

## AND GOD SAYS . . .

**Sponsored by the Melrose Alliance Church**

Recently I have repeatedly heard an advertisement for those who are behind \$10,000 or more on their taxes to call a certain number to get their taxes greatly reduced with the rest being totally forgiven. This ad makes me not want to pay my taxes for a few years. Then, when I get a huge past due tax bill, I can call and only pay a small portion of what I owe.

The net result is that those who are irresponsible in paying their taxes are rewarded while those of us who are responsible and pay our taxes on time and in full, are penalized. You see, we who pay our taxes have to pick up the balance so that our government can continue to operate.

There is a very important spiritual lesson here. The lesson is this, “Mercy is not free!” Somebody always pays when another is granted mercy.

The delinquent taxpayer receives mercy and the responsible taxpayer picks up the tab. Likewise God forgives us, but his forgiveness is not free either. It is granted at the cost of his Son, Jesus. Jesus paid the price for our forgiveness through his own death.

But there is a difference between the two scenarios. The faithful taxpayer is literally *forced* to make up for the taxes not paid by those who are forgiven, whether he likes it or not. But Jesus *voluntarily* paid the price for our debt. He did it because of his love for us. He *willingly* suffered the injustice of dying for our sins so that we could be mercifully forgiven our sins.

This is why God can maintain perfect justice and still grant mercy. He has not let our sin go unpunished. The penalty of death for our sin is paid in full—not by us, but by Jesus.

Just as the one who desires forgiveness for his past taxes must call, we receive God’s mercy when we ask God for forgiveness for our debt of sin. God then, grants us mercy, forgiving our sin because he has transferred our debt of sin to Jesus, who paid it in full.

So, have you asked for that forgiveness? He will forgive you if you ask. It seems surprising to me that people will humble themselves and ask forgiveness for their past due tax bill at the expense of their neighbors and friends but remain too proud to ask God to forgive them their debt and allow Jesus to *voluntarily* pay the price for their debt of sin. Why is that?