



## GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

**Reading:** Isaiah 53

### What is wrong with the world?

There is clearly something wrong with the world in which we live. Every day there is news of crime and violence. In many parts of the world there are wars or the threat of wars. Terrible diseases spread quickly. Many die of hunger, while others have plenty to eat. Many world leaders are not concerned for the welfare of their people.

Why are these things happening? The Bible tells us that God made this world “very good” (Genesis 1:31). He made it a wonderful place in which to live and intended something better than our world of trouble and uncertainty. Sin is the root cause of all the world’s troubles.

### The beginning of the trouble

God made Adam and Eve and placed them in the beautiful Garden of Eden. God taught Adam His ways. He also gave Adam a simple law, and just as a father expects obedience from his children, so God expected obedience from Adam. God said to Adam,

*“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”* (Genesis 2:16,17).

Adam chose to disobey. He sinned: he broke God’s law. Adam’s disobedience led to the punishment of death, as God had said it would. Adam and Eve did not die immediately but became mortal (dying creatures). From that time they also found it easy to sin.

Notice that Adam died because he sinned. God did **not** promise Adam and Eve that they would go to heaven when they died – this would have been a reward. They were sentenced to death, which was a punishment **not** a reward.

### We inherit Adam’s nature

From our birth we inherit the effects of Adam’s sin. Just as children inherit things (like the colour of their skin and eyes) from their parents, so we all inherit our nature from Adam. This human nature is the opposite of God’s nature.

GOD’S NATURE	HUMAN NATURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God cannot sin or be tempted to sin.</li> <li>• God is immortal (cannot die).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All people find it easy to sin.</li> <li>• All people are mortal (dying creatures from birth).</li> </ul>

### We are also punished for our sins

Ever since Adam disobeyed God 6,000 years ago, every one of his descendants has also sinned (except Jesus). We are all descended from Adam and we too die because of our sins (Romans 5:12). The apostle Paul said,

*“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out”* (Romans 7:18).

Paul knew that he was sinful even though he tried to do what was right. Many people do not even want to do what is right. The prophet Jeremiah tells us that human beings are wicked:

*“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9).

Isaiah 53:6 says that we **all** go our own way (not God’s way):

*“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way”.*





We all sin and so we all deserve to die. But death is not the only punishment for sin. At first, Adam enjoyed fellowship (a special relationship) with God. This fellowship with God was broken when Adam sinned. Sin separates us from God, so as sinners we cannot have fellowship with God. We can do nothing to save ourselves.

### **Saved by God's grace**

The Bible tells us about both the justice and mercy of God's character. Because God is just (or righteous) He must carry out the sentence of death for sin. Because God is merciful He does not want people to die and remain in the grave for ever. In His love God has provided a way by which people can live for ever. He has provided the way to overcome the sentence of death. We read in John 3:16:

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life".*

The apostle Paul says:

*"For by **grace** you have been saved **through faith**" (Ephesians 2:8).*

God's grace is His free gift of loving kindness to men and women. It is wonderfully shown by God's gift of the Lord Jesus Christ to bring forgiveness of sins and salvation. We do not deserve salvation and we cannot earn it. By God's grace he has given us Jesus and opened up the way for us to have:

- forgiveness of sins now
- fellowship with God now
- endless life in the future.

Ephesians 2:8 tells us that we can enjoy the blessings of God's grace *"through faith"*. To have faith in God means to believe and trust in Him and His purpose. If we do not believe God's Word, it is not possible for us to share in His grace:

*"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him"* (Hebrews 11:6).

### **The sacrifice of Jesus**

Jesus had human nature like us and was tempted just as we are – but unlike us he never sinned. Jesus always did everything that pleased God and was perfect in every way – yet he was crucified! God did not save him from this terrible death. The verse already quoted from Isaiah 53 continues:

*"... the LORD (God) has laid on him (Jesus) the iniquity (sin) of us all".*

Through the perfect life of Jesus and through his death on the cross, in obedience to His Father's will, it is possible for us to have our sins forgiven. Then we can have the hope of a wonderful life that will last for ever.

There is something amazing about this: the love of God in giving His only Son, and the love of Jesus in giving his life in loving obedience to his Father's will. The way in which Jesus gave himself is described in the Bible as his sacrifice. The sacrifice of Jesus involved:

- a sinless life – he gave up (sacrificed) his own will and desires and followed his Father's will in all things
- the giving up (sacrifice) of his life by dying on the cross.

So the way of salvation is through the Lord Jesus Christ and was made possible by his sacrifice. We have to believe that Jesus died for us and so accept his sacrifice. If we have faith in God and His offer of salvation through the Lord Jesus, we may look forward to a future life free from all the troubles of the world. This is the great hope of the Gospel and we have done nothing to deserve it!





