For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

Perhaps the greatest barrier to relationship with God is the notion that it is the opposite of being alive. That it would be dull and lifeless to live in close relationship to God. But what if it was how life was actually meant to be? What if you were designed for God to live inside of you, the way a car is meant to have gasoline? If this were true, than peace, joy and contentment would be impossible without God’s Spirit. What if, as blood is to the body, God is to the soul: an absolutely necessary relationship.

So why isn’t everyone born with God’s Spirit already in them?

SIN

Christianity is inseparable from the concept of sin.

For all have sinned, we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.

Romans 3:23
We suffer because we are cut off from God because of our sin. Babies are born into sin, but they are not guilty. If a baby or young child dies, they are not cut off from God’s presence. As we get older, we reach that stage where we become guilty of that sin because of our own free-will decisions. So guilt is also inseparable from the concept of sin.

God gave Moses the Law. We often refer to it as the “10 commandments.” These are impossible to keep. If you have ever tried to live in perfect harmony with God’s Law, you will have quickly realized that the sin that is in us makes that impossible. So why give us the Law if we can’t keep it? It is because it acts like an MRI showing us what ails our bodies, minds and spirits:

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the Law, rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

Romans 3:20

Whenever you deviate from the Law, you are showing sign of your disease. The disease of sin. We all have it. But only some people become conscious of it. If you doubt your ailment, administer the following self test:

1. How many times must someone kill another person in cold blood in order to receive the title of murderer? Only once.
2. Have you ever lied? If the answer is yes than that makes you a liar.
3. Have you ever stolen something? If yes, than you are a thief.
4. Have you ever used God’s name as a curse word? If yes, God’s third commandment says that makes you a blasphemer.
5. Jesus said that simply looking at someone in lust makes one an adulterer at heart (Matt 5:28). If you have ever lusted after someone other than your spouse, Jesus declares that it makes you an adulterer.
6. Jesus also said that hatred in our hearts makes us murderers (Matt 5:21-22).
With just this partial list of God’s commandments to test our hearts by, I would say most (if not all) of us are at least liars, thieves, blasphemers, adulterers and murderers at heart. And if God judges us by His standards (not ours), will we be found guilty or innocent?

Remember that an HIV virus is only 120 nanometers wide. That is 60 times smaller than a red blood cell. But how many HIV viruses would your blood stream need in order to be successfully infected?

That’s right. One single virus.

From that point onward, the virus would work its way into one of your white blood cells and high jack it. Then, it would use that white blood cell to make photocopies of itself and pump these out into your system. Eventually, you would have so many of these retroviruses floating through your bloodstream that it would constantly be devastating too many of your immune system cells (i.e.: white blood cells and CD4 cells) to allow for proper protection from the surrounding world. A common cold or small skin infection could turn deadly as a result. As your HIV count increased beyond a certain point, you would then be classified as having AIDS and death would soon follow.

All of this to show that we are accustomed to real life showing us that small diseases can grow into deadly ones. If we think God’s Law is too harsh, perhaps we should reconsider. A small sin in your heart, given the right time and conditions, can manifest as a big sin down the road. God is the Great Physician and therefore He never lies to His patients. The tests have been run and we have been found infected with the deadly disease of sin. This is the Bad News that is brought to us by God’s Law.

So now what? Are we simply left to die in the waiting room of the Great Physician? No...
Much like effective, life-saving surgery, Christianity starts off fairly gruesomely. We just got our test results back and it was not good news. But the term “Gospel” comes from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον which is translated as “evangelion” and means “Good News.” So far, the news has been bad. So why call Christianity the “good news?”

Well, if you were sitting in the doctor’s office and had just been diagnosed with HIV, you would be feeling quite grim. But what if the doctor took you back into a different room and then explained, very seriously, that he could fully cure you. Now that would be good news indeed. This is where the beauty of Christ starts to make sense: after the diagnosis has been understood and accepted. And if we are honest, the longer we live, the easier it is to see that our world is racked with sin. Others have sin in their lives, and so do we.

