



# ***Why Did Jesus Have to Die?***

by  
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# What is the Gospel?

I want to talk to you about the Gospel. There's nothing more important than this. There are a lot of important topics, but the Gospel trumps them all. This is the Gospel that changed my life and I know it will change your life as well. So, I want to take time to explain what the Gospel is and why Jesus had to die, what Jesus accomplished on the cross and so forth.

When we talk about the Gospel what we're talking about is God's plan of salvation that he's made available to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Out of God's love for humanity Jesus Christ has been provided as an offering to atone for our sins. And because of that atonement we can be granted eternal life as a free gift.

It's a story of God's grace, his love, his mercy, but most importantly, it's a story about what Jesus Christ did in history. There's a reason why the cross is the symbol of the Christian faith, and it's because of what Jesus Christ accomplished two thousand years ago on behalf of mankind.

You might be thinking, “What does the cross have to do with my relationship with God? Why did Jesus have to die?” In order to make sense of the cross we have to lay some groundwork first. And the first place we must start is with an attribute of God known as his holiness.

# God is holy

When we say God is “holy” we are saying he is “set apart” in absolute moral perfection, infinitely good and righteous. The Bible says he dwells in “unapproachable light”. I want to go through a passage in Isaiah 6 right now, a vision that Isaiah had to put the holiness of God into perspective.

*I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:*

*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory!”*

*And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”*

*Isaiah 6:1-5*

He is so holy that the Seraphim have to cover their faces with their wings. Elsewhere, God says that man cannot look upon his face and live.

*Be holy, as I am holy.*

So, we must understand that God is unapproachably holy and pure. The Bible says that righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. (1 Timothy 6:16, Psalm 89:14) And since righteousness is who he is, righteousness is what is required of us in order to be in relationship with him. He says, *“Be holy, as I am holy.”* Absolute perfection is the standard. When God created the first people, he told them what his standard of perfection looked like.

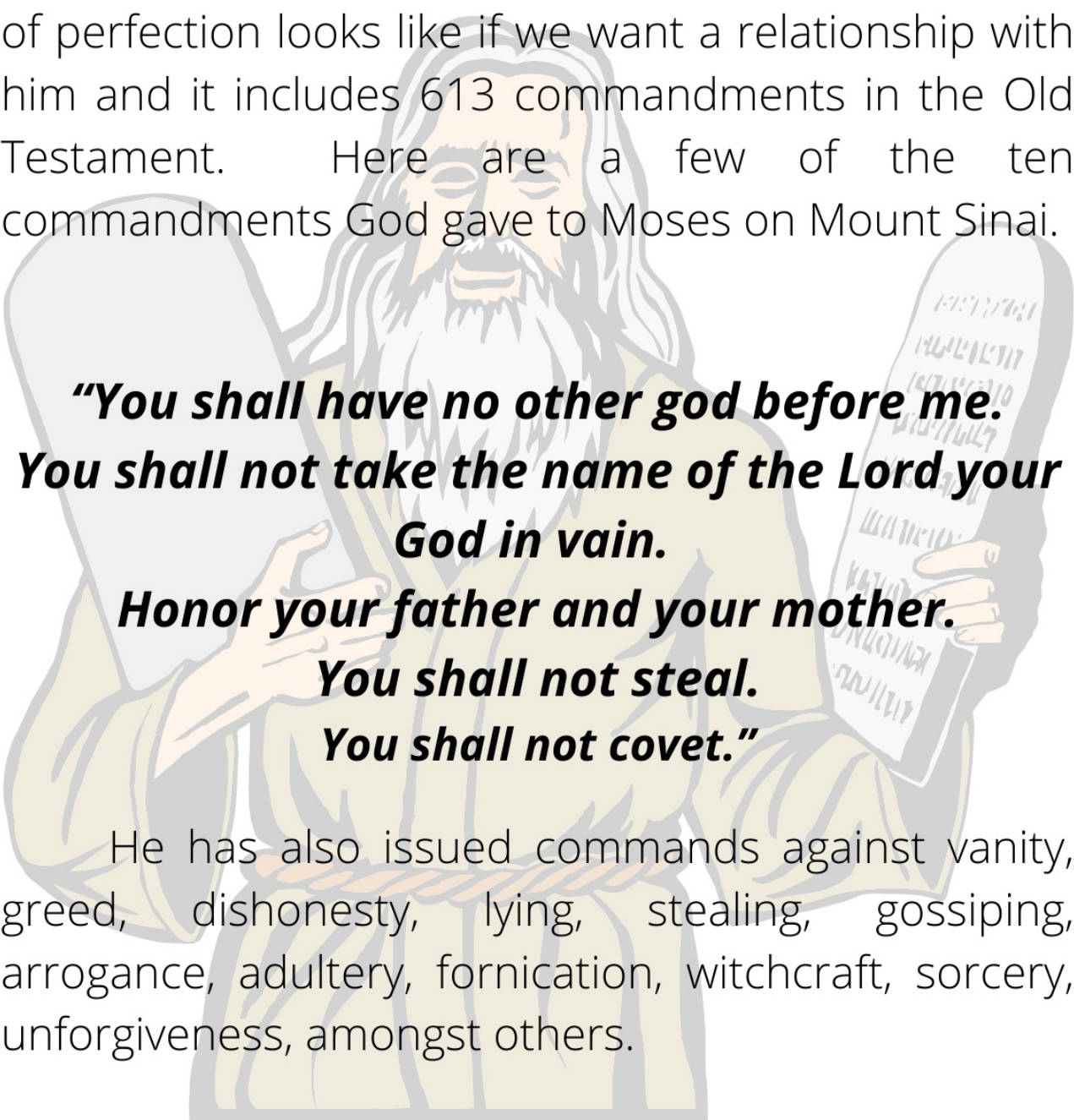
*And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Genesis 2:16, 17*

Now, Satan came and tempted them saying that if they ate from this tree, if they pursued secret knowledge of good and evil, they shall be as God. They gave in to this temptation and committed the first act of sin which brought separation from God and the curse of death into the world.

*And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:2-5*

And so, since we are their offspring, we inherited the consequences of their sin. They were our first representatives before God.

The same God that gave this law to Adam and Eve has also written his laws into our conscience so that we know right from wrong. He's also revealed his law to us in Scripture. God has told us what his standard of perfection looks like if we want a relationship with him and it includes 613 commandments in the Old Testament. Here are a few of the ten commandments God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai.

A stylized illustration of Moses, an elderly man with a long white beard and hair, wearing a yellow robe. He is holding two large, rectangular stone tablets with Hebrew text. The background is a light, textured grey.

***“You shall have no other god before me.  
You shall not take the name of the Lord your  
God in vain.  
Honor your father and your mother.  
You shall not steal.  
You shall not covet.”***

He has also issued commands against vanity, greed, dishonesty, lying, stealing, gossiping, arrogance, adultery, fornication, witchcraft, sorcery, unforgiveness, amongst others.

It's God's love for righteousness, purity and holiness that motivates his condemnation of such sins. But Jesus takes it a step further in Matthew 5 where he says that if we even look at someone with anger or hatred toward them, we've committed

murder in our heart already. He says that if we look at someone with lust in our heart, we're guilty of adultery of the heart already. And there's not a single person who isn't guilty of any of these sins before God. I'm guilty just as much as you are.

Romans 3 makes it extremely clear that no one has met God's standard of righteousness.

