



BACK TO GOD

Do you remember as a child going off on an adventure and realizing in a moment of panic that you were lost? Your only concern was to find mom or dad. You searched frantically until you experienced the joy and comfort of being reunited. Many of us have strayed from God. How did we get separated in the first place? How do we find our way back to God?

COMMANDMENTS

The Bible teaches that God is perfect. He gave certain parameters on how we should live our lives which are summed up in the Ten Commandments. Christ then summarized these into the two foremost commandments:

Jesus replied: “Love the lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ this is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’”

MATTHEW 22:37-39

God created man and woman with dignity to be His image bearers. He created us in a sinless state of perfection, yet with the ability to freely love God. Yet, Adam and Eve abandoned this expression of perfect love and chose to intentionally disobey God. Since this time only one individual has lived a totally blameless and perfect life required by God: Jesus Christ. And upon comparing our life to His, we see how far short we come of His perfection, and the reality emerges that despite all our efforts, we fail to live a perfect life. No wonder the Bible says,

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

ROMANS 3:23

How many people have sinned?

Does sin have consequences? What do you think they are?

CONSEQUENCES

Admittedly we have all sinned, but how serious is our sin? If we break human laws, we will pay certain consequences. What about God's law? The Bible says,

“The wages of sin is death”

ROMANS 6:23

“Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment”

HEBREWS 9:27

This is speaking of spiritual death. If physical death is separation of the soul from the body, spiritual death would be separation of the soul from God, a separation that carries with it fearful consequences. Notice it does not say “the wages of great sin is death,” but just “sin.” That is shattering! Since we have broken the first and great commandment about loving God with all our heart, we are great sinners! You have sinned and I have sinned; the wages of our sin is death. This death means our condition before God is terminal: a dreadful, eternal separation from God. Is there any escape from this penalty?

**What are the consequences of sin?
How do we get rid of our sin?**

CHRIST

Frequently people will say all we have to do is to try harder. Do more good works. Is that enough? Will such a remedy work? Let's use a comparison.

Suppose you are vacationing on a foreign island. You have rented a new, convertible Corvette and while driving along the coast you considerably "push" the speed limit. A policeman pulls you over for excessive speeding. You're taken before a judge. The judge asks, "Is it true you were speeding?" You answer, "Yes, your Honor, I was caught in the act, but I've learned my lesson and I'm not going to drive fast anymore. I'm really sorry. Will you forgive me?" The judge would respond, "Forgive you? You just broke our law! If I simply accepted your apology the law would lose its meaning. Everyone would speed."

If God forgave us for breaking His law on the simple basis that we were sorry and on our promise that we would try to do better, His law would also lose its meaning. God is just and He must uphold the Law. What we need is to understand how God can forgive us, and yet still be just.

Going back to the court scene, imagine the judge saying, "I believe you are sincere in asking for the court's forgiveness. However, if the law is to have any meaning, one will have to impose at least the minimum fine as your penalty. On our island, there is only one penalty no matter what crime you commit. The minimum fine for speeding is \$500,000 or fifty years in jail." You answer, "Your Honor, I don't have \$500,000." "Then you'll have to go to jail."

Although you don't have \$500,000, there is a way you could go free today with no strings attached. I'm your friend and I could pay the \$500,000 for you. Since I paid the penalty the Judge could set you free and still uphold the law. Something similar has taken place in God's courtroom.

I could not pay your fine in God's court because I am also a guilty party. I am in the same predicament you are in. I have to find someone who is not guilty who is also willing to bail me out. Only one person has ever lived who is not guilty before God and that is Jesus Christ, God's Son. But He died 2,000 years ago! How can Christ possibly help us today? The Bible says,

“...Christ died for our sins...”

I CORINTHIANS 15:3

When He died, He didn't just die physically. When He died on the cross Jesus said,

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

MATTHEW 27:46

In His death He was undergoing an agonizing separation from His Father. He was experiencing the wages of our sins. In His death, Christ was paying our “fine” in “God's court.” This is the way God worked it out so He could be just when He forgives us. When God forgives a sinner, He is not merely overlooking the sin. The penalty has been paid in full. The Judge Himself paid the fine by punishing His Son, Jesus Christ.

Further, Christ, as it were, did not pay \$450,000 and leave you or me a balance of \$50,000. Absolutely not. Christ paid the entire penalty for all our sins: past, present and future. There is absolutely nothing we have to pay.

