

Why God must punish sin and why Christ HAD to die.

You're sitting at lunch with a friend of yours named Bob who is not a Christ follower. And the topic turns to religion. Your friend says: I have trouble believing a good God could be so cruel as to put someone in hell forever. I'm a basically good person. I haven't killed anyone.

Or he says: I don't get all this death and blood thing? Why did this Jesus guy have to die to pay for my sins? How does that work? What kick does God get by killing someone else because I told a few white lies here and there? I just don't know how I could buy all that. And then that rising from the dead thing? What was so important about that? Doesn't it seem all rather fantastic to you?

Now at this point you have 3 choices.

a) Pretend that he never said that and immediately say: Hey check out that really cute redhead by the door.

Or b) Tell him something that's sure to turn him off: Well Bob, you just have to have faith. That's what Christianity is all about. If you only had faith then everything would be alright.

Or c) Honestly try to understand where he's coming from and try to give him concise clear answers to his objections. True, many times his questions may be merely smokescreens for his true needs. But if you do not reach out to him at whatever level he is at, you may never get past the smoke to get to his heart.

The Bible says that we are to have an answer for every man who asks about our faith.

1 Peter 3:15 Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Let's say you are with your friend Jeff at coffee one day and Jeff says: I've done so many bad things, there's no hope for me. I know I'm going to hell, so I've just got to get used to it. There's no way that I can do enough good things to make up for all the bad things I've done.

How do you respond to him? Will you have an answer for him?

I had a friend ask me this question the other day. "So you believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven. So does that mean you think I'm going to Hell? And secondly isn't it sort of arrogant for you Christians to think that ONLY you know how to get to heaven and all the other people are fools. Isn't that all rather exclusive?"

These questions are important.

These questions are important not only for those who have *not* been saved, but also for us who have been saved by our Lord. They are important because we need to understand the beauty of what God has done for us as well as to explain it to others.

So in light of that today we are going to focus on some of these critical questions. Part of our purpose in doing this is to:

1. To give you the ability to talk to your friends and people you meet about Christ
2. To give you a clearer understanding of these issues and put them in a clear and concise way.
3. To hopefully get you interested in finding out more on your own

There are no bad or wrong questions when you are a Christian, as long as you are seeking diligently for what the Lord says.

So here are the basic questions.

- 1. Why death? Why blood? What is Spiritual Death?**
- 2. Why does God have to punish sin? Why can't he just forgive us all and be done with it. He is God after all!**
- 3. Why would God put someone in Hell for doing something wrong?**
- 4. How could a good and loving God put someone in Hell forever and ever just because they did a few small bad things?**
- 5. Why did Jesus have to die? How did *His* death pay for my sin? How did His death pay for *ALL* our sin?**
- 6. Why did Christ have to rise from the dead?**
- 8. How come Hitler could go to heaven?**
- 9. How do we change to deserve heaven?**

Now you'll see as we go along, that some of the answers we come up with will create even more questions and so we'll end up with a few more questions than we started this. We'll try to answer as many of these as we can with the finer points being left for a good healthy Bible Study discussion.

Notice that we are answering the questions with the Bible as our basis. This is because we are trying to explain to our friends Jeff and Bob how the Bible comprehensibly addresses these issues. Normally we would have to first and separately prove the authenticity of the Bible and the accuracy of the information in it before we can get them to accept what we say. For after all we shouldn't expect them to blindly believe the Bible. The Bible can be defended both as a Historically accurate document and as a document that has NOT been corrupted over time. But that we'll have to leave to another time.

The Original Covenant

Let's first start with some background.

Do you remember the story of Adam and Eve? What was the reason they were not allowed to eat of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil? Obviously the right answer is "Because God said so."

But the cause of that was: "For you will surely die." But why would you die? What kind of death? Was it physical death? Physical death is a part of it. But the death he was referring to was spiritual death. Well what is spiritual death? Well spiritual death is separation from God.

But why would someone be separated from God? They would be separated from God if they hated him, if they rebelled against him. So what exactly was God saying to Adam and Eve? He was saying: if you rebel against me and eat of the tree, the consequences of that rebellion will be separation from me. Spiritual death.

But what else happened after they sinned? Physical Death came into the world, or as my Dad, who is a Physicist says: The second law of Thermodynamics kicked in...

Why was Physical death a side effect of spiritual death? Well part of that maybe because God removed his complete and sufficient grace from them and their world (essentially their dimension). The consequences of this was the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Everything that was previously sustained by God and particular physical laws was left to partially fend for itself. Chaos kicked in. Entropy increased. Things went from order to disorder.

And what did God do besides kick them out? God killed an animal and covered them with its skin.

Now, what happened later when Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to God, remember Cain offered fruits and vegetables (he offered God a salad), but Abel offered the finest of his sheep, doing what to it? Killing it. What happened to Cain? God rejected Cain's sacrifice of fruits and vegetables.

You see from the beginning, as we saw and as God told us, that the consequence of eating from the Tree was spiritual and physical death and thus God has required a punishment of spiritual and physical death as the consequence of sin. So sa he said the consequence of their eating of the tree i.e. sinning was death.

But in addition to this let's think of this logically. If you rebel against God that means that you don't like God, therefore the punishment for this rebellion is logically separation from him. What is separation from him? Spiritual death. It all ties together.

Here's what the Bible says:

*Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death **but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

The Bible also tells us that there is no man who has not sinned.

Romans 3:23. For all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God.

Hebrews 9:22 And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness [of sin].

Let's move forward now to the time of Abraham in Gen 22

1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"... "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." 3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day Abraham

looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there...." 6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

Do you think that Abraham knew that he was prophesying when he said this? Because about 2000 years later. God did provide the lamb for the sacrifice for all our sins.

Gen 22:9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." 13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

About a 1000 years later, Solomon would build his temple and altar right on that very spot where Isaac had almost been sacrificed.