*as it is written:*

*"None is righteous, no, not one;*

*no one understands;*

*no one seeks for God.*

*All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;*

*no one does good,*

*not even one."*

*"Their throat is an open grave;*

*they use their tongues to deceive."*

*"The venom of asps is under their lips."*

*"Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."*

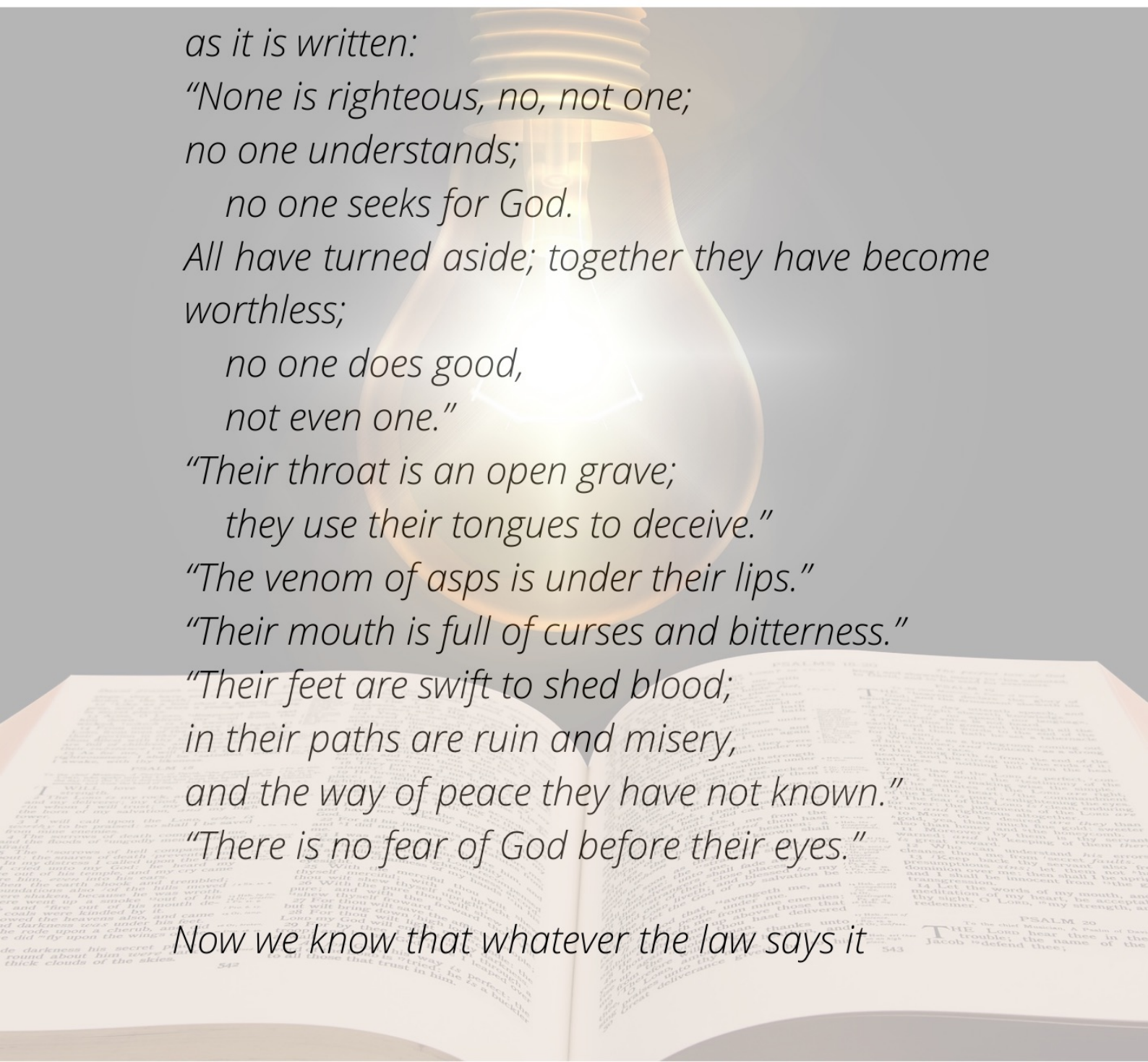
*"Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

*in their paths are ruin and misery,*

*and the way of peace they have not known."*

*"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

*Now we know that whatever the law says it*



*speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:10-23*

If God is so holy and pure and radiant that even the Seraphim can't look upon him and must cover their faces with their wings, how do we think our sin impacts our relationship to him?

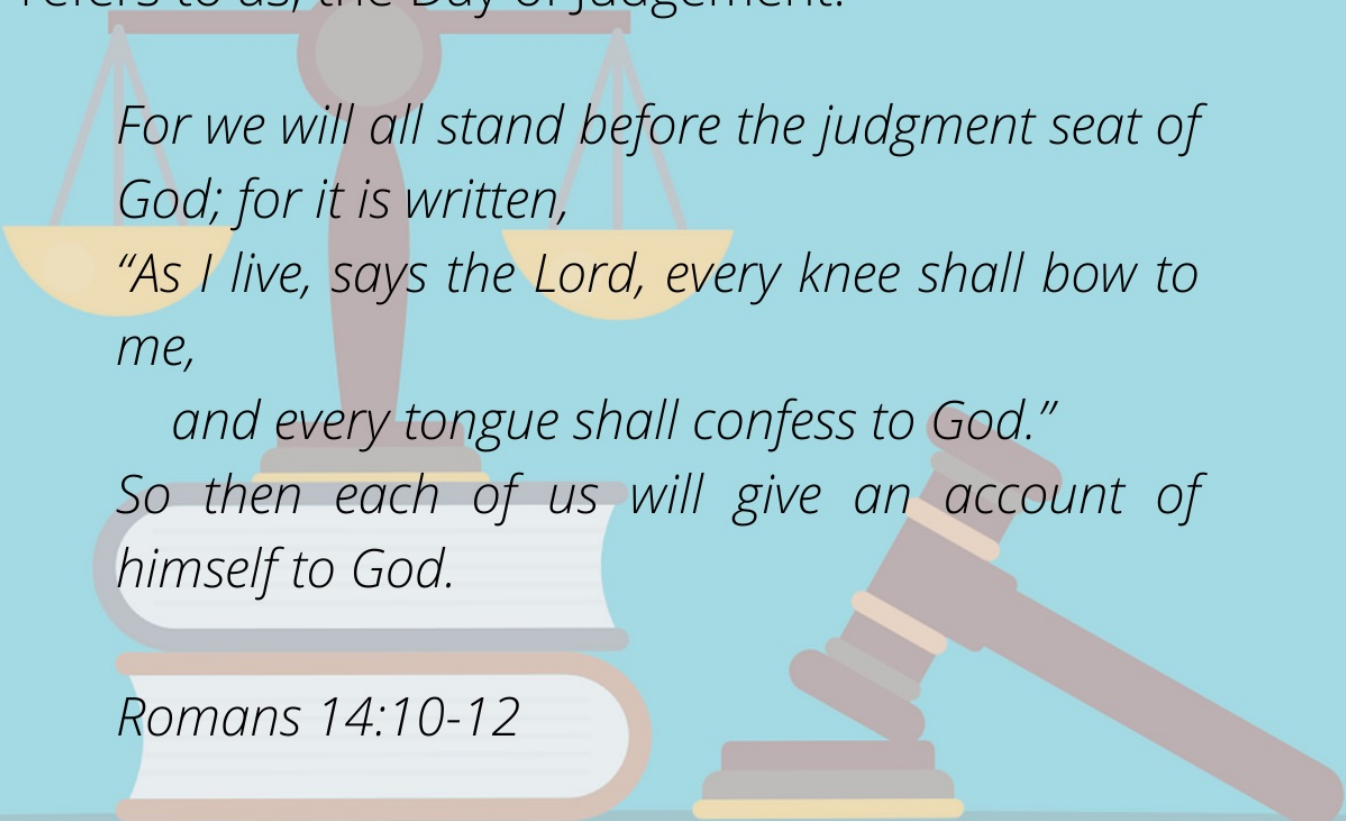
*But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. Isaiah 59:2*

These sins have caused us to be cut off from relationship with God, cut off from fellowship, cut off from his blessings. And the words the Bible uses to describe our relationship with God now are words like "alienated", "hostile" and "spiritually dead" in our sins. But remember, righteousness and justice are the foundation of God's throne. And what this means is that the moral perfection of God entails that sins must be punished. Love demands fair treatment and holiness demands justice.



