

Free and Clear - Spiritual Debt Glen Elliott - August 11 & 12

DEBT

We all are in bondage to some degree. It might be like you heard on the video – bondage to various addictions like drugs or approval or sex. Some of us are in slavery to our past, our fears, our worries or our hurts. There can be more “acceptable” forms of bondage as well – success, busyness, comfort. In any case it all boils down to the fact that we all are hopelessly controlled by our selfish and self-centered ways.

Here’s a spiritual truth that applies to many, many areas of life. This concept is repeated over and over throughout scripture. When we are in debt in any form or way, we are in bondage and slaves to that master/owner. We have lost our freedom and control. The way God intended life and the way we want life to be is lost and dies if the Master is anyone other than God. Here’s the pattern:

Debt ⇔ Bondage or Slavery ⇔ Loss of Freedom and/or Death

There are many kinds of debt but there are two HUGE ones we’ll focus on the next few weeks. All of mankind faces the debt of SIN. That will be our focus today. Many of us face the second huge kind of debt - FINANCIAL debt, which we’ll look at next week.

Here’s the simplest definition of debt I found: An obligation to pay. In short: “I owe!”

We’ll unpack the idea of debt with the following four questions:

1. How do/did we get into debt?
2. Who and what do we owe?
3. What is the damage or loss (death) brought about by debt?
4. How do we get out of debt?

Let me state the obvious with a short phrase: Debt destroys. Any kind of debt has the power to ruin our lives. Debt has the power to keep us from being the people God wants us to be. Debt robs us of God’s blessing. Debt has the power to keep us from doing what we really want to do to honor God and bless others. Let this phrase be burned into our brains – Debt destroys. Debt will ALWAYS take away some level of freedom. Debt will ALWAYS limit our options. Debt will ALWAYS put us in some form of bondage. It is such a huge weapon of the evil one to destroy us we must deal with this.

SPIRITUAL DEBT

Let’s start with the issue of spiritual debt, which results in bondage and death. Paul lays the issue out succinctly in Colossians 2. He will answer the four questions about debt that I mentioned. Let’s read from the New Century Bible version, which does a very accurate job of translating technical and religious language of Paul into words we can understand.

Colossians 2:13 & 14 - The New Century Bible:

When you were spiritually dead because of your sins and because you were not free from the power of your sinful self, God made you alive with Christ, and he forgave all our sins. He canceled the debt, which listed all the rules we failed to follow. He took away that record with its rules and nailed it to the cross.

Let's answer the four questions of spiritual debt from the text:

1. How do/did we get into debt?

We are in debt because of sin. Sin is doing life our way, the way of putting ourselves first rather than God's way. We fall short of what God wants. In Colossians 2:13 Paul says we are in bondage to the power of our sinful self – our selfish self. Did you get that? We are in bondage to our destructive self. We are in debt because no matter how many or few the rules are, we have broken most of them at some time.

Take a card in the seats backs in front of you that says; "My sin...nailed to the cross." In the center, write one or more sins that you are acutely aware of. Think of sins, habits and hang-ups that keep you in bondage. Don't put your name on the card, just the name of the sin or sins that are so obvious, glaring and burdensome to you. Please do that now. Sierra Vista, you too join us. In a few minutes, I'll ask you to pass the cards down the row and we'll have usher's collect them and then we are going to nail them to the cross.

2. Who and what do we owe?

Our spiritual bank account with God is overdrawn. We have failed and failed him. We've dug ourselves into a hole with God. We owe him big time. I see it in two ways. First, our sin cost God his own Son - Jesus. I still can't fully grasp that cost. Second, from the moment we were created, we belonged to God. But in our sinful ways, we "steal" or "hijack" our lives from God to use for our own purposes. When we steal from God we must pay him back.

What actually do we owe? If we could put the cost of our sin in dollar amounts, how about something like one trillion dollars. There is no one here that could pay off that much debt. We are in deep trouble.

What do we owe? Our whole life – all the lost potential and all that we should have been and been doing for him. We owe God his Son. How can we ever re-pay all that was lost? Here's the catch and the bondage – we can NEVER repay what we threw away and cost God. It's gone and on a human level, we can't make up for not being the person God intended us to be.

3. What is the damage or loss (death) brought about by debt?

The damage and loss is huge. First, we've lost connection with God. We've lost the blessing of life as God intended it. We must now pay the consequences of our sin. Our sin has separated us from God. Separation from God results in a loss of his blessing from being in his living presence now and in the life to come.

4. How do we get out of debt?

We can never do enough good things to make up for the spiritual debt we've created. We are tempted to get "religious" to deal with our spiritual debt. Religion is trying to find or create the right rules (laws) and do the right things to fix the debt problem. That's the story of the Old Testament. God gave them the rules (laws) and religious systems to follow. They could not follow them. The problem was inside them – their heart. That's our problem. We will never be good enough on our own to fix the problem. We are in bondage to our sick self. We can't overcome the "power of the sinful self."