Moses

Do you remember when Moses was trying to get Pharaoh to let his people go? What was the last plague that hit Egypt? The death of every FIRST born son. What did the Jews have to do to protect their sons? Their first borns? They had to sacrifice a pure spotless lamb and paint its blood across their door posts. Then when the Angel of the Lord, the Angel of death came by, it "passed over" their homes.

Their firstborn son's were saved, and God gave his firstborn son in their place. That blood across the door was a symbol of the blood of whom? The lamb that was to come. And that time of year is called what? The Passover.

Anybody want to guess what time of the year it was when Jesus died?
Exactly, the Passover.

So you see the original punishment for the very first sin was death and not only physical death but eventual spiritual death. And through the ages God reminds His people over and over again what is to come and what is to be.

Therefore when God comes to deal with sin, he's already said and decreed that the punishment for sin is death i.e. separation from him. He decreed it at the beginning of time. He told Adam and Eve it was death, and he meant it. Now hang in there with me and we'll talk more about why it HAD to be Spiritual Death a bit later on.

Why blood? Why gore?

OK let's say we buy the fact that death is the punishment for sin because that's what God made it at the beginning. So then why is blood so important? Let's look at the Bible.

Lev.17:11 "...for the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul."

Gen. 9:4 "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat." You are not supposed to drink or eat blood because that's where the life comes from. There is one exception to this rule isn't there?

Yes, communion. What is that? The symbolic drinking of the blood of Christ.

So these verses along with others tell us that the LIFE is where? In the BLOOD.

So God decreed that death is the punishment for sin, or if you will a life is required, and the blood is what takes the life, which is required. The shedding of blood is what brings about the death.

Note here that the mere shedding of blood was not enough. It would not be sufficient for Jesus simply to have pricked his finger and let it bleed on the ground. By shedding of blood God really means: to die. As we will see Jesus had to die spiritually and physically.

Why God has to punish sin

Now coming back to our friend Bob, still sitting there at our lunch table wondering where we've been gone all this time. If you recall, his big question was:

I have trouble believing a good loving God could be so cruel as to put someone in hell forever. I'm not a bad person. I'm basically a good person. I haven't killed anyone.

How many of you have been hit with this statement or something like it before?

So let's look at it closely.

You see I think as we logically evaluate this statement and the nature of God we will see how it is only because of the fact that God is good that he Has to punish someone and that too eternally.

First of all let's separate the eternal part of the punishment from the requirement to punish. We'll deal with the eternal part later. Let us look at why God has to punish evil at all

Our first premise is:

"Any sin is evil and it is precisely because God is good that He has to punish evil"

Let's understand why this is so.

There are really 4 options here.

1. Either God is good and he doesn't punish evil (which is what our friend Bob's question is)
2. or God is good and he does punish evil (which is what we as Christians are trying to prove)
3. or God is not good and he does punish evil (which is irrelevant)
4. or God is not good and he does not punish evil. (Which will haunt us later)

We toss out the last two for that is not the question although item 4 will be relevant in a few minutes.

Let's take item 1. God is good and he doesn't punish evil.

This sounds good. After all, God we are told is in the business of forgiving sinners.

But hopefully some of you have already seen the problem with this option. Because this would mean that despite whatever you've done bad in the past you'd be forgiven. But that sounds good you say. But that means that if anyone had done anything bad, they would not be punished. That means no evil people will be punished.

Whoops! That means that despite everything that Hitler has done, God, would not punish Hitler. And in fact, Hitler would get to live in Heaven forever and enjoy life and all eternity in the luxury of heaven. Wait a minute you say. Hitler needs to be punished. What sort of God would God be if he didn't punish someone as evil as Hitler. He wouldn't be a good God. A good God would make sure justice is served. We just changed our tune didn't we? You see it is precisely because God is good that he has to make sure that justice is served. He does so by extracting a punishment for evil.

Do you see that? For instance, if there was a father, whose son was evil and cruel and the son kept beating up younger kids and kicking dogs and hurting people and the father never stopped the kid, and he never punished the kid. Would we call that a good father? Not at all.

Which is exactly item 4.

4. God is not good and he does not punish evil.

You see if God did not punish evil he'd end up as item 4. God would be bad if he did not punish sin.

It is precisely because God is good that He **has** to punish evil.

But wait you say. There's a second and third part to that, isn't there. The father had to not only punish the kid, but he had to teach the kid not to do what he was doing and also to stop the kid from doing anything bad. Well, that is called Sanctification and we'll have to deal with that a bit later.

Why does it have to be Eternal Punishment? Who goes to Hell? Why do they go to Hell?

Now that we know that God has to punish evil, let's talk about why it would have to be eternal punishment and we'll also explain why it has to be Spiritual Death and we'll discuss "Who goes to Hell?" and why they go there.

It's a very valid question to ask: Why would God have to be so severe in his punishment that he'd send someone to hell for all eternity, simply as a consequence of just disobeying him.

First let's be quite clear what heaven and hell are: Heaven is defined as eternity in the presence of God's grace. Hell is defined as eternity in the absence of God's grace.

They are not physical places (they are probably more better described as extra-dimensional places). There are lots more on the extra-dimensionality of God if anyone is interested.

Remember our friend Bob? He wanted to know why God would put anyone in Hell forever just because they said a few white lies. Specially, since he thinks he's a basically good person.

What Bob needs to know is that it has nothing to do with being good or bad.

God, that is Jesus Christ, doesn't put people in hell for lying.

Let me say that again. God doesn't put anyone in Hell for lying.

God doesn't put anyone in Hell for stealing.

God doesn't put anyone in Hell for murdering.

In fact if we presume that Hitler did not become a Christian in his last moments, then Hitler didn't go to hell because he murdered so many people.

Hitler didn't go to hell because he was a racist.