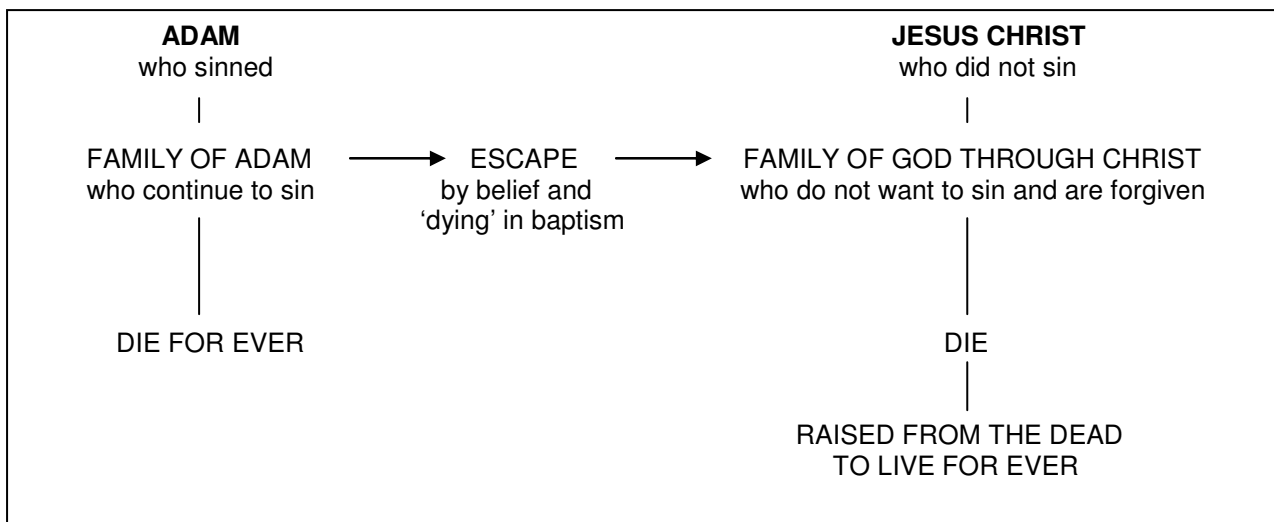
## To which family do you belong?

One way to consider salvation is to think of families. We are all born into Adam's family, since the human race is descended from him. Adam sinned and brought death to the human race. Through his sacrifice the Lord Jesus Christ set up a new family. This family consists of people who do not want to belong to Adam's family but wish to turn to God.

The Bible describes those who belong to God's family through Christ as being 'in Christ'; but those belonging to Adam's dying family are described as being 'in Adam':

*"For as **in Adam** all die, so also **in Christ** shall all be made alive"* (1 Corinthians 15:22).

So there are two families: Adam's family, and the family of God through Christ. We are all born into Adam's family, and if we do nothing about it we will die in Adam's family and perish for ever. The Lord Jesus wants us to join God's family. We can do so by learning about Jesus and the purpose of God and then being baptized. Baptism is a complete immersion in water (going completely under the water). Going under the water is a symbol of dying, and coming out of the water is a symbol of rising to a new life. We leave Adam's family by 'dying' in baptism and we 'rise' to start our new life as part of the family of God. So we die to the family of Adam and rise again into the family of God through Christ. We should be very grateful to God and the Lord Jesus for making it possible for us to escape from the family of Adam.



## Believing and obeying

We have already seen that to please God we must believe in Him and what He has done for us through the sacrifice of Jesus. John 3:16 tells us, *"whoever believes in him (Jesus) should not perish but have eternal life"*. This does not mean that we have only to say, "I believe in God and the Lord Jesus", to be saved from sin and death. If we **really** believe something, we take action. If a child is sick and the parents believe that the doctor can help, they do not just say, "We believe in the doctor", and let the child go on suffering. The parents send for the doctor and, because they have faith in him, they obey him in whatever he says.

It is just the same with believing in God. If we really believe, we will find out what God wants us to do and do it to the best of our abilities. We need to obey God by starting a new life dedicated to following the Lord Jesus. This begins with baptism. Only those who have real faith can hope to be among those who *"should not perish but have eternal life"*.

It is important to **obey** God:

- Adam **disobeyed** God and brought sin and death into the world
- Christ Jesus **obeyed** God and brings life to those who try to **obey** God.





## The gift of immortal life

The blessing of a wonderful life that will last for ever is God's gift to those who believe His Word and try hard to obey Him. People who are given this great gift will be changed. They will no longer have their human nature but will share the nature of God Himself:

1. their minds will be changed – they will never be able to sin again;
2. their mortal bodies will be made immortal – they will never grow tired, be ill, feel pain or die.

Immortal life is the greatest of all gifts, and will be given to people who have waited faithfully for the Lord Jesus to return, trying to live in the way God wants. Such people pray, *"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10).

### Summary

1. Sin is the root cause of all the world's troubles.
2. We all sin and so we all deserve to die – death is a punishment.
3. In His love God has provided the way by which people can have their sins forgiven and be saved from everlasting death.
4. We cannot save ourselves. We are saved by God's grace – salvation is a gift.
5. The way of salvation is through the Lord Jesus Christ and was made possible by his sacrifice.
6. Our part is to have faith – to believe and trust in God and His purpose.
7. Those who have real faith will be baptized and try hard to obey God by following the Lord Jesus.
8. Immortal life is God's gift to those who believe His Word and try hard to obey Him.

### A verse to learn: John 3:16

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

### Verses to read:

**Colossians 1:21-23 – The apostle Paul reminds believers that their sins had been forgiven through the death of Jesus.**

*And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he (Jesus) has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

**Ephesians 2:4-10 – God's great love and mercy is shown to sinners, who are saved by His grace if they show faith.**

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses (sins), made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

**Also read Genesis 2:15 - 3:24.**