We have only one option to get out of this bondage. We beg for mercy. We allow God, through Jesus, to make us alive and forgive all our sins. The ONLY solution is for God to forgive our sin and cancel the debt. Jesus paid the debt for us and canceled our debt on the

cross. He erased our debt – the record of all that we owe God. It is gone – forever. It has been shredded through a spiritual shedder.

Remember what Paul said. Colossians 2:13b & 14 (TNCB) says...***he forgave all our sins. He canceled the debt, which listed all the rules we failed to follow. He took away that record with its rules and nailed it to the cross.***

Now, take the card you filled out just a few minutes ago. You can fold it if you like. Pass it to your right to the end of the row and one of our ushers will collect them. They are going to bring them forward and I'm going to read each one (Not really!). In a moment, we are going to nail them to the cross that is here on stage.

The way to get out of spiritual debt with God is to accept the gift he's offering us. We ask him to forgive the debt. When Jesus breathed his last breath he said; "It is finished." His work of canceling our debt was completed. WE ARE FREE! We are free from what others think. We are free from the stupid stuff or evil stuff of our past. We are free the negative voices around us. We can choose to be free from anything that wants to put us in bondage.

Jesus said it so simply in what we call the Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6:12. In fact I call this the Matthew 6:12 prayer:

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

You can pray that prayer now or later. But it is a debt we all MUST deal with. Jesus adds, "as we also have forgiven our debtors." IF we have really received the grace, mercy and forgiveness of God deep in our hearts – then we can't help but pass that blessing on to others who have hurt and offended us. That's the test if we've really grasped how much God has forgiven us or, in fact, cancelled this huge debt.

Choose Freedom!

- Choose to be free and clear from sin and the consequences of sin by accepting the canceled sin debt. Decide to follow Jesus. Ask God to forgive your sin through Jesus' sacrifice. Do you hear the noise of the folks nailing your sins to the cross? It is being symbolized here, but Jesus completed that 2000 years ago when he died on the cross. Decide to today to accept God's offer to cancel the debt. Choose to follow Jesus.
- God asked us to begin this journey through baptism. Baptism symbolizes our willingness to admit that our ways only creates a spiritual debt, one we can never repay. We are willing to die to our way and follow the Jesus way. We come out of the water of baptism symbolizing that we'll follow Jesus with all our heart for all our lives. If you are ready to begin the journey of life with Jesus, we invite you to go to the Connection Café right now and prepare for baptism.
- Embrace spiritual freedom
 - 1) Live in grace and reject shame – Romans 8:1 (memorize). It is pretty frustrating to God to have totally forgiven you and then you keep condemning yourself or listen to others who condemn you. You are FREE from the consequences of your sin-debt. Live like it!
 - 2) Seek relationship with the One who tells you that you are accepted and forgiven. Reject the way of religion with its rules. The rules will only tell you that you've failed and you'll focus

on your continued debt.

- Next week we move from dealing with spiritual debt to financial debt [Financial Freedom video testimonies #1]

We'll go into this more next week, but I want you to start preparing for some practical ways to get out of financial debt. It is a dangerous form of debt that is, in fact, just a manifestation or symptom of our selfish spiritual debt and sin. Here's some ways you can get free:

1) Journey to Financial Freedom seminar

When: Friday, August 24th from 6:30-10pm and Saturday, August 25th from 8am to noon

Register: Fill out the insert and go to the table or register on line (or you can just show up).

The cost is \$25.

2) Crown Orientation is Monday August 27th - 7pm

Crown is a class that will help you learn God's principles of money and help you get free from debt and free to use the resources God gave you to do what he wants you to do. You can register at the table. This orientation in Mod E is at 7pm and is required. Come and check it out. So many have been so blessed by this class.

4) Free & Clear books are available if you want to get a jump on reading about how you can be free from financial bondage. The books sell for \$12.

Communion is all about celebrating our freedom from the consequences of our sin-debt because Jesus paid it all for us. The debt is gone. We are free. Celebrate your freedom as you remember what it cost Jesus to free us.

Life Group Discussion Questions
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1. Read 1 John 1:9 together. What impresses you about this verse?
2. Read Romans 8:1. What impresses you about this verse?
3. Do you find it hard to forgive yourself? Why is it so hard to accept that gift of total forgiveness and cancellation of our sin-debt?
4. In what ways do you find yourself continuing to allow yourself, others or Satan to condemn you?
5. What have you lost or “thrown away” because of your selfish sin nature and actions?
6. If you are able, please share the sin(s), habits or hang ups that were/are so huge that it would cost Jesus the most to cancel. What did you write on the card that was nailed to the cross on the platform during the services?
7. In what ways are you tempted to follow the “religious path” to cancel your sin-debt?
8. Describe what it is like to be truly free? How does that change your relationship with others and with God?