Hitler didn't go to hell because he hated the children of God (the Jews).

Does anyone here want to guess why Hitler would have gone hell?

Exactly, God puts people in Hell for rebelling against Him. For rejecting Him.

For all the bad things Hitler did, the worst thing Hitler did and the thing that made him worthy of Hell was what?

It was rebellion against God.

And you know what – we have **all** been guilty of that.

Just like Hitler – we have **all** been guilty of that rebellion against God at some point in time. But through the grace of the almighty God, He has saved us.

In fact there is an additional very very important point to this: Just as God doesn't put anyone in hell for being bad, he doesn't put anyone in Heaven for being good either. You can't work your way into heaven. It's as simple as that. Heaven is for people who accept and love God, that is, Jesus Christ, Hell is for those who reject and hate Him and don't want to be with Him. It's very logical. Especially when you rephrase it as so: Living in the presence of God's grace forever is reserved for people who love him. Living in the absence of God's grace forever is reserved for people who hate him and don't like him. It's similar to how you would handle it as a person inviting friends into your home. There is no good or bad involved in the consideration.

So I want to give you an answer to one of the tough statements:

What if someone says: **I'm basically good. I haven't killed anyone.**

You can answer: It's not a question of good or bad at all. Jesus doesn't put anyone in Hell for being bad or lying. He doesn't put people in heaven for being good. He puts people in Hell for rejecting Him, for rebelling against Him.

Let me ask you a question. Are you rebelling against God?

If you think God is calling you, then accept Him today.

Now do you remember what the Bible says is the consequence of disobeying God? Of rebelling against God?

The Bible is quite clear that the consequences of sin i.e. this rebellion is death.

Romans 6:23. For the wages of sin is death.

But what sort of death are we talking about here? It's certainly not **only** physical death. For everyone dies physically even Christians, but it is also a spiritual death. An eternal death, an eternal conscious separation from God, so we must be able to answer as to **WHY** the consequence of sin is eternal death and not merely some temporary punishment.

To do that we have to understand the nature of God.

But that is always a problem because God is so infinite and He created space. Now we have trouble just imagining the infinite reaches of space. So how much less could we comprehend the being that created Space? But we can try.

First we have to remember who we are dealing with. God is not a man. He is an Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent being. In lay terms that means:

God is all-powerful,

God is all knowing and

God is all present.

Now I want to explain that last part. Omnipresent, means that God is present not only in all space, but He is also present in ALL TIME. In other words, He is everywhere, ALL the time. Let me elaborate. We need to understand that when God created space. He also created Time. Time is something. And John chapter 1 tells us that there is nothing that was created that wasn't created by God. So time is something that God created. God existed before that, before there was time. So God is outside of time. God treats time, just like he treats space. God co-exists at all time in all space. He exists in every instant in time simultaneously. Just like he exists in every point in space simultaneously. God is a multi-dimensional being.

Let's take an interesting little side trail here: Sometimes people ask me: What was before God? Where did God come from? And my answer is. There was no "before" before God created time, so the question has no meaning.

Let me say that again because I've had people say: Huh?

There was no "before" before God created time, so the question is meaningless.

You see, Stephen Hawking the Physicist suggests that Time started about 17 Billion years ago. Whether you agree with his dating system or not is immaterial, the point is that there was a singularity when time did not exist. So you see the instant before God created Time, the word "before" had no meaning. In fact the word "instant" had no meaning at that ...uh...instant.

We can't even explain it because we lack the ability to imagine it, and the words to describe it, so forget about understanding it.

Having said all that here are some more possible reasons why God has to punish sin eternally.

1. First we have to understand that punishment in God's eyes means banishment from His presence. When you think of that, it's quite natural. We rebel against God because we don't like him. As a result God gives us exactly what we want. Space away from him. But then we realize that we need God to exist and existence without God is ...well...Hell. But we are stuck because we hate the very God that we need to exist.
2. Now that Christ has died for our sins, God doesn't send people to hell for lying a bit or cheating a bit. As we've said: after the cross, God sends people to hell for rejecting Him.
For rejecting His Son, who is God.
For rebelling against Him.¹

And Rebellion is forever. People who rebel against God do so because they hate God or refuse to bow down before him. And a million years from now they will hate God even more than they hate him today. RC Sproul puts it this way. People in Hell want to be in Hell, because they would hate being in the presence of God even more than they hate Hell. And since they continue to hate God forever, their separation from God has to be ... forever.

In other words for those who hate God, being in Heaven would be worse of a Hell than Hell itself.

In a sense God is being kinder to them by keeping them away from Him in Hell. And this is what we call Spiritual Death.

Now you could ask why wouldn't someone change after seeing how bad it is in hell.

Good question, I'm glad you asked that question.

Unfortunately that question will have to be postponed to another day...not because I don't have a possible opinion, but because it may take us a while to go into it. For now assume that there are explicable reasons why this does not happen (and do some of your own research into this – think along these lines – this is an attempt of an example: Let's say that you hated the US and believed that you were commanded to destroy it by your blind faith in your fictitious god. Let's say we caught

¹ Predestination notwithstanding that is.

you and put you in prison for life but every day you watched TV from your cell and saw how well things were going for the US and how they were being glorified. After 40 years of this (assuming you didn't age and mature) would you feel more kindly to the US at the end or hate it more? Sure this is a weak example because it has lots of caveats e.g. did we treat you nicely during your imprisonment, did we attempt to befriend you etc. But hopefully you have a gist of some of the reasons why it is quite possible that after a million years, those separated from God because of their hate may hate God more than when they started).

So coming back, that is why the consequences of sin is **Eternal Spiritual Death**.

You see we aren't sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners. Our very nature before we were saved was of sin. And as long as we have that nature we will hate God, and as long as we hate God we would rather be in Hell than with Him in Heaven.

Want evidence of that?

