In Our Place

Christians call the message of the cross of Jesus Christ the "gospel," which literally means "good news." What makes the news good?

The most concise answer to that question is from God's book to us, the Bible. It simply says, *"Christ died for our sins...he was buried ...he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

From the beginning of the Bible to the end, the penalty for sin is death. God warned the first man, Adam, of the consequences of breaking his instructions: *"In the day that you eat of [the forbidden fruit] you shall surely die"* (Genesis 2:17). During the thousands of years that followed, God repeatedly made the consequences clear— *"those who practice* [sin] *deserve to die"* (Romans 1:32). There are numerous examples throughout the Bible of God's judgment of sin. Sinning is the opposite of the conduct that God accepts from his highest creation, mankind.

God's justice has to be served, and sinners have to pay the consequences of their lawless conduct. *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....The soul who sins shall die"* (Romans 3:23, Ezekiel 18:20). But God wasn't satisfied to leave us in our sinful state, waiting out our lives to be punished.

The ultimate...and only solution

The ultimate and only solution was for someone who didn't deserve judgment to take the place of someone who did. But mankind needed more help than that. We needed someone of such character and stature with God that he could substitute himself for all of us! The only candidate who qualified? God's sinless, unique Son, Jesus Christ. He substituted himself in our place—for our

sins—and took God's wrath for us! *"Jesus . . . delivers us from the wrath to come"* (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Jesus died to take on himself the penalty for our sin. God the Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity, paid our debt of death—he literally took our place. On the cross Jesus took our sins so God could give Christ's righteousness to those who believe in him! *"For our sake he* [God] *made him* [Jesus] *to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). The cross of Jesus is good news because there Jesus made the full payment for our sin. Jesus, who is God the Son, became a man to restore a relationship between God and humanity.

Because of our sin we need a mediator to stand between God and us. The Bible speaks of Jesus as our only mediator: *"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 2:5). Our spiritual debt is to God, and only Jesus stands between the wrath of God and us.

We need a redeemer to pay our debt to God the Father. The Bible speaks of *"our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness....Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us"* (Titus 2:13-14, Galatians 3:13). Because our sins are against God, only God can forgive our debt of sin. Jesus, who is God the Son, paid that debt on the cross in order to forgive our sins, *"for Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God"* (1 Peter 3:18). Our sins are against a completely holy and perfect God and therefore require a perfect payment: *"You were ransomed . . . not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot"* (1 Peter 1:18-19). Through the cross, Jesus completely paid our debt so that we could be reconciled to God.

On the cross, Jesus revealed to us the love of God. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life....God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us...and was raised"* back to life (John 3:16, Romans 5:8, 2 Corinthians 5:15).

The cross is something caused by you: Your sins crucified the God-man, Jesus Christ. The cross is something done for you: God loves you and Christ died for you—in your place!

If you have never asked Jesus Christ to be your Savior and to forgive you of all your sins against God, why not call out to him today in belief? The Bible promises, *"to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"* (John 1:12).

:: CROSSWAY

To learn more about Good News Tracts, visit *www.goodnewstracts.org*.