Why can't God just forgive sin?

Why is Jesus the only person who can pay that penalty for another person?

If Jesus died for everyone's sin, does that mean everyone goes to heaven?

BELIEVE & RECEIVE

Does this mean everyone in the world is forgiven and does not have to worry about sin anymore? Christ has paid the penalty in full. The Bible teaches we are clearly forgiven. But there is one thing we must do in order to experience the gift of salvation: we must receive Christ. Receiving Christ involves both **TURNING** and **TRUSTING**. One must decide to turn from a self-directed life (*this included a willingness to turn from your sin, as well as turning from trusting in yourself for salvation*) and trusting in Christ to be your Savior and Lord. Trusting Christ means to depend on His work on the cross for your salvation. And trusting Christ as Lord means to invite Him to come into your life and take control.

Mere intellectual assent does not constitute saving faith. It is not enough to acknowledge intellectually that Jesus can save us. True belief involves total trust. To trust in Jesus Christ is to let go of every other confidence, of every other resource, of every other security and to receive Jesus Christ as your only hope of salvation.

Charles Blondin, a Frenchman, was one of the world's finest tightrope walkers. He successfully crossed the treacherous Niagara Falls (approximately a 1,000 foot span, 160 feet above the raging waters) on a tightrope. He then turned to the crowd that was clearly awestruck by this spectacular feat and asked how many believed he could traverse the tightrope a second time pushing a wheelbarrow. The crowd cheered enthusiastically, acknowledging their belief in Blondin. He succeeded, and then asked the astonished crowd again, "Does anyone believe enough in me to get in the wheelbarrow and cross Niagara Falls with me?" No one volunteered! Finally, Blondin's manager climbed on Blondin's back, and they traversed across Niagara Falls together. The manager trusted Blondin to get him safely across the great chasm. The great chasm between man and God isn't crossed by intellectually believing but through completely trusting in Him.

What is the difference between intellectual assent and faith?

FAITH

Believing in Christ first involves believing His claims. We also realize that believing in Christ involves a radical step of trust in Jesus Christ.

**He is God the Son.
He died for our sins.
He literally rose from the dead.**

To illustrate such trust in Christ, let us suppose three people approach the Gate of Heaven seeking entrance. God asks all three, “Why should I let you into My heaven?”

The **FIRST** person answers, “I have tried to live a moral life.” That is another way of saying, “I’ll trust in my personal works.” God would respond, “I’m sorry, My standard is absolute perfection, and your works fall short of My standard. Had your works been good enough, I never would have had to send My Son to die for you.”

The **SECOND** person answers, “I believe intellectually in Jesus and I’m trying to live a good life.” God would say, “I’m sorry, you also fall short of My standard. If you’re trusting in yourself it shows you aren’t fully trusting in My Son.”

The **THIRD** person approaches and God asks, “Why should I accept you?” “There’s no reason You should let me in,” she replies. “I’m a sinner. My record is horrible. But I understand that’s why You sent Your Son. He died in my place. I have trusted Jesus Christ. He is my only hope of being forgiven.”

God says to the third person, “That is genuine faith in My Son! Come on in!”

**Which of these three people do you most closely identify with?
What would need to happen for you to be the third person?**

Genuine faith involves trusting Christ-*not ourselves*-to direct our lives. These two circles illustrate what it looks like to go from a **SELF DIRECTED LIFE** to a **CHRIST DIRECTED LIFE**. In this first circle self is on the throne running the show while Christ is on the outside of this individual's life. In the second circle, Christ is on the throne and self is yielding control to Christ

SELF DIRECTED LIFE

Self is in control of his or her life.
Relying on self's record for salvation.



CHRIST DIRECTED LIFE

Self has surrendered control of his or her life to Jesus.
Relying on Christ's record for salvation.



The Bible explains that salvation comes only by grace through faith alone. Grace means it is something I can't earn, buy, borrow or steal. Grace is something given freely to me, even though I don't deserve it.

“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not by works, so that no one can boast”

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”

JOHN 1:12

THE BIG QUESTION

**Would you like to receive the free gift of salvation
by placing your trust in Jesus Christ now?**

**FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH,
BUT THE FREE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE
IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.**

ROMANS 6:23