

12/25/11

That Crazy Family of Yours #6 – The Biggest Bill Has Been Paid

- one of the amazing characteristics about Christmas is how frequently some particular fad catches on that ends up becoming part of the celebration of the holiday that year...
- can you think of some of the amazing Christmas fads in the past?...
- check out this video – and they show pictures first and then identify the item afterward – see how many of them you can name...

[<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpZf1poaJpc>]

- isn't it fascinating how one certain item or one outstanding event becomes part of the way we remember Christmas that particular year?...
- Christmas 2011 may be remembered for a delightful trend that has sprung up all over the country now...
 - Layaway Angels...have you heard about them?...
 - not all stores even do layaways anymore...but K-Mart does – probably some others...
 - but you can select certain items you want and the store will hold them for you while you pay a bit off each week until you pay them off completely and take them home...
 - and you might say – well, that's what I use my credit card for...that's a totally different discussion but this service is available many times for people who don't have credit...or who have fallen on hard times and maxed out their credit...
 - but they lay some things away especially this time of year for their children hoping they'll be able to work some overtime or something will come through so they can have something for their children at Christmas...
 - and the way the programs generally work...if you don't pay them off by a certain time, the items go back on the shelf so they can be sold to someone else...
 - well, this year...people are walking into stores and offering to pay off the layaway bills anonymously for complete strangers...
 - then the stores have the happy privilege of calling their customers and telling them to come on in and get their items because the bill has been paid...
- can you imagine how that would impact you if you were just trying to make ends meet...or you had lost your job and were trying to figure out what you were going to do for your kids...and you get the news that a complete stranger paid your bill?...how cool is that?...
- has anything like that ever happened to you?...
 - and what if – it wasn't from a complete stranger – but it was someone who knew you intimately...not just on the outside, but on the inside...
 - someone who knew all your thoughts, and all your desires, and all your everything...
 - anyone want to argue about whether you've been naughty or nice if we're talking about an analysis that includes the inner man?...
 - what if someone knew you intimately...and also this...what if the bill turned out to be incredibly larger than you had ever imagined...
 - and what if...someone was willing to pay that bill for you anyway?...
 - would that make it a merry Christmas or what?...
 - with that in mind, please open your Bible to Colossians chapter 2...page 157 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- this morning we're finishing up a series we've been doing entitled **That Crazy Family of Yours...**

- So far we've talked about:

- Tis the Season for OCD
- Loving Your Outlaws
- Too Much Sugar, Too Many Presents
- Fixing Your Focus
- Christmas has Always Been Crazy

- this morning we want to conclude by studying the wonderful news that **The Biggest Bill Has Been Paid**

- let's read beginning at Colossians 2:1 – read 2:1-15

- what a tremendous passage of Scripture and I'd like us to organize our thoughts this morning around these three ideas...

I. The Significance of the Bill

II. The Sufficiency of the Payment

III. The Sweetness of the Victory

I. The Significance of the Bill

- Paul uses terminology in this passage that is very important for all of us to understand...
- because something far worse than having an item on layaway that you can't afford to redeem is having an outstanding bill at the store that you didn't even realize you had...or you didn't realize how large the bill had actually become...
- did you see how Paul described it?...

A. Dead in your transgressions.

- **transgressions** is the Greek word **paraptwmata** – para means beyond...
- that's what sin is – to step over the line...to go beyond what God has commanded...to cross the line He has established...
- and the passage says – not only that we do that...but we were dead in that condition...
- think about that – crossed over the line of disobedience and unable to return...
- Grammarians call that a locative of sphere – living in the sphere or realm of spiritual death...being completely unable to know or please God on our own...
- the reason I'm stressing that this morning is that we will have men and women attend our services today, or maybe who have attended for some time...
 - and they would refer to themselves as "10 commandment Christians"...which is a terrible phrase by the way...
 - and even if someone hasn't actually used those words...that's the way they think about themselves...
 - my relationship with God is based on me being a pretty good person...
 - I try to be kind to others...I try to do the right thing...
 - I try to obey the ten commandments and let's even throw in the golden rule...
 - or I'm better than a lot of the people I know around me...
 - and all of the various versions of that is the belief that we earn our way to heaven by our good deeds...
 - or that God grades on a curve...
 - or that He's going to have some kind of heavenly scales...
- the problem with all of that is that it fails to recognize the enormity of the bill...and cancels the need for an event like Christmas...

- if we could have earned our way to heaven on our own—Jesus would have skipped the whole “baby in a manger” step – and just stayed in heaven and yelled down to us – be really good...because I know when you’re sleeping, and I know when you’re awake...I know when you’ve been bad or good so be good for goodness sake...
- in other words – stay off the naughty list...
- and Paul would say – excuse me – but because the standard is God’s perfect holiness...you were born on the naughty list...in and of yourself you will always be on the naughty list...and (locative of sphere)...not only do you transgress...you are dead in your transgressions...
- That is one really big bill...
- but it doesn’t stop there...Paul also says that we were...v. 13 – **dead in...the uncircumcision of your flesh...**
- you say, what does that mean?...

B. Outside the covenant community.

- that’s why it’s so sad to hear people say things like – well, I’ve always been a Christian...
- we’re all God’s children...
- that’s like the person who filled the back room of K-Mart with layaway items and then goes through life as if there’s no bill to pay...
- friend, if the Word of God is going to be our guide...the significance of our debt cannot be overstated...
- that’s why Paul goes on to say in verse 13...that we are in...