Romans 7:8 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

I am UNABLE to do anything good. It is impossible for me to do anything Good on my own.

Romans 3:10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." 13 "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." 14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and misery mark their ways, 17 and the way of peace they do not know." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Let me repeat that: We aren't sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners. Our very nature before we were saved was of sin.

And as long as we have that nature we will hate God, and as long as we hate God we would rather be in Hell without him, than in Heaven with Him.

And THAT is why the wages of Sin is death. Spiritual and Eternal Death. And that is why God requires Death to justify us. And that is why God told Adam and Eve in the Garden that Spiritual Death was the consequence of sin.

And that is why God rejected Cain's offering of salad and accepted Abel's symbolic death of the lamb.

And that is why God symbolically made a covenant with Abraham that revolved around the substitution of Abraham's son with God's son.

And that is why the Passover in Egypt revolved around the saving of the Jew's first borns with the blood of a lamb, and that is why the Jews sacrificed animals every year for centuries.

3. OK continuing with reasons why God punishes eternally. We all agree that the punishment should fit the crime. For instance if you were betray me and rebel against me. They wouldn't execute you today but if you were to betray the government and rebel against it and become a traitor. They'd execute you.

You see, the person against whom the crime is committed decides the seriousness of the crime. In the old days, if you stole something from a peasant, they probably didn't even care. If you stole something from a merchant they'd beat you. If you stole something from a public official they'd torture you. If you stole something from a Lord, you'd get hanged. But if you stole something from the King, you'd first get beaten then tortured, then hanged then you'd finally have your head chopped off, and they may even come after your family. The more important the person against whom you'd done wrong, the more severe the crime. Now fortunately we nowadays believe that all mankind are equal. So we don't have different crimes for different people unless you live in a Fascist country.

But God is not equal to us. So the penalty for a sin against God is infinitely greater than a penalty against a fellow human.

4. Continuing with that, you can shoot a dog and they won't give you life in prison (unless you are in San Francisco of course), but if you shoot a man they give you life in prison. So who/what you commit the sin against is also what determines the severity of the punishment. Now follow me on this as well. A finite sin against a finite person is punishable only by a finite punishment.

But would you agree that if it were possible to do, an infinite sin against a finite person should be punishable by an infinite punishment.

Now do you see why a finite sin against an infinite God is punishable by an infinite punishment?

5. Some people say, why should the fact that someone sins for 100 years result in a punishment of all infinity. Well the reality is that the amount of time it takes to commit a crime does not relate to the amount of time the punishment should be. For instance, you could take a gun and shoot a man right here in 30 seconds. That punishment would be far more severe than if you spent 5 years embezzling money from a bank.
6. If a sinner were not punished eternally then God would eternally have to deal with that sinner. As we've said, we don't sin and therefore are sinners. We sin because we are sinners by nature. That's what happened when Adam sinned in the garden of Eden. God told them. The day you eat of it you will die. What was He said, He was saying we would become infected with the desire to sin. And Adam and Eve would doom their entire race to this disease of hating God as Paul tells us that no one seeks GOD. We all hate him or hated Him in the past if we are saved. We inherited our father's sin nature. *Our very nature is to sin and so we sin. Watch a 2 year old and tell me that we don't have a sin nature. Everybody around the 2 year old may be giving and kind. But what's the first thing a two year old does when it has to share a toy. She says: "MINE." It takes years of training to learn kindness and giving. We aren't born with it. We learn to care for others.* If God were to continue to let us exist and do our own thing we would continue to sin and if we continued to sin, God would have to continue to punish that sin because he is a good and a just God as we've discussed earlier.

We sin because we are sinners. So any religion that tells you that to get to heaven you have to be good is doomed to what? Failure! Why because it is impossible for us to not sin. We inhabit sin. We are sinful by our very essence. By our very nature. If you go to a church or join a religion and they tell you that you can only get to heaven if you don't do any bad things. You know that they are asking you to do something absolutely impossible. It's against your very nature. You are doomed before you walk out that door.

Note you also can't do enough "good" to outweigh the bad. That's because you are asking "How much good can I do to please the God that I hate." Obviously that's a silly question.

So the concept that God could just wave his hand and forgive us is a trite unworkable solution. God has to solve this problem of eternal rebellion.

How does He do that?

Well there is another option, God could just wave his hand and make us "good". Note that it wouldn't really work if God forced us to be good: because even if we were forced to act good but in our minds we really wanted to rebel against him, that would be sin all over again and heaven would be hell if there were a bunch of people who really wanted to sin but couldn't.

Think about it. If you lived in heaven and really wanted to sin but couldn't. That would be similar to a prison full of pathological murderers wouldn't it? All these people who want to go out and murder people but can't. Imagine that being heaven. So the only true way this would work is if God were to change us from the core, from the very depths of our very being. Make us all non-sinners. Make us all "Good people". Change us. This interesting is also tied to the root word of "baptism". Don't forget these points because while we don't have time to cover it in this paper, it's a very important and should be studied further. It has to do with Sanctification. That can be your homework. Don't forget this point because it's going to be very important a little while from now.

So in summary we now have the following: It is because God is good that he has to punish sin and that too eternally.

Why then did Jesus have to die? What use was it? How does it work?

OK so all we've agreed upon then is that the wages of sin is spiritual death. So where does Jesus come into the picture. Well as we obviously all know, he comes in the picture because he was willing to die for us. But we haven't answered the real question because what a lot of people will ask you is: Why was it necessary or sufficient for Jesus to die for us? What's with all this dying business? How does that work? Why does it work?

And this is a very valid and important question. Unfortunately sometimes we don't really know how to answer this fully. So let's go over it.

Why sin is so bad revisited.

If you recall we said in essence: If a man sins against a Holy God, then the punishment is for God to banish that man to a spiritual death, this does not mean extinguishing, but rather an eternity banished from the presence of the Almighty God, which is Hell in itself.

