

The Debt Forgiven

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WHEN the Savior taught His disciples how to pray, He put into their mouths the words, “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12). It is clear from this that God does not hold anything against man. If He did, Christ would not have taught us to make such a request.

IT is this truth, too seldom apprehended¹, which makes the message of the Gospel “tidings of great joy to all people.” If only it were believed, it would lift every cloud that overhangs this life, and cause the hearts of men to sing for joy.

EVERY sin is committed against God. The Lamb of God bears the sin of the world. David confessed, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight” (Ps. 51:4). Men realize that they are sinful in His sight, and that there is enmity in their own hearts. They judge God by themselves, and count Him “a hard man.” It seems to them that God has nothing but stern condemnation for them, and they avoid His Word, because they fear its reproof.

BUT God is love, He feels the gap which men make between themselves and Him, and His one desire is to draw all to Himself. When Adam sinned, he sought not God, though he needed Divine help more than ever. God looked at His need, and sought out the trembling sinner, not to embitter his life with reproaches, but to bring the comforting promise of a Savior who should recover what Adam had lost, and restore all things.

EVER since that time, sinful men have thought to hide from God, as though He were pursuing them in His wrath, but it was His goodness and mercy that followed them every day of their lives. Still God sends His messengers into all the world, not to condemn, but to speak the glad tidings to every creature.

AND what is the message that the ambassadors bear? Theirs is a ministry, not of reproach, but of reconciliation. They declare that God was in Christ, reconciling sinners to Himself, “not imputing their trespasses to them,” and through them He beseeches all to be reconciled to Him. (2 Cor. 5:18–21). Since every sin is against God, if He does not impute sin, no one else can.

“NOT imputing their trespasses to them.” Truly this is a message meet to be sounded in the ears of every sinful, discouraged creature. All have wished at some time in their lives that the miserable record of the past might be blotted out, as though it had never been, and they could start afresh. This is the very thing that the Gospel brings to men. The old debt is freely forgiven. They are clear with God, and can come to Him with confidence, for all that stood between them and Him is taken out of the way. He has destroyed the

¹ Definition of apprehended: “understood”

enmity, and asks simply that men will acknowledge that He does indeed love them, and be reconciled to Him.

IF, after this, men die in their sins, it is their own fault entirely. God does not impute sin to them, but they choose to impute it to themselves by deciding to still bear it when God has set them free. It is not the sins of their lives that condemn men, but the fact that, with the chance of getting rid of the sins, they prefer to retain them. "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19).

GOD challenges all men to declare one thing which He might have done for His people that He has not done in them. (Isa. 5:4). He gives every advantage that the weakest can ask for. He declares the past to be disposed of, imputing nothing to men. In place of the sin which He takes away, He bestows His own righteousness, and imparts His own power, for the Gospel is the power of God. He takes away all the old things, and makes all things new, creating a clean heart. His angels are commissioned to minister to the heirs of salvation, and His Spirit is given without measure. He does for all exceeding abundantly above all that they can ask or think. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3).

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