

God's Answers ... Your Problems

"God's Answer to Your Guilt"

Matthew 6:12

- I. We're looking at the Lord's Prayer –
 - a. When I pray, I ask God questions – all kinds of questions.
 - i. I do that because I believe that God has answers.
 - ii. Everybody has answers – I just think God's answers are the best.
 - b. The Lord's Prayer is often called the "perfect prayer."
 - i. God knows that we have problems that we don't know how to solve.
 - ii. So he gave us this prayer.
 - iii. It's a perfect answer from a perfect God to all of our problems.
- II. Today we are looking at this phrase from Matthew 6:12
 - a. "Forgive us our debts"
 - b. This is God's answer to our guilt.
- III. First, we have to admit the obvious = we all have guilt.
 - a. We have things in our pasts that didn't turn out the way we intended.
 - b. There are people we've hurt and actions we've taken that were wrong.
 - c. We're all sinners.
 - i. Romans 3:23 – "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
 1. We know this; we understand it.
 2. Sin is a sports word – an archery word.
 3. And we try to lessen our guilt by saying things like, "it's like I murdered anyone."
 - ii. 1 Samuel 15:23 -- For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry."
 1. Rebellion is the same as witchcraft.
 2. Arrogance is the same as worshipping idols.
 3. Sin is sin ... not better sin or worse sin ... just sin.
- IV. Without ignoring the devastating effects that sin has on our relationship with God, other people and His creation, let's be sure we recognize that sin breeds regret.
 - a. Unless your heart is completely hard and unchangeable, sin results in regret.
 - i. You can't help but wish that things had turned out differently.
 - ii. You can't help but regret some of your decisions, some of your choices.
 - iii. At our core, we want things to go perfectly.
 1. And when it doesn't go "perfectly" – whatever perfect means ...
 2. We regret the choices and decisions that brought us to that place.
- V. And when we brood over those choices and can't let go of them, regret breeds guilt.
 - a. We go over and over stuff in our minds.
 - i. Some mistakes stay with us for a long time.
 - ii. We can remember them as though they happened yesterday – they're that fresh in our memories.
 - iii. It's that mulling and wallowing that deepens our guilt.
 - b. Guilt is a fact of life.
 - i. We really can't get away from it.
 - ii. There's no where to run.
 - iii. It's like a bad horror movie.
 1. Just as you escape one monster and stop to catch your breath.

2. Another one jumps out of the darkness and the race begins again.
3. Guilt is relentless.
- iv. And we're caught – we can't get away.
 1. All we get are brief moments of reprieve, but even those are filled with terror because we know what's coming.
 2. More mistakes, more regret, more guilt.
- v. How do we break out of this?
- VI. God says, "The only antidote for guilt is forgiveness."
 - a. When we recognize that nothing we can do will let us escape from our guilt –
 - i. We're closer to finding God's forgiveness.
 - ii. We have to admit we need the help.
 - b. The more we try, the more bound up we get; the more we prove God right – His forgiveness is what we need.
- VII. Here's how God's forgiveness works:
 - a. God forgives completely.
 - i. God's forgiveness doesn't partially cover your sin or mostly cover your sin.
 - ii. It completely removes the stain of your sin.
 - iii. Psalm 103:12 – "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."
 1. How far is that? East is from the west?
 2. In a straight line – the two ends never meet.
 3. It's gone.
 - iv. It's so gone that God doesn't even remember it.
 1. Is that because God has a bad memory?
 - a. No, it's because God chooses to forget.
 - b. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." – Hebrews 8:12.
 2. We like to go back over our sins.
 - a. That's the way our guilt holds onto us.
 - b. "God do you remember when I asked you to forgive me for this sin?"
 - c. I picture God saying, "No. Sorry, I don't remember that one."
 - d. Because God forgives completely.
 - b. God forgives instantly.
 - i. God doesn't forgive conditionally.
 1. If you perform this task, if you fulfill this duty – I'll forgive you.
 2. That doesn't produce forgiveness – that produces more guilt.
 3. It makes forgiveness something to be earned.
 4. That's not the way God works.
 - ii. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."
 - iii. It's a simple if-then statement.
 1. If - we confess.
 2. Then - God forgives.
 3. Done!
 - iv. It can't be that easy, but it is.
 1. You ask.
 2. God forgives.
 3. And God forgives instantly.
 - c. God forgives continually.

- i. God is a God of second chances.
 1. No matter how often, how frequently you mess up.
 2. God is still ready to forgive.
- ii. In 1 John 1:9 we saw that “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”
 1. We said that God forgives instantly [immediately].
 - a. There’s no delay.
 - b. When we ask, God forgives.
 2. But the verb tense here also indicates continuous action.
 - a. Not only did God forgive that one time, but God will continue to forgive.
 - b. God’s forgiveness is continuous.
- iii. Throughout the Bible, forgiveness is presented as something that can happen – right now.
 1. But also as something that can happen – at any point in the future.
 2. God forgives continually.

VIII. God doesn’t want us to live in guilt.

- a. He has better plans for us than a life ruled by regret.
- b. He’s prepared an antidote for us – forgiveness.

IX. C’mon, admit the obvious – “I’m a sinner.”

- a. You’re guilty – “But, there’s an antidote to my guilt – God’s forgiveness.”
- b. Does God forgive – “God forgives continually.”
- c. Does God forgive – “God forgives instantly.”
- d. Does God really forgive – “God forgives completely.”