How the debt can be paid

But what man has created by sinning against this Almighty God is a debt that needs to be paid. If you recall, we said, that God HAS to punish SIN. Otherwise he wouldn't be a good God. Now as we've also seen the only way to pay that debt is for man to die spiritually.

However, the wrath of God can be satisfied if the debt is paid by someone else who is willing. Because then while it is not fair to that someone else, Justice is still served. And God is still a Good God.

So someone could feasibly come and take my penalty and die a spiritual death for me. A Substitutionary Atonement. That someone could be my justification if you will. Because he satisfies the justice that needs to occur.

Let me say that again: Someone could come and take my penalty and die a spiritual death for me. We would call that a Substitutionary Atonement. That person would BE my justification. Because he satisfies the justice that needs to occur.

However, the first problem is what if I were to sin again. Then my penalty once paid would have to be paid again. And since I only have 1 death to pay for my first sin, I wouldn't be able to satisfy the second payment. Unless I could find a way to pay for all my debt, past, present and future.

Secondly, if the person himself were guilty of anything then that person who paid my debt, would now be in a quandary, simply because someone has to pay HIS debt.

And someone would have to pay that person's debt and someone would have to pay that person's debt until we ran out of people.

And who would pay for the last guy's debt. But the analogy shouldn't stop there should it. Let's take it a step further and see if it helps us understand this debt thing.

You see let's say that I didn't want to go to Hell and you out of the goodness of your heart offered to go to hell and pay my debt. But there's an inherent problem there. Let me illustrate it with an example. Let's say that I owed the state a fine of \$100,000. But I couldn't pay it. But you, however said, hey, I have exactly \$1,000,000 and that's all I have, but I care about you Neil so I'll pay it for you. But when he went to the court to pay it, the judge said, "Hey wait a minute, our court records indicate that you owe us \$1,000,000 as well. So then they'd say, sorry Neil you are out of luck. They'd turn to you and say: thanks for the \$1,000,000 but that only covers you, but Neil still owes us \$1,000,000.

You see if you were to offer to die for me, to pay for my sins, when you went to offer your life you wouldn't be allowed it to pay for me until they knew that somehow you'd be able to pay it for your own debt as well.

However if you were to go there and they found out that you didn't owe anyone anything, then you could pay the debt for me. So the first requirement for anyone to pay the debt of sin for me would be for that person to have no other debt. I.e. for that person to have no sin. For that person to be pure. And if you recall in the Old Testament traditions the Lamb had to be a pure and spotless lamb.

Why Christ had to be sinless?

So there we have the first reason why Christ had to be pure. Why Christ HAD to be sinless, why He could not have been a sinner. Because if he had been a sinner then he would have had to die to pay for HIS sins and would not have been able to pay for us. Remember the movie "The last Temptation of Christ" in that movie Jesus supposedly lusts after Mary Magdalena. A lot of my non-Christian friends couldn't understand why I thought that movie was just plain offensive. You see, first they didn't realize that God calls lusting after someone you are not married to a sin, and secondly if Jesus had sinned, then he would not have been eligible to die for anyone else's sin, much less the entire worlds. And that would have put an end to this whole sacrifice thing wouldn't it?

So the lamb had to be sinless,.... Mother Teresa couldn't pay for it, Gandhi couldn't pay for it, and the Pope couldn't pay for it, why? Because none of them were sinless. No man is sinless.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God

Also the Bible says that there is no man who does not sin.

How did he pay for ALL the people who would be saved?

But that really only answers one part of the problem. You see if Christ was pure, he could have paid for the debt of a single man. But the question still remains. How did Christ then pay for all of mankind who would be saved?

Well this comes back again to the finite and infinite nature of things, if Christ was a supernatural infinite being, if Christ was God, then indeed his death would have been sufficient to pay for all mankind who would be saved. Because His value is infinite. Thus his value would not be equal to a single man, but to all mankind for all eternity. And that's why the death of Christ was a sufficient atonement for our sins. The punishment of an infinite being was sufficient to cover the finite debt of a finite number of finite beings.

And this is also why Christ had to be Infinite God and couldn't have just been a perfect man. He had to be an Infinite Perfect Being.

Why didn't Christ have to die eternally? Didn't he have to be equal to a sinner in hell for eternity?

But now we come to a further problem. Christ did not die eternally. In fact he came back to life. And that itself is critical simply because it was by His resurrection that He proved he was God. There's more to that and we'll talk about that as well later. But this does cause a problem because if we are required to pay for our sin by eternal death, then why is it that Christ did not die eternally. Well the answer is straight forward, first eternal death is not extinguishing but rather eternal separation from God. Now, if we look at what happened on the Cross, do you recall what Jesus said while he was hanging on the cross? He cries out "My God, my God why have you forsaken me." You see from that moment till he said: It is finished. Jesus was in Hell. Yes, you see Hell is separation from God. And for those moments/hours Jesus was separated from his eternal father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus was quite literally experiencing Hell.

But there is second part of that. You see, Jesus IS God, therefore being God he is eternal in nature. Thus it is a impossible for an eternal infinite being to die eternally, and secondly it is impossible for God to be separated from Himself for all eternity (which if you recall is what Spiritual death is). For those terrible moments, God the Son was separated from all he'd known for all eternity. But he couldn't be separated from them for eternity.

So in that finite terrible time Christ was able to sufficiently and substitutionary pay more for the infinite less terrible time for all those who would accept Him.

There is a third option, that I like to consider, and that is, if you recall we said that God is omnipresent in time and space, he is in all times at all time. I.e. He is outside of time, like we can be outside a box and view the events that occur in different parts of the box. Thus Christ who is God is in a sense eternally present in His suffering at the cross. So God sees an eternal payment of the finite sin. While this is not an orthodox view, it does give you a glimpse into the complexities of an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being. Of course you couldn't argue the same for a finite non-omnipresent being.