In the Old and New Testaments, we see tons of courtroom-like language and legal motifs which describe God's relationship to sin. Just like a good judge on Earth requires murderers to be held accountable for their sins, God, whom the Bible says is a Righteous Judge, requires us to be held accountable for our murder of the heart, for our blasphemy, for our theft, for our lying, our gossip and so forth.

If God is holy and just, he must punish sin, otherwise he's not really good. Just like any good earthly judge has demands of justice and will hold criminals accountable under the law, God has demands of justice and we will all appear before the judgement seat of God one day on, what the Bible refers to as, the Day of Judgement.



*For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written,  
"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,*

*and every tongue shall confess to God."  
So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

*Romans 14:10-12*

*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. Revelation 20:11, 12*

God is fundamentally holy, and we simply aren't. And his holiness has demands of justice that must be satisfied. And since God is so much more infinitely holy and pure than we have any frame of reference for, our sin is more severe to him than we can imagine.

Oftentimes in our judicial system the penalty for the crime you've committed is proportionate to the value of the thing that you've sinned against. So, if you go into a junkyard and you take a key out and scratch a car in the junkyard there's no penalty because you're literally just scratching garbage. But if I took that same key and went onto a used car lot and scratched a Toyota Camry, well, suddenly there's a penalty because that car has value.

If you went into a Bugatti dealership and scratched a Veyron, suddenly your penalty went through the roof. And even if you've paid your fine the owner of the dealership might still have problems with you personally. You've broken relationship. There's relational damage that's been done, but also a fine that needs to be paid for the crime.

When we talk about God, we're talking about him being of infinite value and worth. And we're not just talking of scratching a car. We're guilty of cosmic treason against the Creator of Heaven and Earth. What does the smallest scratch against the Trinity warrant as a penalty? What does a lifetime of scratches warrant?

And there's a relational element as well. The car owner might be angry with you. The Bible says that God is angry with us on the cause of our sin. And since God is perfectly holy, perfectly good, his love entails that he hate that which is destructive, that which is evil, and since he has demands of justice, his response to our sin is both wrath and judgement.

And so here we are on the day of judgement, standing before this beautiful God, this holy God,

this righteous and loving God where we must give an account for our sins, and we're condemned before him under the law. Since the penalty is proportionate to the value of that which you have sinned against, and since God is of infinite value, this warrants eternal punishment.

*They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.*

*2 Thessalonians 1:9*

*...but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. Romans 2:8*

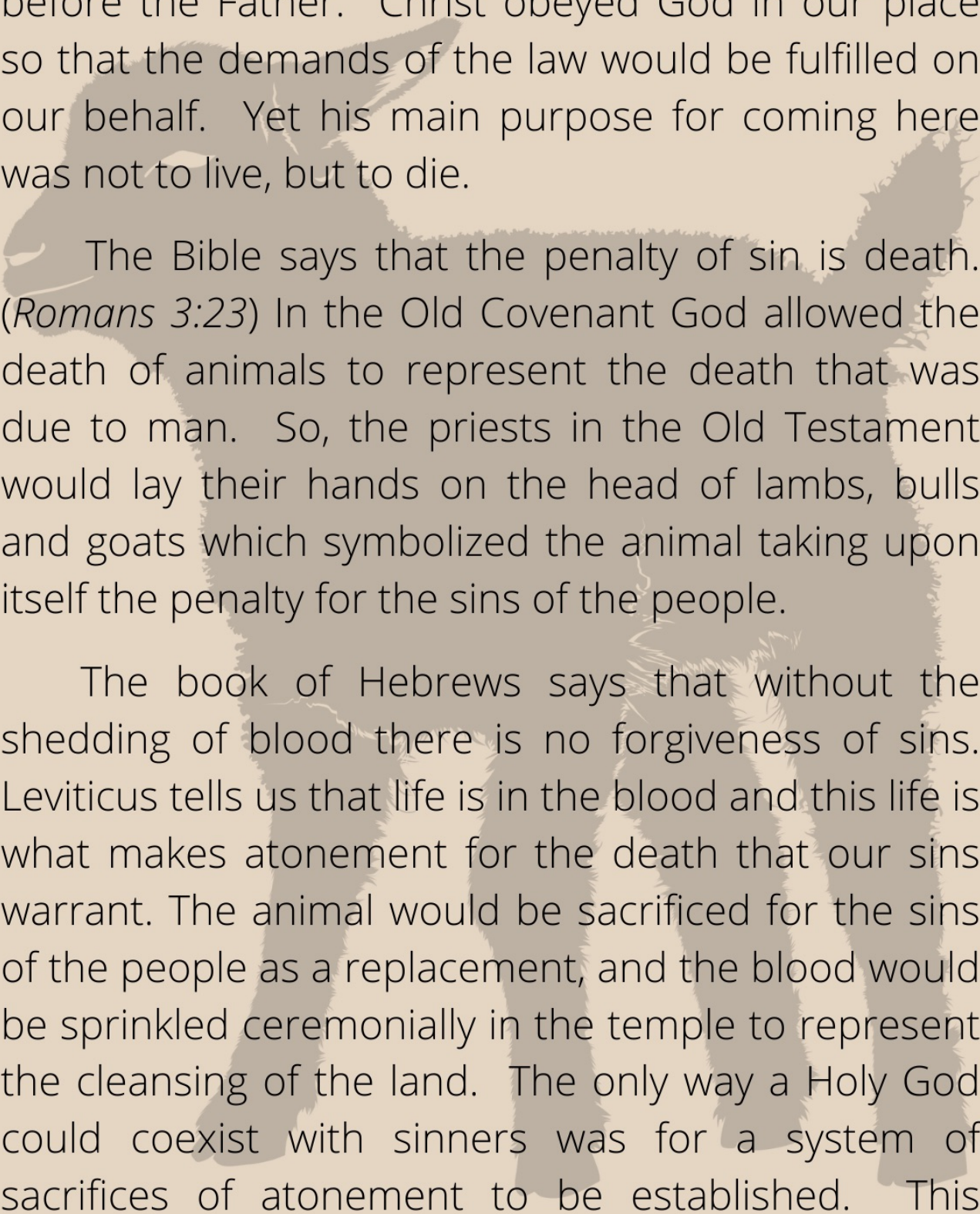
Jesus spoke about Hell no less than three dozen times in the gospels. He spoke about Hell more than anyone else in the Bible put together, and he did so for a reason. God doesn't delight in sending sinners to Hell. He hates it. But he has demands of justice that must be fulfilled just as an earthly judge would sentence a guilty murderer to life in prison. Even if the judge loves the murderer, even if the murderer did good works around that murder, even if the murderer was sorry for his crime and promises to never do it again, it would be wicked of

that judge to let the murderer go free.

