

Hey, did you know that the latest official debt owed by the U.S. Government to lenders around the world is over \$36 trillion? Yeah, you can look for yourself on the internet at usdebtclock.org. But let's get a bit of perspective about just how much one trillion really is. 1 trillion is 1 million millions. 1 trillion is represented by a "1" with 12 zeroes behind it. And if you start counting consecutive numbers with each second that passes on a clock starting with the number "1," it would take you over 31,000 years to reach the actual number one trillion! *Multiply that by 36 to arrive at the \$36 trillion owed by the U.S.!*

And guess what? That \$36 trillion is only the so-called "official" debt: the U.S. Treasury department reports that the Government's projected unfunded financial commitments *on top of the \$36 trillion it owes is another \$78 trillion*. That's roughly made up of what the Government projects that it owes in future Social Security and Medicare payments!

Of course, all that is or *at least should be* quite concerning to every American! But it apparently isn't, even by its leaders: the U.S. Congress continues to increase the nation's debt commitments all the time—in fact, the \$36 trillion owed right now was just \$1 trillion in 1981. So, in just over 40 years, the United States Congress has increased the debt its citizens owe from \$1 trillion to \$36 trillion! Are you stunned by this? Or just numbed by it? After all, this is a long-time issue that's been largely unaddressed.

Well, this mind-blowing situation is one amazing example of the podcast topic today of intergenerational indebtedness. Yes...that's debt or obligations passed on to later generations to deal with. In fact, it's ethically and morally more thorny than that simple statement: it's the current generation enjoying resources that debt and commitments pay for now...but leaving the consequences to future generations.

Hey, it used to be, through about the 1970s in America, there was a notable segment of the population very concerned about the national debt—that issue played a real factor in national politics. But then debt faded as an issue. Fewer and fewer people cared. After all, the good times were rolling! President Ronald Reagan initiated policies that dramatically increased the personal well-being of many Americans, both in annual income and in building wealth. The debt was just something that could always be pushed off until later. Yes...to be handled at an unspecified, distant time. And of course, "later" easily comes to be viewed by many folks to pretty much mean "not me." *Yeah, Washington is out-of-control in spending and debt... but what can you do? Besides, when it comes to my personal concerns, like inflation, crime, wars, and getting government funds are now and about me, while national debt piling up is later and about "them."*

Believe it or not, a number of political liberals and progressives say the debt doesn't matter at all, they're not bothered in the least about those trillions—in fact they advocate it with a flawed economic hypothesis called Modern Monetary Theory, "MMT." Yep, it's the university academics and theorists at it again as to social issues and economic matters, angling to try to justify the unjustifiable. Hey...*no wisdom, no worries.*

Here's an interesting twist happening in recent years—the "total fertility rates" issue. For a nation's population to remain steady, there needs to be an average "replacement rate" of about 2.1 kids begat by a woman and her partner. And for a variety of reasons, the current generation of eligible-parent-citizens in many nations are choosing fewer children...often no children at all. Some countries' TFR is currently near 0.7! And of course, a low TFR rate in a nation means that the pool of people available to support the current budget appetites as well as pay off its national debts can be shrinking at an alarming pace. So, some of these nations are now trying to financially incentivize their citizens to have kids!

One little-mentioned key impact on the debt issue is the higher productivity per citizen that's enabled by technology advances. And as for current political policy, U.S. President Trump has signed on Elon Musk and others to work at cutting down on government regulation and spending. At the time of this podcast episode's release, the relative success of this initiative remains to be seen. But here's the rub: even if it's highly successful, yes, even then, will the government still incur more debt because it won't ask its citizens to pay for its remaining budget appetites with current taxes? In the U.S. at least, that proposition doesn't look likely: 2001 was the most recent year to have a budget surplus—and even that was a quite small!

All this can cause a sense of helplessness for individuals who are concerned for their nation at a macro level as well as their family at a micro level. So, are difficult times ahead? Likely so...but how far ahead? And what can just one person do? Well, some core solutions at the micro level are to work to ensure that children and grandchildren are serving the Lord who provides...have solid personal prospects financially...and have an inheritance—an inheritance may help family members cope with a challenging financial future. Proverbs 13:22 (ESV) says, “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children.”