Thus we can conclude that

- a) death was necessary to pay for my debt
- b) Christ had to be sinless to qualify as a worthy atonement
- c) Christ could not have died eternally because he is an infinite being
- d) Christ's death while not eternal was sufficient to pay not only my sins, but also all the sins of those who would be saved, because he is the Infinite God,

The finite death of an infinite being is sufficient atonement for the infinite death of finite beings.

And finally remember how God asked Abraham to sacrifice HIS true firstborn and only son, well God in the covenant could not ask Abraham for more than he would require of himself. So God in return had to sacrifice HIS firstborn and only son, to pay for the sins of Abraham, his son and all who would believe. Do you see the symbolism there?

The audacity and arrogance of claiming that Jesus is the only way to God

Now let's address the final question: The audacity and arrogance of claiming that Jesus is the only way to God.

One of the biggest complaints I get from non Christ followers is this:

Don't you think it's rather arrogant for you to think that only you Christians know the truth? That only you Christians know the way to eternal life? Why is it that Christians are so exclusive that they condemn everybody else to hell? That is usually followed by the question: Do you think I am going to hell because I don't believe in Jesus.

This question needs to be dealt with kindly. The answer is simply this:

Our faith is based on 4 fundamental premises when it relates to this:

1. We believe the Bible is accurate
2. We believe Jesus was telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
3. We believe Jesus said He was God
4. We believe Jesus said He was the ONLY way to Salvation.

So now in light of these premises, we have to say that it is NOT us that are arrogant. We humbly believe Jesus at this word. If anyone is arrogant in this equation it is going to be Jesus. Do you see that? So now the person who's asking why we are arrogant, can't say that they think that we as Christians arrogant, they have to agree that our exclusive belief system is logically based upon the 4 premises. They can dispute that what we believe is correct, but they cannot presume that we are arrogant. So at the end of the day, the real questions our non-Christ follower friends have to ask is: Why was Christ so arrogant as to believe that He was the ONLY way to God? And our answer and I believe His is because: He is the ONLY God all the others are frauds. The truth is not always palatable or fair. As the great Dread Pirate Roberts said so wisely: Life is unfair Princess, anyone who tells you otherwise is selling something. {Actually he said "Life is Pain Princess." But I like my version better.}

Now the next logical question from your friend will be: Do you think I am going to hell, because I don't believe in Christ?

And that was our friend Bob's question wasn't it. My answer to that is always: My dear friend, if you continue to rebel against Jesus, then when you get to Heaven, you won't like Him and He'll give you exactly what you want at that point. So please do consider not rebelling against Him.

Why did Jesus have to come to earth and get tempted?

Jesus had to suffer all kinds of temptation. Contrary to popular belief it is the person who resist temptation who knows how powerful temptation is because he has had to fight it all the way. The one who has given into temptation will most probably give in to it over and over again and really has no comprehension of how hard it is to resist. Christ in the flesh had to suffer all types of temptation in order to prove himself worthy (not to God but to all the accusers)? Why? Because once he had resisted all temptations no one could point their finger at him and say: You do not understand, or you have no right to judge. Secondly Christ suffered as a result of resisting those temptations. He did good and suffered. Again so that no one could point at him and say that Christ did not go through what they had gone through. Thirdly if Christ had never been tempted like we were, then he really wouldn't qualify as having been pure. Because he never was given a chance to sin. For instance, you couldn't really say that you would never ever do anything bad, if you'd never been given an opportunity to do anything bad. But having gone through the temptations, having been given many chances to sin and refusing it. Christ was now sinless despite having the opportunity to do so.

(Now this of course raises a new question: Was Jesus capable of sinning given the opportunity....that's a debate for a whole different level and more of a philosophical issue...I'd say no...for God cannot sin. But then one could argue that Jesus didn't really have the opportunity and so on etc....)

Why Christ Had to rise from the dead.

Let's go back to our friend Bob for a second, he's still back there at the lunch table. He asked us to explain why it was so important for Christ to rise from the dead. Well as we've know the fundamental crux of Christianity is that Christ rose from the dead. Without that we are all fools. But why is that the fundamental crux of Christianity? So let's understand why Christ had to rise. We understand why Christ had to die for us. But did he have to physically rise, couldn't he have just spiritually risen?

God has let Satan duplicate many miracles, but no one has yet been able to rise from the dead. Sure there are many close forgeries, like the voodoo zombies and what not. But no one has been able to raise themselves from the dead. So one of the

first reasons is so that Jesus could prove that he was God. Note that one of the signs of the end times will be when Satan duplicates this when the Anti Christ a public figure dies and appears to come back to life.

Christ had to rise because that's first how he proved he was God. That's the first part of it.

Secondly Christ had to rise because God was showing us what our hope would be. It was the promise of things to come. The fact that Christ arose is the promise that we will rise one day. It's the promise of eternal life.

Thirdly by rising physically Christ proved that he was God over Death and the Grave.

Christ also had to rise because his new body was a sort of prototype of our resurrected bodies. The body that Christ had after his resurrection will be like the body that we get after we rise up as well. I say "sort" of prototype because Christ carries the scars of the price he paid for us. Our bodies will be brand new, with no deformities, no diseases no problems.

Word Definitions

Now let's define some words to describe what we know.

propitiate (pru•pish'E•At"),
to make favorably inclined; appease; conciliate. An offering that has been successfully made to appease God, to turn His wrath from us. Christ was the propitiation for us.

impute (im•pyOOt'),
1. to attribute or ascribe
2 Theol.to attribute (righteousness, guilt, etc.) to a person or persons vicariously; credit as derived from another.
Christ's righteousness was imputed to us sinners.

atonement \A*tone"ment\
1. (Literally, a setting at one.) Reconciliation; restoration of friendly relations; agreement; concord. [Archaic]
2. Satisfaction or reparation made by giving an equivalent for an injury, or by doing of suffering that which will be received in satisfaction for an offense or injury; expiation; amends; -- with for.

