

The Free Gift

Did you know that in the U.S. a baby is born every 7 seconds and that someone dies every 13 seconds? By the time two human beings have been brought into this world, one human being has left it. People are being born and people are dying. We are either coming or going.

Now here's something to think about: if you are already here, then you've made the birth statistic. That means you've got the death statistic awaiting you! That's a sobering thought, isn't it?

Have you ever wondered why death occurs...why people die? Well, of course there are many physical reasons, but ultimately it's because their heart stops beating. However, there is actually a more important reason, a spiritual reason why we will die.

The Bible explains that everyone born into this world is a sinner. That simply means that we have all done wrong things. We've all failed to meet, in some form or fashion, God's standard of righteousness or perfection.

Suppose we each throw a rock and try to hit the North Pole. One of us would throw it farther than the other but the reality would be that neither one of us would hit it. The target that God demands we hit is the target of perfection. When we lie or cheat or lust or gossip, we miss the standard that God has set.

Now this is where "death" comes in. The Bible explains that the penalty for our sin is **death** – not just physical death but the worse kind of death of all – **spiritual death**, separation from God forever.

Suppose you were paid \$50 to do some work? That \$50 would be your wages. That's what you earned. The Bible says that by sinning we have earned death. That means we deserve to die and be separated from God forever. That's what it says in Romans 6:23: ***"the wages of sin is death."***

We could all agree that this is pretty gloomy news. Every 13 seconds, someone in this country ends up dying because everyone in this country – in this world – is a sinner. We have earned death because of our sin.

But guess what! The Bible contains some awesome good news. Chapter 2 of the book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus Christ came to earth and died so that ***"by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."***

Elsewhere in the Bible, in First Corinthians chapter 15, we are told that ***"death is swallowed up in victory"*** and then it says, ***"thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."***

HEY – this is great news! The best news we could ever hear. You see, Jesus Christ came to earth for the purpose of dying for us, for paying the penalty for our sin.

Suppose you were in a hospital dying of cancer and someone came to you and said, "I'll take the cancer cells from your body and put them into my body. I'll exchange my good cells for your cancer cells." If that were possible, what would happen to the person who took your cancer cells? That's right, they would end up dying. What would happen to you? You would walk out of the hospital cured. You would live.

The Bible says that Jesus took the penalty that we deserved for our sin, placed it upon Himself, and He died in our place. Then three days later, He came back to life to prove that sin and death had been conquered and that His claims to be God were true.

So you ask, "How does this good news become **my** good news? How can I know that what Jesus did will benefit me? What do I have to do for this good news to be my reality?" The Bible's "good news" just gets better because it tells us that everyone who believes in Jesus is given eternal life as a **free gift!**

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, ***"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."***

God doesn't require anything from us. Jesus Christ did all the work by coming into this world, dying in our place, and then rising again. We are simply invited to receive this wonderful free gift of the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life by believing in Jesus and Him alone.

Just as you trust a chair to hold you through no effort of your own, so you must trust Jesus Christ to get you to heaven through no effort of your own. The moment you stop trusting in your own efforts, or your religion, or your good living, or going to church, or whatever and put your trust in Jesus, God will give you eternal life as a free gift.

So let me ask you a very important question: Is there anything keeping you from trusting Jesus right now?

The seconds of life are ticking away. Physical death may claim us, but spiritual and eternal death don't have to if we trust in Jesus.

Would you like to tell God you are trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior? If you would, how about saying this simple prayer:

Dear God, I know I'm a sinner. I know my sin deserves to be punished. I believe Christ died for me and rose from the grave. I trust Jesus Christ alone as my Savior. Thank You for the forgiveness and everlasting life I now have. In Jesus' name, amen.

Congratulations – Welcome to God's "forever family!"

If you would like to know more about having a personal, ongoing relationship with God, please contact us here at Fellowship Bible Church (fbc@fbcva.org or 540-662-7743). We'd love to talk with you.