The Bible actually says that whoever excuses the guilty is an abomination to God. (Proverbs 17:15, 18:5, 24:24) So our predicament is that God is holy, and we aren't. We need to be made right with a Holy God. We need our sins cleared. We need forgiveness. We need to be reconciled to this God of perfect love and holiness, but his standard is that we be holy, and we are *anything but* holy. We need God's grace, and we need his mercy, but we deserve his justice.

The good news, the Gospel, is that because God is rich in mercy and has love for sinners like you and me, and he has taken care of everything for us. Jesus has made a way, and what he has done for us to be reconciled unto God and be in right relationship with him where the justice of God can be satisfied at the same time.

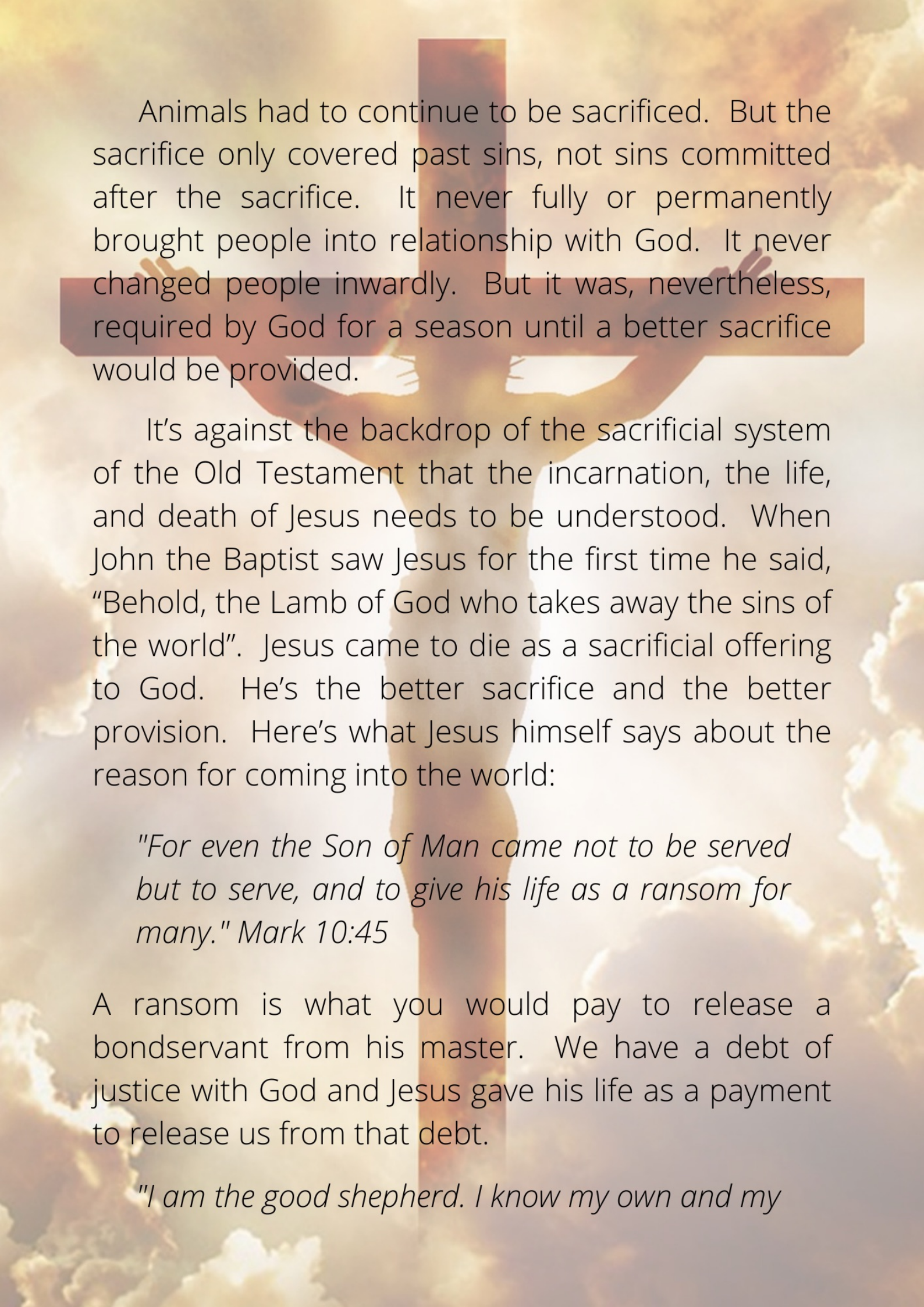
Jesus is the eternal second person of the Trinity, and he looked down from Heaven and decided to take on flesh, volunteering himself to be incarnate in the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, keeping all the commandments and all the laws that we had broken.



Just like Adam represented us before God and got his sins imputed to us, Jesus represented us before the Father. Christ obeyed God in our place so that the demands of the law would be fulfilled on our behalf. Yet his main purpose for coming here was not to live, but to die.

The Bible says that the penalty of sin is death. (*Romans 3:23*) In the Old Covenant God allowed the death of animals to represent the death that was due to man. So, the priests in the Old Testament would lay their hands on the head of lambs, bulls and goats which symbolized the animal taking upon itself the penalty for the sins of the people.

The book of Hebrews says that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. Leviticus tells us that life is in the blood and this life is what makes atonement for the death that our sins warrant. The animal would be sacrificed for the sins of the people as a replacement, and the blood would be sprinkled ceremonially in the temple to represent the cleansing of the land. The only way a Holy God could coexist with sinners was for a system of sacrifices of atonement to be established. This cleansed the people of their sins and turned away God's righteous indignation from them.

A silhouette of a person on a cross is centered in the background. The cross is a simple wooden structure. The person's arms are outstretched horizontally, and their body is vertical. The background is a bright, hazy sky with soft, white clouds. The overall color palette is warm, with yellows, oranges, and whites. A semi-transparent dark red horizontal bar is positioned behind the text in the first paragraph.

Animals had to continue to be sacrificed. But the sacrifice only covered past sins, not sins committed after the sacrifice. It never fully or permanently brought people into relationship with God. It never changed people inwardly. But it was, nevertheless, required by God for a season until a better sacrifice would be provided.

It's against the backdrop of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament that the incarnation, the life, and death of Jesus needs to be understood. When John the Baptist saw Jesus for the first time he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world". Jesus came to die as a sacrificial offering to God. He's the better sacrifice and the better provision. Here's what Jesus himself says about the reason for coming into the world:

*"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45*

A ransom is what you would pay to release a bondservant from his master. We have a debt of justice with God and Jesus gave his life as a payment to release us from that debt.

