

THE BAD NEWS

HEADED FOR A BAD PLACE

**the names and numbers in brackets
are the references in the Bible
that reveal these truths*

1. God is holy and perfect, and he requires each of us, made in his image, to be perfect.

We must be holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). God says that even one sin breaks the whole law (James 2:10).

God's law is like a chain of commands. How many links in a chain must break before a beautiful chandelier falls from the ceiling? Or if one car is towing another with a chain, how many links must break before you lose the person? Breaking one of God's commands breaks the chain of fellowship.

We must be perfect (Matthew 5:48).

You say, "Whoa, how can God require perfection?" Interesting that when it comes to food, we utterly reject poison. How much petrol would you like in your milk? Half and half? A teaspoon? An eyedropper? NONE? You must have everything perfect? God wants perfection.

2. God calls breaking His moral law "sin"; Adam sinned, and everyone descended from him has been born with a fallen sinful nature and commits sins in thought, word, and action.

We're deceiving ourselves if we say we haven't sinned (1 John 1:8). All have sinned and fall short of what God requires (Romans 3:23).

Imagine a guy saying, "I'm a pretty good guy; I've only committed three sins a day – one sinful thought, one sinful word, and one sinful action." But in one year, that's over 1,000 sins; then multiply that by the years of my life. Whew! Imagine standing in front of a judge with that many violations of the law and saying you are a good person!

3. God's just and proper penalty for sin is separation from God, what the Bible often calls "death."

The payment for sin is death. Death in the Bible is separation from fellowship with God and from communication with God in this life (Romans 6:23). All people are born dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1-3).

When my cell phone loses all power, I say "my phone is dead." Dead = powerless and unable to communicate. Due to our sin, we have no power to seek, connect, or communicate with God.

One day, God will enter into judgement against sinners; afterwards, there is separation from God forever in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

4. I cannot "save" myself from judgment by good or religious works.

We are not saved by works of righteousness (Titus 3:5).

Let's say my wallet is a record book of my sins. I can really turn my life around (turn that book) or turn over a whole new leaf (flip that book) or do a lot of good works (cover that book). But the record book is

still there underneath. It won't go away. No justice system in the world dismisses crimes due to a person's good works.

Salvation is not by works; rather, it is God's free gift (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Imagine how insulted you would be if you gave me a gift, and I started whipping out R100 notes to pay for it. How much do I have to pay you to change the gift to a bargain purchase? (1 cent)

God considers our good works as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

Who was Jesus toughest on? The Pharisees, leaders of God's own Jewish religion, men who were known for good and religious works!

That's a lot of bad news—dark, eternal bad news for every one of us and all the people around us. This is why the person and works of Jesus are known as "the good news," the gospel.

THE GOOD NEWS

GOD TOOK MY PLACE

5. God loves you and me, and He made a plan for us to be reconciled with Him and saved from the coming judgment

Because God loved us, he gave his Son (John 3:16). God loved us and sent His Son so that we might live (1 John 4:9-10). There is nothing like this love of our God. The Greek gods were sinful beings; the Allah of Islam doesn't love people while

still sinners in order to save them; true Buddhism doesn't even mention a God. But we have a God who loves and who serves.

6. Jesus, the God-Man, lived a sinless life and died as a substitute for us, paying the death penalty for our sin. But Jesus defeated sin, death, Satan, and hell by rising again!

Christ died for our sins to save us (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). God showed His love by sending Christ to die for us (Romans 5:8). God takes our sin and places it on Jesus, and He takes Jesus' righteousness and places it on us. God created the rule of substitution—without it, there is no way we could be saved (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). There is one basic decision in your life: Will you pay for my own sins, or will you accept God's gift of paying for them?

A young man was once brought in before a judge for stealing fruit. The young man said he was starving. The judge found him guilty as charged and was told that the fine was \$10. The judge then paid the fine and commented that the community should be helping its needy. Did the judge uphold justice? What if he had dismissed the charges due to the young man's poverty?

7. God offers each of us the free gift of forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life only through Jesus and what He did for us.

There is salvation in no one else (Acts 4:12). Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (not merely a way) (John 14:6).

On 11 April 1912, after getting a distress signal from the sinking Titanic, the RMS Carpathia responded on an 80 km route weaving through icebergs to get to the Titanic. Some 1517 lives were lost, but the Carpathia rescued 705 survivors. Many people say that Christians are bigoted to believe that Jesus is the only way. But imagine someone treading water there in the freezing North Atlantic and saying, "What, just one ship? Do you think your ship is the only ship? I think we can each get out of the freezing water in our own way." You're lost and utterly hopeless! God sent Jesus to save your soul. Get in the ship!

8. To receive God's gift of forgiveness, salvation, and adoption . . .

There are several words used in the Bible about what humans must do to respond to all that God and Jesus have done. Turn away (**repent**) from your wrong ideas about God and sin, from saving yourself, and from running your own life (Acts 3:19). **Believe** with your heart and acknowledge with your mouth who Jesus is and what He did (Romans 10:9-10). Receive the true Jesus as your own and only Saviour and Lord (John 1:12).

Suppose I gave you a million-rand cheque and had enough money in the bank to cover it. You could take the cheque, jump up and down waving it and telling all your friends that you are rich ... but you're not truly rich until you do what? Cash or deposit the cheque. There are two steps: provision and appropriation. God has provided and now you must respond.

We will note here that a human response to the gospel is impossible without God's help—His calling, convincing, convicting, illuminating, enlightening work. But when you believe God's truth and God's Spirit moves, then you are drawn to repent of your sins and turn to God.

TO PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

God is holy and perfect, and He requires each of us, made in His image, to be perfect. God calls breaking his moral law "sin"; everyone since Adam has been born with a fallen sinful nature and commits sins in thought, word, and action. God's just and proper penalty for sin is separation from God, what the Bible often calls "death." You cannot "save" yourself from judgment by good or religious works. God loves you and me, and therefore He made an amazing plan for us to be reconciled with Him and saved from the coming judgment. Jesus, the God-man, lived a sinless life, and died as a substitute for us, paying the death penalty for our sin. Jesus then defeated sin, death, Satan, and hell by rising again! God offers each of us the free gift of forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life only through believing in Jesus Christ and what He did for us. To receive God's gift of forgiveness and salvation, you must turn away from your wrong ideas, believe in Jesus Christ, and acknowledge Him as your only Saviour and Lord.

What will you do about this all?