Yeah, let's talk “intergenerational *inheritance*.” When it comes to personal inheritances, America is an interesting place: current law doesn't hinder the wisdom in Proverbs 13. When citizens die, they can leave substantial assets they've accumulated to their children, grandchildren, or charities tax-free.

But what about intergenerational *debt* in America. Also similar to other Old Testament guidance, U.S. bankruptcy laws allow circumstances where citizens can avoid paying certain debts—and generally family members don't have to pay for their parents' debts anyway. So, overall, *American offspring can inherit parents' assets but not their debts*...unless, of course, the parents' assets like homes, cars, and investments are used as collateral security for loans that lay claim to those assets. So, at the level of individual activity in the U.S., debts can generally be avoided or at least handled with minimized impact on later generations.

Now let's cut to the truly big picture of intergenerational indebtedness—just how does God handle that? Well, the first thing we must deal with what many call the “sin nature” we all “inherited” from the actions of Adam and Eve. But what about the specific sins of an individual? Here's what Ezekiel 18:1-4 (ESV) says: “The word of the Lord came to [Ezekiel]: “What do you mean [Ezekiel] by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge’? As I live, declares the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.”

Clearly, each of us dies due to our own choosing sinfulness—not due to the sins of Adam, Eve, our dad, or our mom. While all inherit the propensity to sin, each is guilty *only* of their personal sins! Yes, whether Christians or not, people do not pay the intergenerational debts of their family's sins, they are accountable to pay only for their own sins! Of course, people still may be *impacted* by the sins of their parents, their neighbors, or strangers, but they won't be paying the price of God's judging of *others* choosing sinful ways.

But, you might say, what about *generational curses* found in the Old Testament Law? Yes, folks should avoid choosing to mimic their parents' sins, then or now! But recall Ezekiel 18: it's the soul who sins who shall die. *Regardless, here's the real deal*: New-Covenant, born-again believers are no longer under the dominion of sin...not under the law, they are under grace! (Romans 6:14) Yes, believers are new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)! *And salvation is available to all, regardless of sins of parents or anyone else!*

So...have you ever been weighed down emotionally and perhaps even spiritually by the shame brought by the sinful actions of close family members? *Hear this: such shame is not yours to bear!* That's right, in Christ, we literally have *no intergenerational indebtedness of sin* that we must carry with us!

Yes, indeed, believers are freed from the eternal price of their sin. Instead, believers' inheritance is in Christ—they are fellow heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). And since Christ is the heir of all things (Hebrews 1:1-2), our clear position in Christ and His Kingdom far exceeds the onerous specter of \$36 trillion of debt!

Yeah, let's talk *full* intergenerational truth! God made a Way through Jesus for every person to lose *all* their sin-indebtedness...that of their own sin, and also that which some say is imputed by the sins of their family. Indeed, believers become the sons and daughters of God! And as the old saying goes: *God has no grandchildren!* Hey, do you say you're a Christian because *for generations* your family has always been Baptist or Presbyterian or Roman Catholic? But, according to Jesus, the only way to enter the Kingdom of God is for each person to be personally born-again of the Spirit of God! *Go ahead, seek after Jesus—He will answer!* All you have to lose is your sin-indebtedness—and you'll become an heir with Christ Himself!

A&A: Application & Action

1. Do you believe the national debt and unfunded future financial commitments made by Congress are troubling? Do you believe the possible impact this indebtedness on future generations should be a very strong priority for current legislators? Why or why not?

2. Hey, do you maybe believe, deep down, that you aren't overcoming or even *cannot* overcome seemingly-unmovable downsides of your family background—even when you are a born-again believer, a new creature in Christ? Or do you believe that people in such a circumstance are pretty much predestined to be unable to do so, even while claiming Christ as their Lord and Savior? Discuss.

3. Do you find that your life and inheritance in Christ is so real and overpowering such that issues like the Federal debt of many trillions cause you little concern for your future? How about the future of your extended, intergenerational family? Discuss.