Substitutionary Atonement: A substitutionary payment. Reparation given by one who is not the offending party. Christ was the substitutionary atonement for us. He paid the price for us.

Justification \Jus`ti*fi*ca"tion\
1. a showing or proving to be just such that the law requires no more from you
2. (Theol.) The act of justifying, or the state of being justified, in respect to God's requirements. Such that God requires no more from you.
Christ substitutionary atonement for us justified us.

Sanctification \Sanc`ti*fi*ca"tion\
1. The act of making holy; the state of being made holy; the act of God's grace by which the desires and actions of men are purified,

The Amelioration of Hitler

Hebrews 10: 1-23

Heb 10:1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

2 If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: .. 9 "Here I am, I have come to do your will." 10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest (Jesus) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Now he starts to talk about Sanctification- a new concept for us:

Sanctification: *15 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: 16 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."*

Justification: *17 Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." 18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. 19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*

Sanctification & Justification

Now I earlier mentioned that one of the reasons why God had to punish sin was the example of Hitler. If God were to universally forgive all sin then he'd have to forgive Hitler as well.

But that doesn't let us off the hook because Christians do believe that Hitler could be forgiven. But wait you say, if Hitler could be forgiven then God isn't really punishing sin. No he is, and that is why Christ had to die, to pay for that sin. But you say, "that isn't enough for Hitler, Hitler must pay." This is where Christians and non Christians may disagree. You see, there is a condition where I believe that it would be OK to forgive Hitler. What if Hitler were to realize the "enormosity" of the horrible things he had done. What if Hitler had changed deep in his very soul and regretted so terribly what he had done and would have done anything to go back and fix it? What if Hitler was not only willing to suffer the physical penalty of his actions but also before he died did everything in his power to correct as much of the bad things he had done? What if he then became a preacher of non-violence and on his way to prison had an opportunity to escape but instead gave up his life trying to save someone? Specially, when you realize that killing someone is not the worst thing you can do. Rebelling against God is the worst thing you can do.

At some point you'd have to agree that Hitler had changed. But the whole time you'd wonder if he had indeed changed? But you see God would know if Hitler had really changed.

But there's more to that.

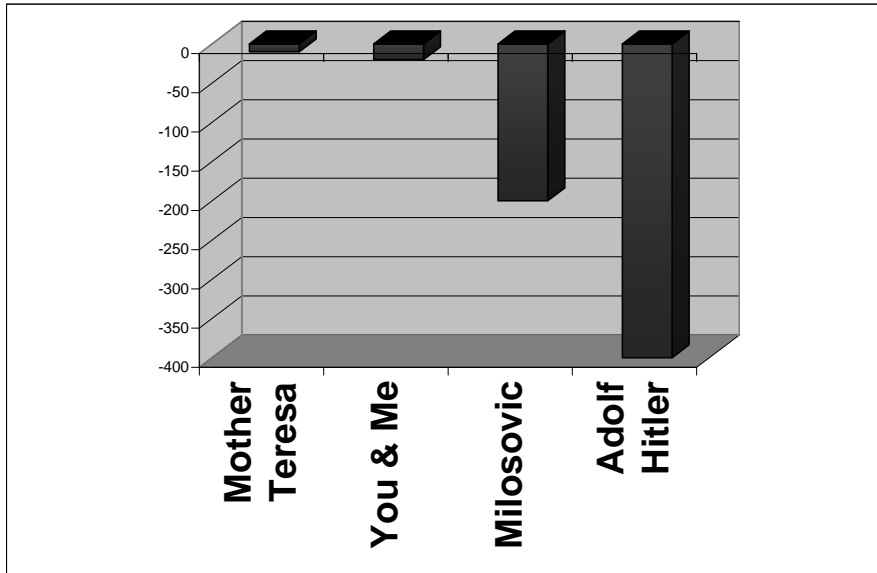
Peter Malkin was an Israeli Mossad Agent. In 1969 he was sent to South America to kidnap Adolf Eichman, a Nazi responsible for the murder of millions of Jews. While they were hiding out after they'd kidnapped Eichman waiting for a way to smuggle him out of the country Malkin got to spend lots of time with Eichman and talk to him. In his book "Eichman in my Hand" Peter Malkin describes how one night after talking to Eichman he breaks down and cries bitterly. Not because of what had happened during the Holocaust but because he realized that Eichman was a normal man. "He's just like me" said Malkin as he sobbed bitterly.

Another famous Nazi Criminal Hunter is reputed to have once said: "The scariest moment in my life was not the first time I met my Death Camp Doctor, but the second time when I met him when he was on trial in Israel. Because as we went through the trial, for the first time in my life I realized that I too was capable of the dreadful horrors that he'd done."

You see my point is that we are all capable of this horribleness. We are all inherently capable of sinning and then sinning some more and then justifying what we do and then becoming callous to the evil we do, becoming callous to the pain that we cause, fooling ourselves into believing that others are human or deserve death at our hands. It grows slowly. Hitler didn't start being evil. He was once a sweet little baby and a nice little boy. Just like you and me. What we do in secret is only the first step. What we do when no one can stop us or we believe no one can punish us is the next step. That's when the true horrors of our personalities come out. We are all capable of that if we do not have Christ.