*"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my*

*own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” John 10:14-18*

*Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Matthew 26:26-28*

So, Jesus was both our high priest and our sacrifice. And rather than entering temples made with human hands Hebrews 9 verse 12 says, *“he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.”*

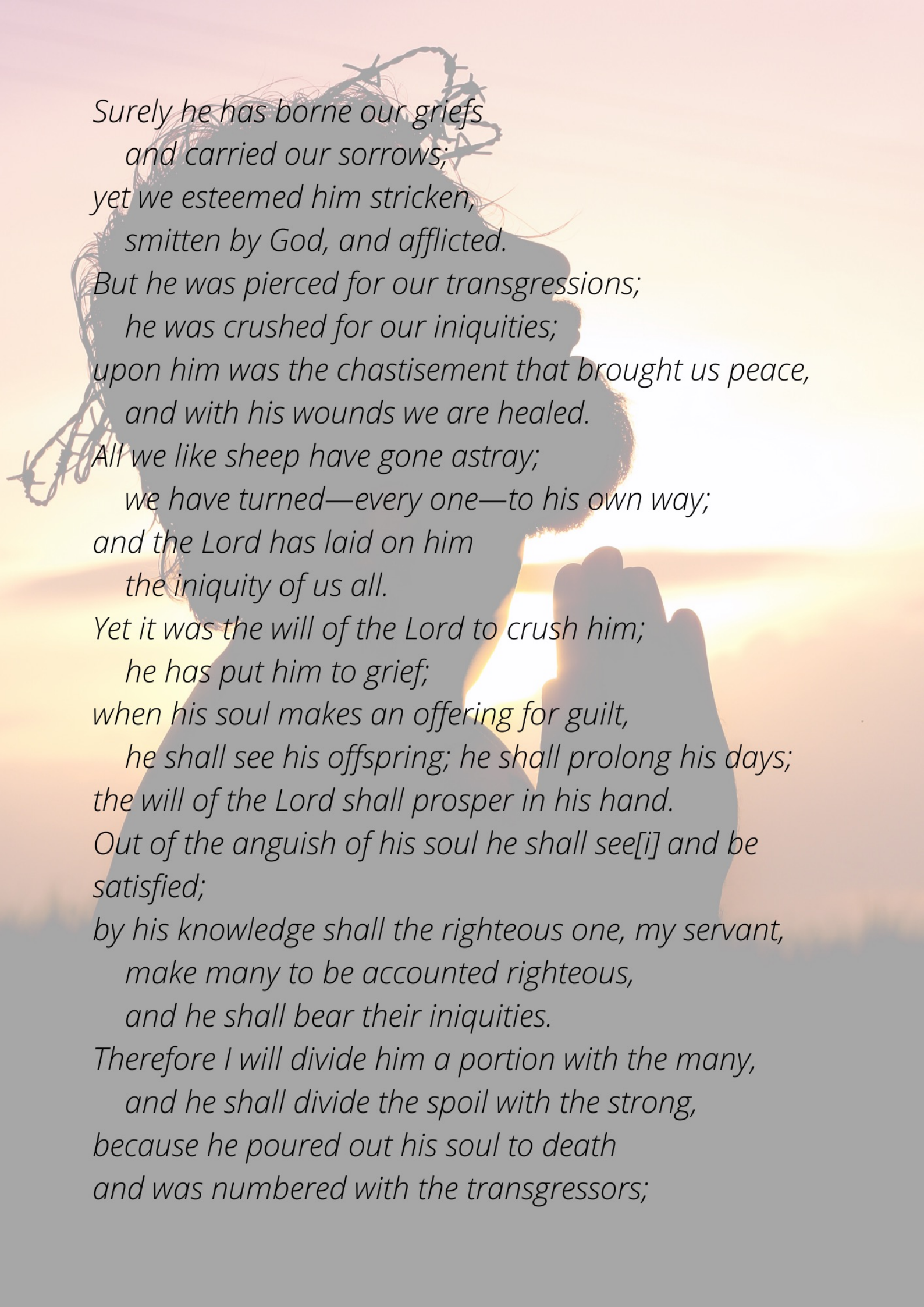


The crucifixion actually happened on the Feast of Passover, and Paul refers to Jesus as our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). When Pharaoh in Egypt was holding God's people captive God sent a plague for refusing to let his people go, that all the firstborn in Egypt would die. But God told his people, "Take a lamb, sacrifice it and smear blood on the doorposts and my judgement will pass over you". (Exodus 12:1-30)

And so, Jesus, our Passover Lamb, shed his blood so that the judgement of God may pass over us. Since God's judgement had been satisfied in Christ, it frees us from liability to that punishment and enables us to freely enter into relationship with God.

Now, the reason why Jesus' death on the cross is so significant is that he represented us before the Father in that death - *dying the death we deserve*. So, our sin record was laid onto Jesus. He bore our sins. He took our penalty upon himself, and he endured the suffering that we deserved.

I love this passage in Isaiah 53 because it was written several hundred years before the crucifixion of Jesus and prophecies about the Suffering Servant of Yahweh who would one day come and bear the penalty for the sins of his people.



*Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his wounds we are healed.*

*All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.*

*Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;  
he has put him to grief;  
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,  
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;  
the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.*

*Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see<sup>[i]</sup> and be  
satisfied;  
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
make many to be accounted righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.*

*Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,  
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
because he poured out his soul to death  
and was numbered with the transgressors;*

*yet he bore the sin of many,  
and makes intercession for the transgressors.  
Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12*

So, God lays our sin upon Jesus. Jesus dies our death for us, in our place, paying for our sins. *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”* (1 Peter 2:24). *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”* (1 Corinthians 5:21) *“God cancelled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”* (Colossians 2:14)

Jesus took on the record of our sins and chose to be held liable for them. He was held accountable for our sins so that we wouldn't have to be. Jesus hung on the cross as our sin-bearer. Our record of debt was laid upon him and he was judged in our place taking our penalty, enduring our suffering and our judgement that would have been ours had it been accounted. And when Jesus was hanging on the cross, his final words he let out before he died were, *“It is finished!”*

So, in the cross we see the mercy and the graciousness of God toward sinners. We see the

holiness of God expressed in judgement. We see his faithfulness to his word and his promises in the Old Testament, that a Messiah would come and redeem a people unto God.

All that God is – as judge, as Lord, as redeemer – was put on display in that moment on the cross. But what we also see is the amazing love that God has for people like us. People matter to God, and he doesn't want us to be alienated from him. We're his creatures and we bear his image, and he loves us. He didn't want to leave us without help and so he entered into our suffering to redeem us unto himself so that we could be reconciled with him eternally. And this was motivated by his love for us.

