Jesus paid our debt with His death
- Jesus tells us to ask for freedom to the requirements of this law.
 - This is receiving God’s Grace through prayer.
- Jesus proclaimed the time we live in to be a Year of Jubilee
 - This is a time when all slaves are freed and all debts are forgiven
- Now we are under a new law—The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus
 - We are now debtors to this law
 - We owe this law a debt to walk after the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus, and to love God and our neighbors.
- Believers will be judged to receive rewards, but will not be judged with those who go to the lake of fire.