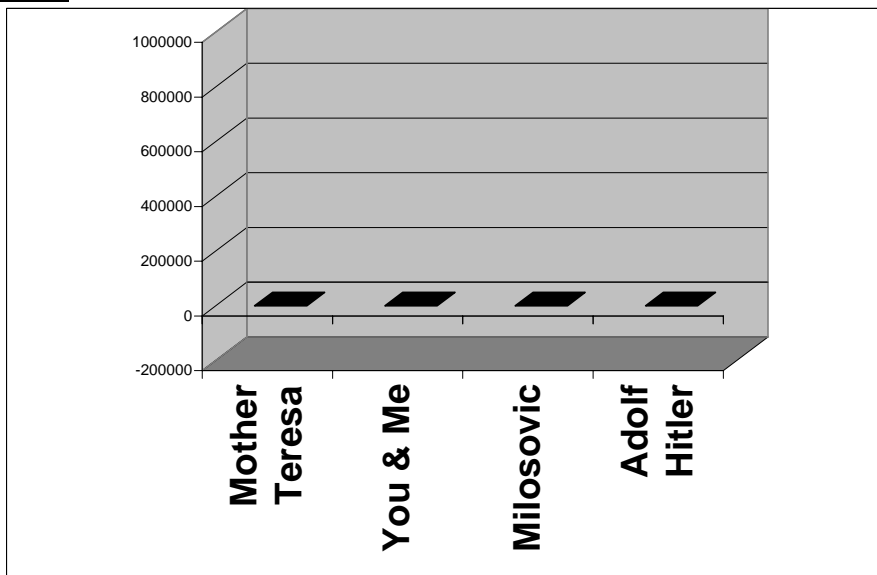
A lot of times we seem to think that there is so much difference between Hitler and us that we forget that we aren't the judge.

Our View of How bad Hitler is vs. us.



You see the difference between us and Hitler is less than the difference between God and us. It's like driving through a city and seeing the skyscrapers and comparing the differences in sizes vs. a small house. But when we compare ourselves to God that's like looking down from a plane 30,000 feet up. Everything looks like a dot.

God's View of How bad Hitler is vs. us.



What am I trying to say? Hitler's story is your story. If God couldn't forgive Hitler neither could he forgive you.

So through the payment of the penalty you CAN be forgiven. But wait....the transformation is just as critical a requirement isn't it?

But you may say, "Anyone can pretend to be holy; any one can pretend to be sorry." But that's the beauty of the Gospel. It does not stop at the sacrifice of Jesus. You see you are saved from your past sin, but you are also saved from your future sin. But moreover this salvation package is not just sin, it includes TRANSFORMATION. Which is where Sanctification comes in. Part and parcel of the salvation message is the transformation of you by the God the Holy Spirit. You are sanctified daily. Not only do we get the transformation of righteousness, but also Christ and the believer become one. You see Christ died to pay for our sins and then we die. Our old man is put away, buried, removed and the new man, the new transformation, the new creature resurrects from those ashes to be not only saved, but once being transformed, that new man is imputed righteousness.

In Christ I died on the cross, and in Him I was resurrected. Thus his death is not only in my place but WITH me. And his resurrection is not only in my place but with me.

Romans 6:3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—

7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.

10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

That is the transformation. Now do you agree that this new creature can be forgiven regardless of what horrible things the old creature had done? And that is our story, regardless of what we have done in our past, our new creature is now redeemed. Of course we all agree, this had better be a new creature or this is all a big mockery. I think we can trust God to know the truth of everyone's heart, don't you?

And now this new creature must learn to live in righteousness. Not that we will ever achieve it in this life, but when we rise from the dead to be with God eternally. And that is exactly what baptism is, we are buried in the grave of water, to rise again in the life and with the Life of the Holy Spirit. We are the new man.

And this is the difference between justification and sanctification.

Justification is that Christ died to save us from Hell. Sanctification is what God does in our lives after we are saved.

Justification cannot be earned. Christ does it all.

Sanctification is the daily walk of you with God. It's you hand in hand with God.

Remember I said that some Churches teach that you have to be good to go to heaven. Some churches teach that you have to accept Christ and then be good. But as you can see what the Bible says is that the only "Good" comes from the Holy Spirit who sanctifies you.

What can we conclude?

- a) You can never be good enough
- b) You die with Christ and rise with Christ, and after that God sanctifies you.
- c) He works in you to slowly bring you to a maturity of that life with Him.
- d) We will never be perfect until we get into heaven.

We have really on just touched the surface. This is a fascinating topic. I hope this has whetted your appetite for more meat of Theology.

References:

There are numerous good references I can suggest some of them are hard reading. But it's good stuff if you can work your way through it.

1. Tapes or Videos from RC Sproul of Ligonier Ministries.
2. Systematic Theology by Millard Erickson
3. Systematic Theology by Berkov
4. Any book on cults that explain "Justification by Faith."
5. The Institutes by John Calvin.

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NOTES:

Question: God says the wages of sin is death, in Romans 6:23 *Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death.* So how do we then defend the concept that God doesn't send anyone to hell for a single sin?

Answer: First, God has to punish sin, and the wages of sin is indeed Death. So someone has to die. But that death punishment was paid by Christ. So we know that justice is served. But now that Christ has died and risen again, so the second part of that verse kicks in

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, BUT the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So while the original wages of sin was death, now through Christ we can have eternal Life. In other words, now we have a way to avoid going to hell for a simple white lie or for that matter even for murder, simply because Christ bore the punishment for those sins.

But what then of the person who doesn't accept? Aren't they going to hell for their sins? Actually the truth is that anyone who sins, sins, only because they are a sinner, because their nature is to rebel against God. Thus in effect the punishment of death is due to their sin nature and rebellion. Basically it's all tied together.

NOTE FROM NEIL:

Dear Reader, I have made every attempt I can to ensure that I have not taught any heretical concepts in this talk. However due to the complex nature of the topic it is quite possible that some slips maybe made. If you encounter anything here that is either new or not in line with the last 20 Centuries of Evangelical Christian and Biblical doctrine, please let me know so that I may correct it. It is not my intention to create any new doctrine but rather teach the original Gospel as preached by the Apostles who learned it from our Lord.