*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:6-8*

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

*not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." John 3:16-17*

*In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:10*

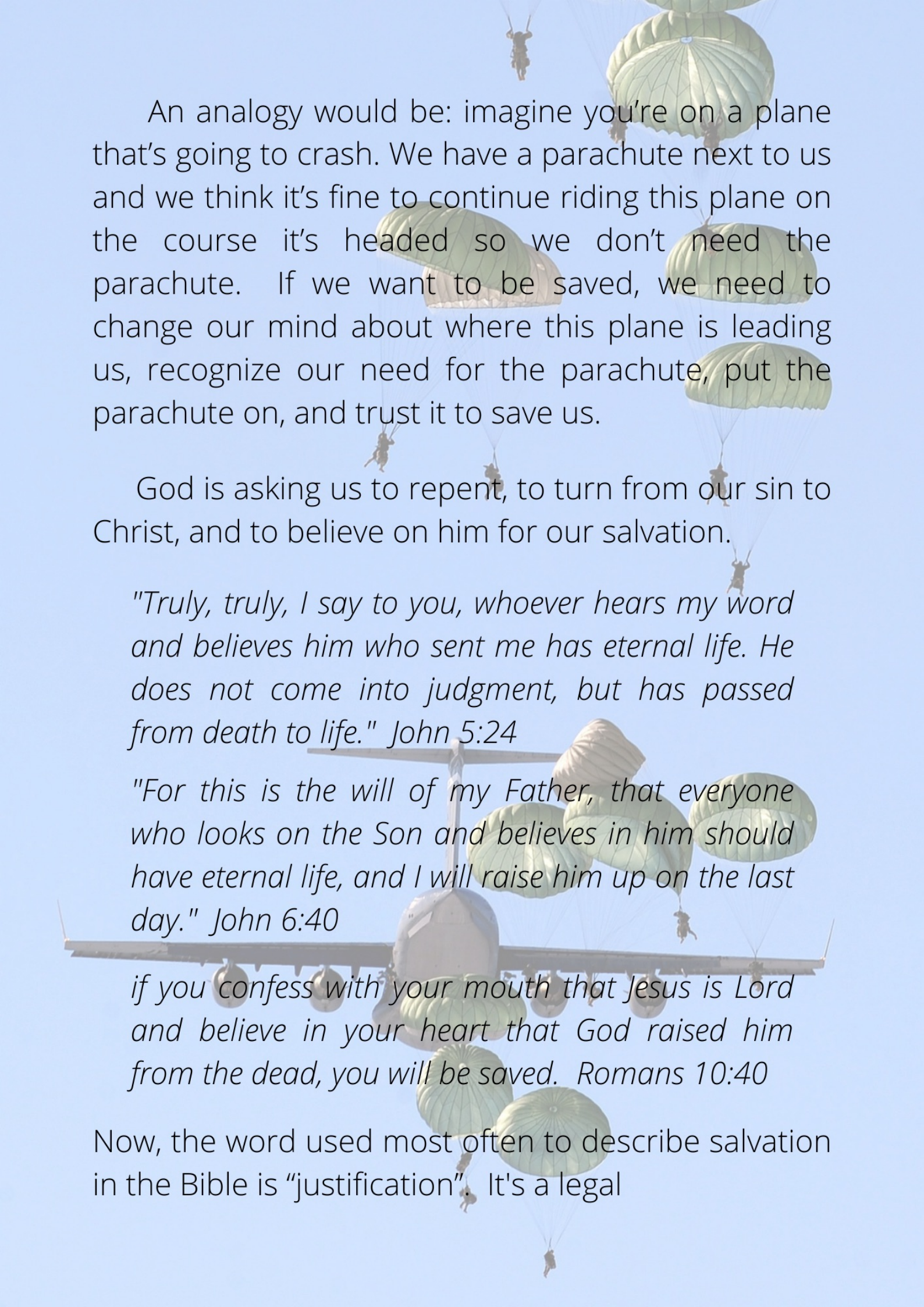
So, Jesus Christ took your sin upon himself on the cross out of his love for you and his desire to be with you and paid for your freedom in his life's blood so that you can be with God. The work is finished. There's nothing else that needs to be added to it. This work of mercy and grace and love and forgiveness is available to everybody. However, it's not applied to everybody. God has conditions that must be fulfilled if atonement is to be applied to us.

Now, thankfully we don't have to be perfect first. We don't have to qualify ourselves through good works. We don't have to "turn a new leaf". We don't have to complete some religious ceremony or try harder to be a better person. No human work, effort, or merit can earn salvation, and thankfully so, because we are not able to overcome the power of sin in our lives without God anyway.

So, what are the conditions under which God will apply the atonement of Jesus Christ to us? His first words during his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ put it this way, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15). Since God's rule and reign had manifested in the Earth with Jesus we are commanded to repent and believe.

Jesus goes on to say that "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish". (Luke 13:3) Paul says that God "commands all people everywhere to repent". To repent means to have a change of mind and a change of heart resulting in a change of direction. We are headed in the direction of destruction. We need to have our minds changed about sin and our need for salvation so that we turn away from that path of destruction.

Jesus is telling us to turn away from the direction – the course of sin – and to himself. To "believe the Gospel" means to believe the Gospel and trust in the Gospel for our salvation. So, faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin. You can't turn to Jesus and trust in him for your salvation unless your mind and your heart has turned away from something else.



An analogy would be: imagine you're on a plane that's going to crash. We have a parachute next to us and we think it's fine to continue riding this plane on the course it's headed so we don't need the parachute. If we want to be saved, we need to change our mind about where this plane is leading us, recognize our need for the parachute, put the parachute on, and trust it to save us.

God is asking us to repent, to turn from our sin to Christ, and to believe on him for our salvation.

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." John 5:24*

*"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." John 6:40*

*if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:40*

Now, the word used most often to describe salvation in the Bible is "justification". It's a legal

term. To be justified means to be declared “just”. So, when we believe on the Lord our status before God goes from being a lawbreaker to a law-keeper, not because we are one, but because he counts us as one just like Isaiah 53 prophesied that the Servant of Yahweh would make many to be accounted righteous. And so, God credits righteousness to those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

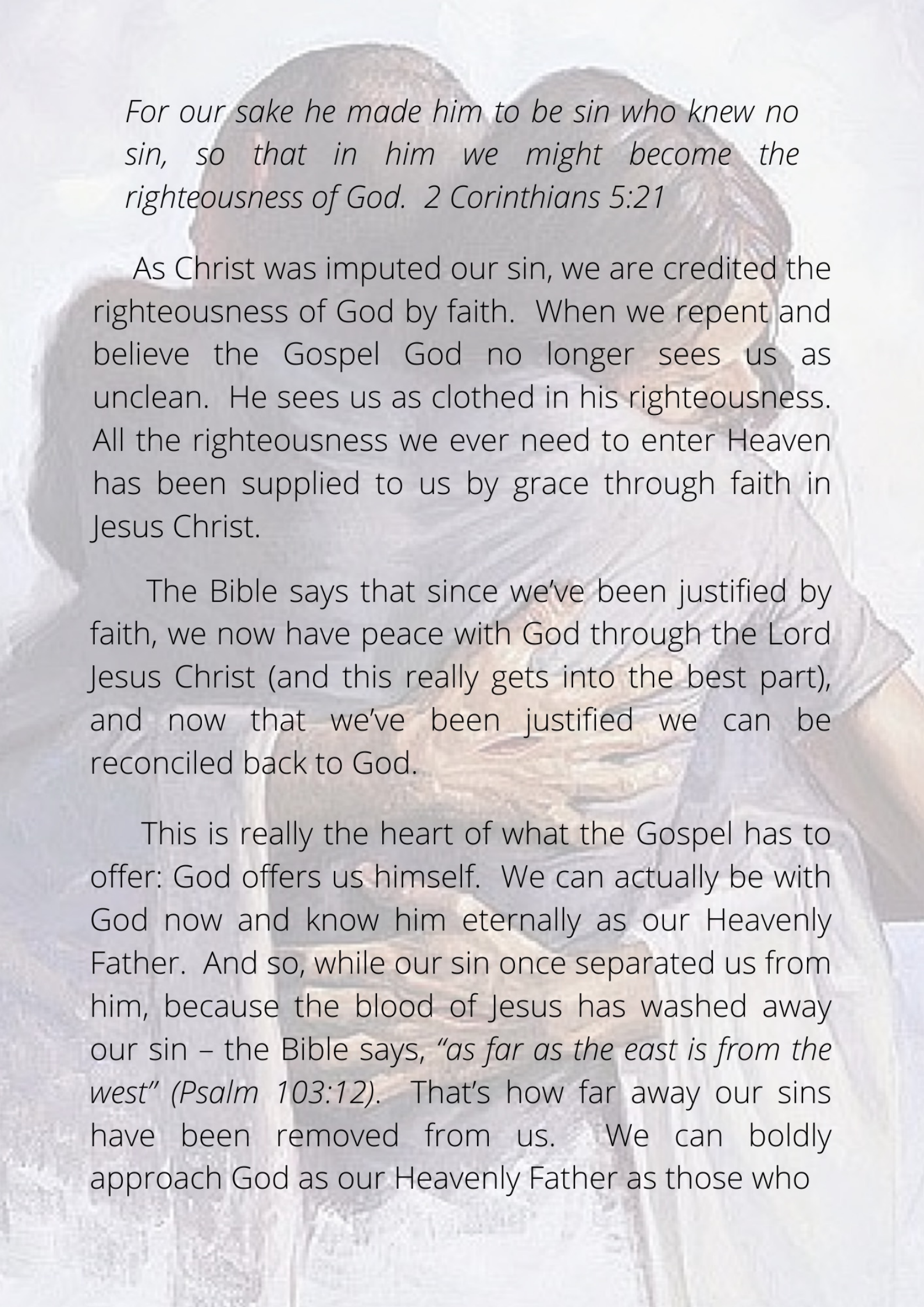
We don't just go from “guilty” to “innocent” when we repent and believe, we go from “guilty” to “righteous”. This chair I'm sitting on is innocent but it's not holy. And God requires that we be holy as he is holy.

