

Living Praise

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***He paid a debt He did not owe  
I owed a debt I could not pay  
I needed someone to wash my sins away  
And now I sing a brand new song amazing grace  
Christ Jesus paid the debt that I could never pay.***

We reproduce here for our consideration and easy reference some verses of scriptures to facilitate our understanding of the mindset of this songwriter.

1. ***“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”*** Isaiah 53: 6.
2. ***“For He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*** 2 Corinth. 5:21.

Let us place in its proper perspective the use of the word debt in this song. Clearly the reference is not to an amount owed for the purchase of some goods or services. We are assisted to gain an insight into the nature of this debt by the third line of the song which says “ ***... I needed someone to wash my sins away***”.

So the reference is to sin and the consequence of sin. We do know that the penalty for sin is death. By this we mean a loss of fellowship with the creator which renders the sinner naked and consequently exposed to all maladies which may ultimately lead to his physical death.

In Genesis, God commanded the first man, Adam saying “***of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die***”. (Gen. 2:16-17).

Adam’s disobedience of this commandment bequeathed to all that ever came through his lions what has come to be known as the Adamic sin or the original sin. This in itself constituted a burden or debt on the whole of mankind.

Over the years man has tried without success to settle this debt. Hebrew 9:22 tells us that “***almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without the shedding of blood is no remission***” of sin. This is evident from the numerous blood sacrifices made by the children of Israel as recommended by God himself through Moses. These Sacrifices no matter how well intentioned had a limitation. They were not able to provide a permanent relief or total cleansing. This explains why the Chief Priest needed to appear in the holiest of all on behalf of the people at least once a year with the blood sacrifice to atone for the sins of the nation. Suffice it to say that these sacrifices were only a foreshadow of a more permanent arrangement already put in place by God for the salvation of mankind through his only begotten son, Jesus Christ. Hebrew:9:11-14.

Therefore, it was clear that man could not help himself. This is where Ephesian 2:8-9 becomes relevant. ***“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.”*** We were all like condemned criminals awaiting execution for by the law of God we had all sinned. In the words of Isaiah 53: 6 ***“All we like sheet have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way ...”*** And the judgement of God: the wages of sin is death - awaited us all.

This was the condition man found himself before God in an unmatched show of love caused to be activated his great plan of salvation for mankind. To put it simply, He sent his only begotten son, Jesus, to die for us. So while on the cross, Jesus was actually being crucified as us. Isaiah 53:4-5 puts it clearly thus ***“surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed”***. And drawing from our second scriptural reading, 2 Corinth. 5:21, Jesus Christ who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

By the help of the spirit, there are two interrelated points we need to understand and consciously relate with as we make progress in this way.

1. The debt which we owed and could not pay has been fully and permanently settled by our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. Our indebtedness is now to God who loved us and gave his only begotten son in our place. God gave his one son that he may through and with him have many sons. (Hebrew 2:10-11.) As Christians we must constantly bear in mind that we have been bought with a very precious price and that our benefactor requires our total, unalloyed loyalty and availability to him. In the light of this we should daily evaluate our relationship with God. Are we still carrying on as if we own ourselves? Are we still in a passionate romance with the world out of which we were called? What ought to be our attitude towards this loving father?

Let us look at it from the human perspective. You owed a man One million Naira and you were to go to jail for your inability to pay. Another man steps forward and offers to pay the debt on your behalf so you may go free. The creditor collected his money satisfied and left. Here you have been set free and released to the second man who graciously paid your debt. Now let us ask the question again. What ought to be your disposition towards this man. Clearly you now owe him one million Naira which you may never be able to pay back. Such is our indebtedness to God.

2. The death penalty is lifted. Jesus Christ died in our place. According to Isaiah Jesus bore our griefs, carried our sorrows and the chastisement of our peace was upon him. These and more the Lord secured for us on the cross. Now recall our illustration above. The creditor after collecting his one million Naira left satisfied.. Never again will he come near the former debtor to ask for that, which has been paid to him already. We as believers must constantly live in the consciousness of the truth that our debts have been paid. A beautiful life now awaits us as we walk hand and hand with Jesus Christ who has graciously set us free. We must not allow the devil to cheat on us by bringing to our consciousness our past on the strength of which he will begin to make demands on us. Each time the devil comes reminding you of your sinful past and how that you deserve to be punished, it is like the creditor in our illustration above coming to request for the one million naira already paid to him. We should stand firm to declare our

freedom in the light of what Christ has done for us and put Satan the devil where he belongs. Each time we are confronted with the problems of this world which I dare say are a prelude to death (sickness, poverty, barrenness, etc.) we are to stand firm declaring, by our confession, the word of God. After all, by the word of God we are made over comers and are able to stand says the songwriter. Again, we are lifted by his word out of shame and sorrows into the glorious presence of our God. Praise be to the name of our God.