C. Possession of a certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us.

- what is that?

1. its meaning

- **cheirographos** – “**something written with the hand, an autograph**”
- in Bible times a debtor was sometimes required to write out the nature of his debt in his own hand so there was no question about what he owed...
- that is the impact that the OT law was always intended to have on us...not as a guide so we can earn our way to heaven...
- but as a revelation of the Holy character of God and a simultaneous revealer of the sinfulness of man...
- as we continued to transgress the law and realize the depth of our need...
- that’s why Paul told the **Galatians...Galatians 3:24 - Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.**
- God’s Word is a schoolmaster in the sense that it brings us to a place of realizing—we could never keep this on our own...the bill of our sinfulness is far too high...
- and notice...

2. its effect.

- v. 14 – **which was hostile toward us**
- that’s speaking about our conscience...and about how it smites us and reminds us of our failures...
- **Galatians 3:10 - For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.”**
- and the point of all of this is that the bill that has been generated by our own sin is absolutely enormous...and until a person is willing to look at him or herself in the mirror and say – yes, I acknowledge that is true – Christmas will make very little sense at all...
- that, by the way, explains a lot of what this church does...

- and I'm so glad for the many men and women who have served in CFE...
- who have served in the LN...
- or the Christmas Eve Services...
- New Year's Eve spectacular...
- made a commitment to Faith West...
- participate in the hundreds of regular ministries of our church...
- why, because we are all about proclaiming the gospel...the belief that there truly is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned...
- if there wasn't a bill that someday will have to be faced by every person living in this community some day, we could dial down our activity for sure...

- and you might say – well, you act like there's some sense of urgency about all of this...
- there is – that's why Paul said -- **2 Corinthians 5:11, 20, 21 - Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men...Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

- now, that's pretty heavy and it has to be...but that's what positions us to appreciate...

II. The Sufficiency of the Payment

A. Made alive together with Him.

- **Colossians 2:13 - When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him...**
- the great news is that the bill doesn't have to remain unpaid...
- a transaction can occur...please look up at verse 13 of chapter 1 for a beautiful description of it...
- **Colossians 1:13 - For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,**
- do you see how different that is than – we all God's children?, or I've always been a Christian?...
- no, a decision has to be made at a definite point in time...
- and the beautiful thing is – the payment is already in place...
- **Colossians 1:19-20 - For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.**
- it's not a matter of sitting around and hoping someone will make the payment we can't afford...
- it's a matter of going and receiving the gift that has already been provided...
- it would be like the manager at K-Mart calling a layaway customer and informing them of the incredible news that their bill has been paid and then the customer never going in and receiving the gift...
- the sufficiency of the payment was nullified by their unwillingness to accept what was given...
- that's why John explained...**John 3:16-18 - For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

- now you might say – back in Colossians, what did Paul mean by saying that we are made alive together with Him?...
- it's very important to understand that we are not talking about going from one set of rituals that we couldn't keep to another set of duties that maybe we can...as if that's the core of being a follower of Christ...no –

B. The payment is a Person.

- this passage is all about the sufficiency of the Person of Jesus Christ...
- that why Paul said in **verse 9 – For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form**
- that's the miracle of the manger – the incarnation – God becoming man...
- we saw that in 2 Cor. 5:21 – **He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**
- the Bible writers never quite got over that – and neither should we...
 - John said -- **John 1:14 - And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.**
 - Paul said -- **Philippians 2:7-8 - but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**
- this is where the illustration of the Layaway angels falls so woefully short...
- as admirable as it is to put down some money to make a payment for someone you don't know...
- Jesus was willing to be the payment...
 - there is a huge difference between being willing to make a payment, and being willing to be the payment...
 - but that act is what made the potential nature of our relationship with God intensely personal...

- Paul went on to describe this payment with the words...

C. Having forgiven all your transgressions.

- **verse 13 – having forgiven us all our transgressions**
 - in his commentary on Colossians, John MacArthur has a marvelous outline highlighting the beauty of the forgiveness that is ours in Christ...
- 1. God's forgiveness is gracious.**
Romans 3:24 - being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

- 2. God's forgiveness is complete.**

Romans 5:20 - The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

- 3. God's forgiveness is eager.**

Psalm 86:5 - For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.

4. God's forgiveness is certain.

Acts 26:18 - to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

5. God's forgiveness is unequalled.

Micah 7:18 - Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love.

6. God's forgiveness is motivating.

Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

- and because of that...

D. He will cancel out the certificate of debt.

Colossians 2:14 - having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

- we're told that in Bible times, often when you wrote something on a papyrus—because of the nature of both the ink and the writing material – the ink wasn't absorbed – it just sat on the top...
- so you would use that papyrus over and over simply by wiping it clean...
- **canceled out – exaleipho – like wiping off a blackboard**

- that's the beauty of Christmas...that your layaways have all been covered...
- **Psalm 130:3-4 - If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.**
- **Isaiah 55:7 - Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.**
- **Hebrews 8:12 - "FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE."**

- and friends, the people on the first Christmas night knew that...because the angels said... **Luke 2:10-11 - But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**

- now, where does that leave us?...

III. The Superiority of the Victory

Colossians 2:15 - When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Colossians 1:18 - He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

Galatians 6:14 - But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.