So, God imputed our sin to Jesus on the cross, and when we turn and believe on him God imputes righteousness to us.

*And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. Romans 4:5*

*And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. Philippians 3:9*





*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21*

As Christ was imputed our sin, we are credited the righteousness of God by faith. When we repent and believe the Gospel God no longer sees us as unclean. He sees us as clothed in his righteousness. All the righteousness we ever need to enter Heaven has been supplied to us by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Bible says that since we've been justified by faith, we now have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ (and this really gets into the best part), and now that we've been justified we can be reconciled back to God.

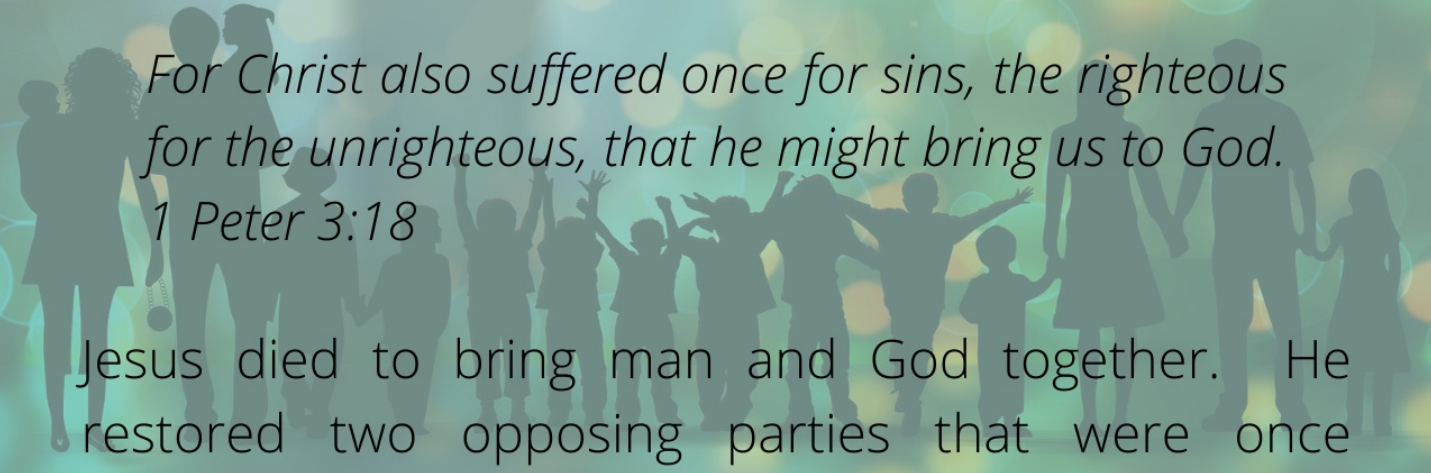
This is really the heart of what the Gospel has to offer: God offers us himself. We can actually be with God now and know him eternally as our Heavenly Father. And so, while our sin once separated us from him, because the blood of Jesus has washed away our sin – the Bible says, *"as far as the east is from the west"* (Psalm 103:12). That's how far away our sins have been removed from us. We can boldly approach God as our Heavenly Father as those who

have been reconciled unto him all because of what Jesus has accomplished on our behalf (Hebrews 4:16).

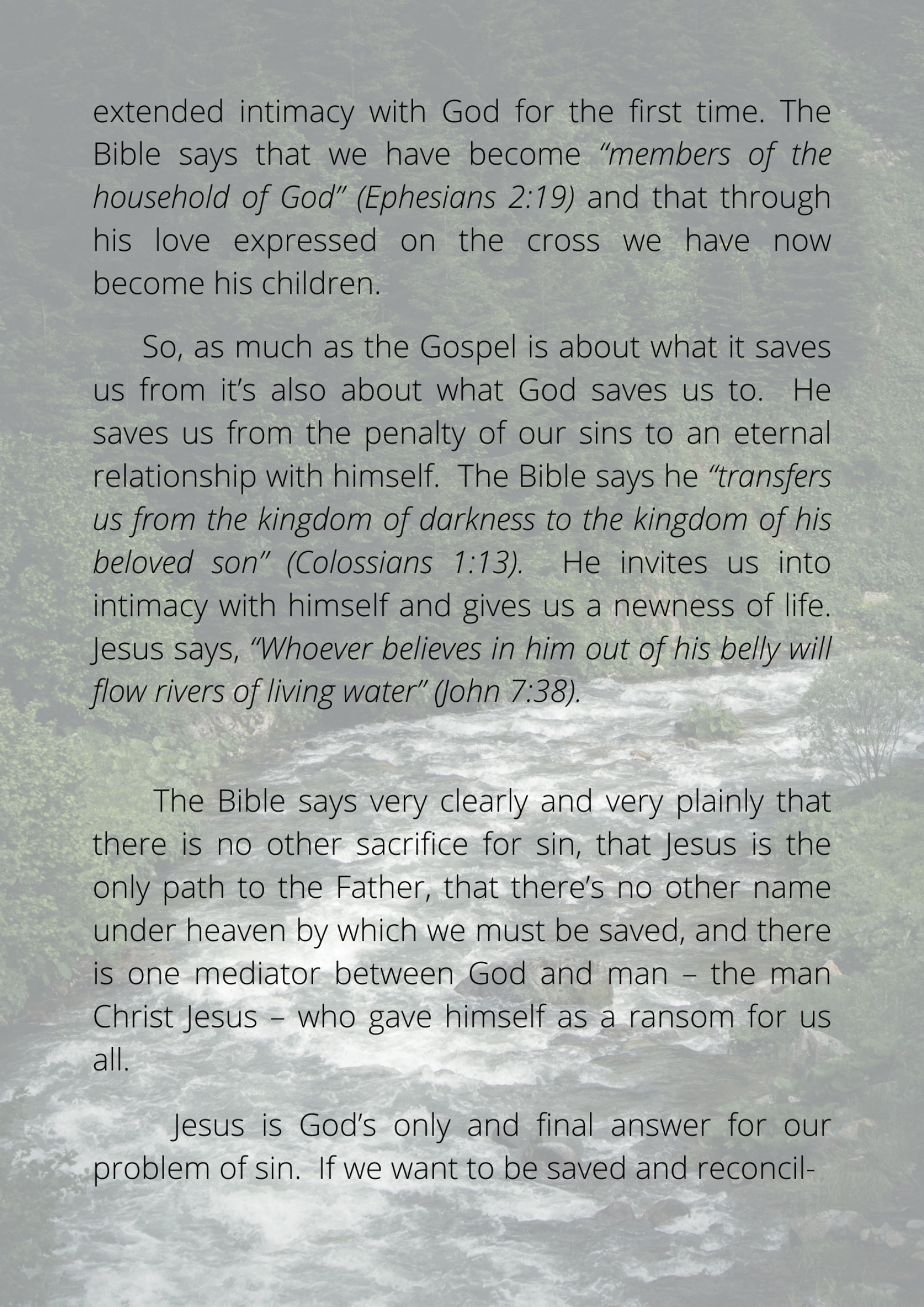
*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12*

