

In Our Place
Hebrews 2:9-15; Isaiah 53:1-12

God's desire from the beginning was that we would be at one, in wonderful relationship, with God and with one another. Though that one-ness was broken when Adam and Eve sinned, God still wanted to be at one with us and immediately put into place the plan that would make it possible for us to be restored to that relationship. It was in the giving of his perfect life that Jesus restored everlasting life to all who will receive his gift. Through his death on the cross Jesus rendered powerless, the one who holds the power of death, that is the devil (Heb. 2:14) and set us free from sin which holds us in bondage to death. Only Jesus and the shedding of his blood could make it possible for us to be restored in our relationship to God.

All this is possible because of God's immense love for us. Jesus himself said, "*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends*" (Jn.15:13). Paul tells the extent of Jesus' love for us: "*At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Rm.5:6-8).

While we have focused on God's love, we must also consider God's holiness. There is no dark side to God at all, not even a little bit. God's principal character is holiness. The basic sense of the word *holy* is "set apart". God is set apart from impurity and sin because he is absolute moral perfection. God is perfect in integrity. There is no shifting shadow in God (Jas.1:17). God's eyes are too pure to look on evil (Hab.1:13). God cannot even be tempted by evil (Jas.1:13). In simplest terms, God is thoroughly good in everything He thinks, plans, and does.

The reason God absolutely abhors sin in all its forms is because sin is the absolute opposite of God. Whenever we compare ourselves to God in his sinlessness and purity, we are

forced to see how far short of God's holiness we fall. And we must recognize that God is angry at my sin. I have to understand that while God loves me, because of my sin, I deserve to die.

This is not a message that is readily believed. We live in a culture that has the impression that people are basically good. Some of us here may even hold to the conclusion that people are basically good. I get that. I want people to be good, not bad. I want people to consider me to be good, not bad. But here's the thing, "*whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it*" (Jas.2:10). So, no matter how good we may think we are, from God's perspective we aren't.

Isaiah was given a vision of the Holy God on His throne and shares his reaction, "*Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty*" (Is.6:5). How relieved Isaiah must have been when God revealed that one was coming who would "*pour out his life unto death, and be numbered with the transgressors ... who would bare the sin of many, and make intercession for the transgressors*" (Is.53:12). Jesus took our place! Listen to how the writer of Hebrews states it (**Read Text Here**).

When Jesus died on the cross he took the consequences of sin, our sin, on himself. Without Jesus, we are not basically good people going to heaven; we are sinners going to hell. Can you grasp that? We are not basically good people going to heaven; we are sinners going to hell. The people around us and with whom we associate are not basically good people going to heaven; they are sinners going to hell.

But Jesus "*gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age*" (Gal.1:4); he "*redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us*" (Gal.3:13) so that we and all who will believe our message could be restored in our relation with God and ultimately go to heaven. Though "*he had done no wrong and he never deceived anyone*" (Is.53:9), "*he was wounded*

and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the guilt and sins of us all" (Is.53:5-6).

The wonder of the Gospel is that Jesus took my place, your place, and the place of everyone who will believe that Jesus died so that they could be saved. But, the wonder of that Gospel, the wonder of God's love can only be grasped as I see the horror of my sin: "*when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son*" (Rm.5:10). We are now made right with God because Jesus died in our place.

Perhaps this story, "The Attorney," will put all this into perspective.

After living a "decent" life, my time on earth came to an end. The first thing I remember is sitting on a bench in the waiting room of what I thought to be a courthouse.

The doors opened and I was instructed to come in and have a seat by the defense table. As I looked around I saw the "prosecutor." He was a villainous looking gent who snarled as he stared at me. He definitely was the most evil person I have ever seen.

I sat down and looked to my left and there sat my lawyer, a kind and gentle looking man whose appearance seemed familiar to me.

The corner door flew open and there appeared the judge in full flowing robes. He commanded an awesome presence as he moved across the room. I couldn't take my eyes off of him. As he took his seat behind the bench, he said, "Let's begin."

The prosecutor rose and said, "My name is Satan and I am here to show you why this man belongs in hell." He proceeded to tell of lies that I told, things that I stole, and those whom I cheated. Satan told of other horrible perversions that were once in my life and the more he spoke, the further down in my seat I sank. I was so embarrassed that I couldn't look at anyone, even my own lawyer, as the devil told of sins that even I had completely forgotten about.

As upset as I was at Satan for telling all these things about me, I was equally upset at my representative who sat there silently not offering any form of defense at all. I know I had been guilty of those things, but I had done some good in my life – couldn't that at least equal out part of the harm I'd done?

Satan finished with a fury and said, "This man belongs in hell, he is guilty of all that I have charged and there is not a person who can prove otherwise."

When it was his turn, my lawyer first asked if he might approach the bench. The judge allowed this over the strong objection of Satan, and beckoned him to come forward. As he got up and started walking, I was able to see him in his full splendor and majesty. I realized why he seemed so familiar. This was Jesus representing me – my Lord and my Savior. He stopped at the bench and softly said to the judge, “Hi, Dad,” and then he turned to address the court.

“Satan was correct in saying that this man sinned. I won’t deny any of these allegations. And, yes, the wage of sin is death and this man deserves to be punished.” Jesus took a deep breath and turned to his Father with outstretched arms and proclaimed, “However, I died on the cross so that this person might have eternal life and he has accepted me as his Savior. So, he is mine.” My Lord continued, “His name is written in the book of life and no one can snatch him from me. Satan still does not understand. This man is not to be given justice, but rather mercy.” As Jesus sat down, he quietly paused, looked at his Father, and replied, “There is nothing else that needs to be done. I’ve done it all.”

The judge lifted his mighty hand and slammed the gavel down. From his lips bellowed these words, “This man is free. The penalty for him has already been paid in full. Case dismissed.”

As my Lord led me away, I could hear Satan ranting and raving, “I won’t give up. I’ll win the next one.”

As Jesus gave me my instructions where to go next, I asked, “Have you ever lost a case?”

Christ lovingly smiled and said, “Everyone that has come to me and asked me to represent them has received the same verdict as you: Paid in Full!!!”

Have you accepted what Jesus did in your place? Have you asked Jesus to represent you?

If not, do it now and truly experience the wonder of God’s love!