

What is the gospel? Pt 10: spiritual death
Bible Readings: Genesis 2 & 3, Romans 5.6-17

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Introduction

We have spent the last few weeks looking at the [barrier](#) which sin created between us and God, and how Jesus has broken down each part by his work on the cross, problem number one was the problem of perfection, and Gods holy character which was dealt with by [propitiation and justification](#). Last week we looked at the problem of freedom, and the moral and spiritual trespasses which [Jesus paid for in full](#) to free us from our prison of debt.

This week we look at the last of the blocks in the barrier:

[Problem of spiritual law](#) – we don't break the laws but break ourselves on them.

There are physical laws we ignore at our peril:

The law of gravity – we could jump off a building, but we wouldn't break the law; we could use an aeroplane, but eventually gravity gets the last word.

The laws of nutrition and rest – we do need to eat and sleep, again we can temporarily overcome the effects of the law, but they always get the last word. Sometimes we look at the world and see the delay, but remember law has the last word, Paul states another law in Galatians 6 “[7](#) Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. [8](#) The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

The law of [sowing and reaping](#)

Sow sin, reap death: the wages of sin is death

We know there is a delay between sowing and reaping, but it is a spiritual principle at work. If we plant acts and thoughts of selfishness and independence and we reap a bitter harvest. So our problem of spiritual law is that it means we have a consequence of death.

Spiritual death

[What is death?](#)

[Separation;](#)

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Physical death is when the visible and invisible parts separate
cp Jesus and Jairus' daughter, she was dead and he took her hand and Luke 8.55 says that 'the little girl's spirit returned' and she was alive again.

Another sort of death is spiritual death, which means being cut off, or separated [from the life of God](#),

In Gen 2.17 God says to Adam that if he ate the forbidden fruit he would die, but of course when he ate he didn't fall down dead – that is because literally the Hebrew says 'in the day that thou eatest of it, dying thou shalt die' this meant that he would die spiritually, that the 'life connection' between him and God would be broken and the inevitable consequence would be physical death.

Like my [rechargeable razor](#), when it is plugged in it uses the power from the national grid, when it becomes unplugged, it uses its own power and becomes flat, slows down and eventually stops, this is an accurate metaphor for what happened.

The reason they had to be expelled from the garden (Gen 3.22) was that the decay which was an inevitable consequence of the fall and sin would have an end point in death. Imagine the horror of corruption, illness and aging without the release of death – God in his mercy protects sinful humanity from the full extent of sin, by denying immortality

There is also the '[second death](#)' which is the separation of those from God who have in life chosen to reject him [CS Lewis](#) "There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, "All right, then, have it your way"

Probably an even more accurate analogy would be a [torch](#) rather than a razor – because after Adam, who truly understood life, it was only a few generations until people had so lost their concept of the one true God that they had wandered hopelessly into spiritual darkness.

Jesus is the light of the world Jn 1.4 'In him was life and that life was the light of all men'

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God then has to communicate to humanity through the 5 senses because the spiritual lights are off,
See 1 John 1.1-2 “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.”

But God needs to do more than just communicate with humanity – because of the barrier of sin which has produced spiritual death; he needs to find a way that he can give us new life.

Substitutionary death:

Penal substitution, we have already seen how incurred the righteous judgement of God, but that Jesus on the cross was the sacrifice, the propitiation which turned the throne of judgement into the mercy seat, the word penal reminds us that justice has been done, the penalty has been paid. Substitution however tells us of Gods love and mercy, Jesus takes our place, as we heard God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners and far off, Christ died for us.

Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world – Jesus dies as our substitute, he not only takes our sin and our debt, he also takes the penalty, which is death – on the cross when he cried out ‘Eloi eloi...’, at that point when he was made sin, the Father turned his face away, and then like Adam it was inevitable that he could and would die – if the Father had not, then he would have not died, he would have been tortured and crucified but unable to die – the horror. He experienced our separation from the Father, so that we might never be alone again. With our sin upon him he was rejected, so that we might be accepted in the Father’s presence.

Earlier we sang ‘My debt he pays, my death he dies – that I might live’ – so that we might be given life: the **exchange on the cross**.

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How does the maths work? If one man sinned, then the penalty would be one life. How then could Jesus take the sins of the whole world?

1 Peter 1.18 “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.”

Acts 20.38 “Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”

He was not just sinless; he was the Son of God, God the son, which is why all those weeks ago we spent time establishing his deity as fact. The value of his life was more than just one man, he was able to take upon himself the sins of the whole world and pay the penalty of [death](#) for us all because his is the [unlimited life of God](#), voluntarily laid down. Cp 1 john 2.1

Don't forget why he did it: John 15.13 greater love has no man than this, to lay down his life for his friends. ‘My Lord, what love is this that pays so dearly, that I the guilty one may go free!’

Romans 5.10 “For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”

So we have seen the problem of spiritual death, and the work of the cross which is penal substitution, but we still need more: and that is where we receive the life of Jesus in exchange for him taking our death:

[Regeneration John 3](#)

Instead of simply fixing the ‘connection’ so we could be recharged, God by the Holy Spirit comes to live in us and give us a different kind of life altogether, which we will discuss in a few weeks time.

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Jesus was the one who told us about this [new life](#) which is offered to us: we are offered a new life, starting out like a new born baby, a clean sheet, a fresh start.

He teaches that this new life is [spiritual](#), that we become [children of God](#), welcomed and loved, part of his family, and the life which we receive is [eternal](#) life – that is life which is full and free, that we enjoy now in this life, and then goes on for ever.

Remember, the reason they had to be expelled from the garden (Gen 3.22) was that the decay which was an inevitable consequence of the fall and sin would have an end point in death. Imagine the horror of corruption, illness and aging without the release of death – God in his mercy protects sinful humanity from the full extent of sin, by denying immortality – but once sin has been dealt with, and righteousness imparted, then we can receive eternal life and be [a new creation](#). [2 Cor 5.17](#)

We can [grow in Gods hands](#); we are free from the barrier which held us away from God, we can truly live, there is no guilt or fear, there is no debt or law working against us, but we are eternally loved and accepted, we have his presence with us all the time, his light and life shining through all our differences and casting the rainbow of his love to all the world.

Let us stand and celebrate this marvellous gospel with our closing hymn, 'In Christ alone' number 1346.