*All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19*

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. 1 Peter 3:18*



Jesus died to bring man and God together. He restored two opposing parties that were once separated from each other. And because of his work applied by grace through faith we go from being alienated from God to being part of the family of God. We have been adopted as sons and daughters and, being reconciled with him, are

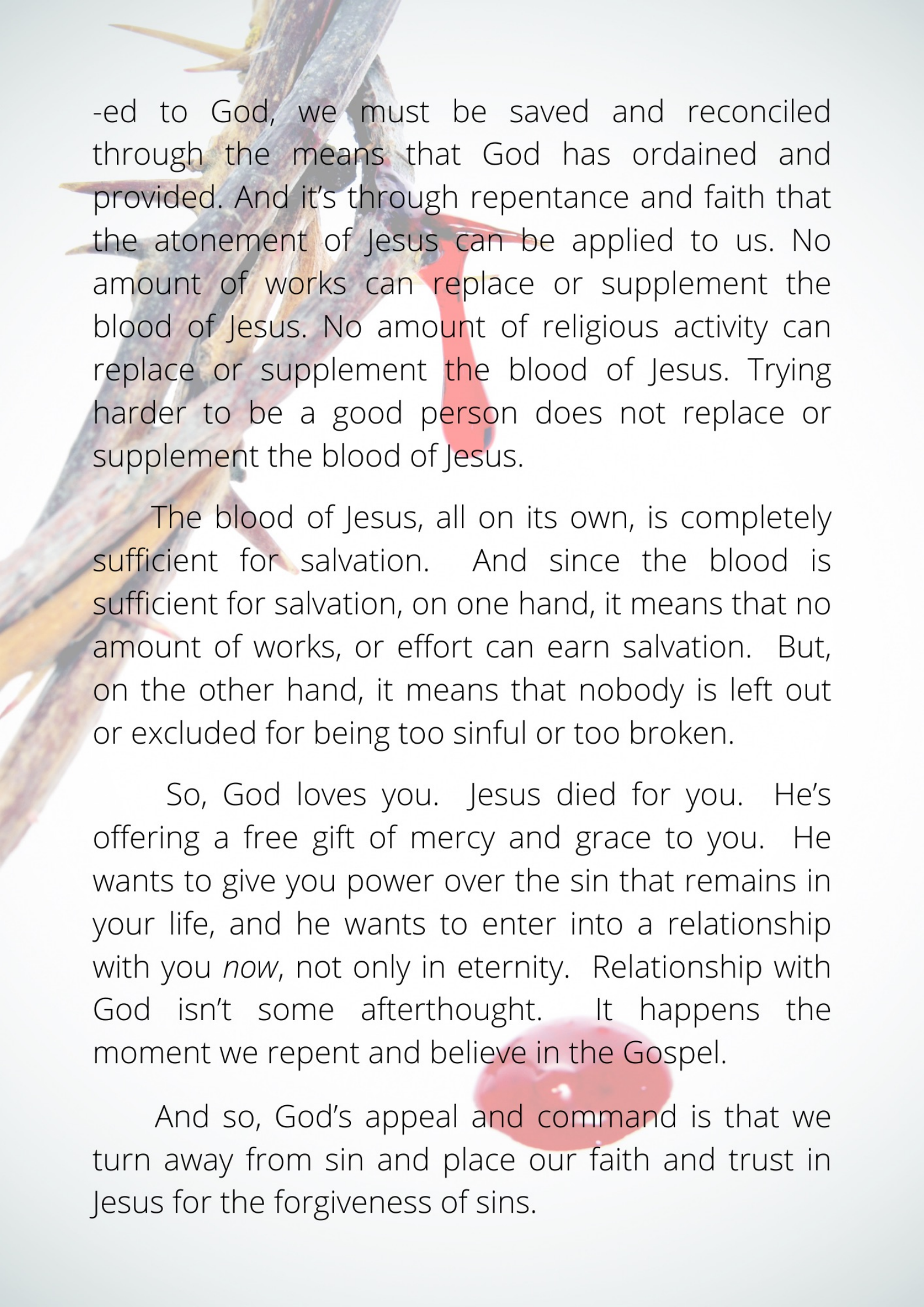


extended intimacy with God for the first time. The Bible says that we have become *“members of the household of God”* (Ephesians 2:19) and that through his love expressed on the cross we have now become his children.

So, as much as the Gospel is about what it saves us from it's also about what God saves us to. He saves us from the penalty of our sins to an eternal relationship with himself. The Bible says he *“transfers us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved son”* (Colossians 1:13). He invites us into intimacy with himself and gives us a newness of life. Jesus says, *“Whoever believes in him out of his belly will flow rivers of living water”* (John 7:38).

The Bible says very clearly and very plainly that there is no other sacrifice for sin, that Jesus is the only path to the Father, that there's no other name under heaven by which we must be saved, and there is one mediator between God and man – the man Christ Jesus – who gave himself as a ransom for us all.

Jesus is God's only and final answer for our problem of sin. If we want to be saved and reconcil-



-ed to God, we must be saved and reconciled through the means that God has ordained and provided. And it's through repentance and faith that the atonement of Jesus can be applied to us. No amount of works can replace or supplement the blood of Jesus. No amount of religious activity can replace or supplement the blood of Jesus. Trying harder to be a good person does not replace or supplement the blood of Jesus.

The blood of Jesus, all on its own, is completely sufficient for salvation. And since the blood is sufficient for salvation, on one hand, it means that no amount of works, or effort can earn salvation. But, on the other hand, it means that nobody is left out or excluded for being too sinful or too broken.

So, God loves you. Jesus died for you. He's offering a free gift of mercy and grace to you. He wants to give you power over the sin that remains in your life, and he wants to enter into a relationship with you *now*, not only in eternity. Relationship with God isn't some afterthought. It happens the moment we repent and believe in the Gospel.

And so, God's appeal and command is that we turn away from sin and place our faith and trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.

# So, what's next?

I encourage you to have a conversation with God. You're at a crossroads right now. Are you ready to give up control of your life and hand it over to God? That's what surrender is. And being a disciple won't be easy, but it will definitely be worth it. No emotional plea here, friend, just a gentle nudge.

If you need any help trying to figure all of this out, talk to the person who gave this booklet to you. They gave it to you because they care.

May you have an encounter with God that changes you forever.





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