

God's Good News

Adapted from *Becoming a Contagious Christian*

God

There are many aspects of God's nature that we could study, but He has three characteristics that are especially relevant. The first one is that He is *loving*. Out of His compassion, He made us and desires to have a relationship with us. Even though we're sinners who have rebelled against Him, He continues to patiently extend His love to us.

Many people prefer to stop right here, but there's more that needs to be said. You see, God is also *holy*. This means that He is absolutely pure, and He is separate from everything that is impure.

That leads us to a third characteristic of God: He is *just*. In other words, He's like a good judge who can't wink at a broken law: Rather, He must mete out justice.

Us

When God first created us, He made us good, without sin. But we abused our freedom, rebelled against Him and became evil.

Unfortunately, the seriousness of our sin requires God to pronounce upon us the death penalty. This means both physical death and spiritual death, which is separation from God in a place called hell.

And to cap off the bad news, we're helpless to initiate any action that can change our situation.

Christ

The central truth of the gospel is that Christ died in our place, as our substitute. He suffered the death penalty debt for us. In so doing, He expressed the love of God, upheld the holiness of God and satisfied the justice of God.

It's summed up in this song:

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, all day long.
Christ Jesus paid the debt
That I could never pay.

(Author Unknown)

First, some people ask why any price had to be paid at all. "Why couldn't God just forgive and forget, as we can?"

We've done damage by sinning against God. And He was willing to forgive us and restore our relationship with Him. It's ours for the asking. But He still had to pay for the damage. He was left holding the bill – the death penalty – which He paid by coming as one of us and dying on the cross in our place. (Acts 20:28)

The second question some people ask is why *Christ* had to pay that penalty: "What kind of justice is there in having Jesus, an innocent bystander, suffer instead of me?"

The answer lies in His identity. He's not some reluctant bystander who God forced onto the scene as a whipping boy to take our punishment. *He is actually the God we have sinned against.*

You

Jesus paid the price of salvation for the whole world, but only those who say yes to Him will actually receive His forgiveness.

So for the sake of those who need to be reached, we've got to be crystal clear about the fact that a personal response is essential. Each of us has to receive the forgiveness and leadership of Christ individually. And when we do, the Bible assures us that the Holy Spirit will immediately take residence within us and begin to change us from the inside out.