So where does “blood” come into the picture?

...without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

Hebrews 9:22

Sin is real and it is serious. Someone has to pay in order for sin to be dealt with. Yet we owe our debt to a perfect and holy God. This is a problem. If I tear up a stick man drawing done by a 4 year old, I’m a jerk. But how bad will my punishment be? Probably just a bad reputation with the child’s mother. Now, if I get my hands on the Mona Lisa in the Louvres museum in Paris and tear that up, I will be in serious trouble. When we sin, we sin against God. If I hurt someone, I am hurting God’s child and a person made in His Image. If I live in defiance of His Law, I am defacing a God, not a mere creature. So my sin debt is very, very large.

So large, in fact, that I am not capable of repaying it. But this is where Christ earned the title of Saviour. Remember that Jesus said plainly that He was not sent
to Earth in order to condemn us but to save us (John 3:17). And on the cross, that is exactly what He did:

**But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.**

*Isaiah 53:5*

Christ was not only publicly, painfully executed on a Roman cross during the first century, but God the Father poured His full wrath onto God the Son. And this was no last minute decision on the part of the Godhead. Before the physical universe was created, God understood that to save His creation He would have to undergo the crucifixion as well as bear the wrath of God *(1 Peter 1:20)*. It was a carefully planned operation that has been in the works for more than the 13 billion years our cosmos has been around. Every single one of our sins was known about and paid for by Christ. Not a single one is hidden from Him or left undealt with by Him. This is where His omnipotence and omniscience becomes a comforting ally.

So, will everyone be saved because of Christ’s sacrifice?

Unfortunately, no. Sin occurs because we have free will to choose our own thoughts, words and actions. And this same free will allows us to choose whom we will follow. God or our own opinion. Most people ignore the signs and symptoms of the disease of sin. They are like countless stubborn patients who refuse to go to the doctor to get a check-up and proper medication.

Christ’s blood is a symbol of His sacrifice for your sins. Christianity cannot be practiced if one refuses to believe that Christ had to pay for our sins. If you believe you are not desperately ill with sin, you will not be interested in the cure.

We are not just uneducated or misbehaving. We are spiritually **dead** because of our sin *(Ephesians 2:1).*
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here.

2 Corinthians 5:17

If you are tired of the effects of sin in your life, the Good News keeps on getting better. Not only has Christ already paid for your sins, but He is bringing a whole new life to you. This does not happen overnight. It is a process. Sometimes a painful one. But the constant arrival of new and better life makes it worthwhile.

In the New Testament, Jesus makes many analogies about a new Christian growing up. He often compares the believer to a child. A child does not complicate things but simply asks the parent for what he wants and needs. Likewise, we are to ask God for the Holy Spirit and blessings and God will be happy to oblige.

Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

Luke 11:11-13

The God of the universe has created you to be His child.

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father.

Romans 8:15
Amazing. We become God’s children when we accept Christ. And we are told that Jesus will share His entire Kingdom with us in the New Heaven and New Earth. We are quite literally royalty *(Romans 8:17)*. And the notion that we can call God “Abba” would have blown the minds of the Jews in Jesus’ time. “Abba” is a term of endearment that is less formal than the word “father.” Simply looking up at the night sky and thinking that the master Engineer that orchestrated the cycles of star life and star death is willing to adopt us as sons is so profound that it almost makes no sense. It is like trying to wrap your mind around the idea of a star system being millions of light years away. It is simply too big for our finite minds to fully grasp. Yet, reality is not bound by our minds, and large truths are still truths.

Isn’t it interesting that most famous pop songs are love songs? An artist expresses the desire of another person’s love. The song describes the relationship between the two lovers as the highest ecstasy, without which life would be drab. God is a lover. He desires relationship. We are to relate to Him, in our new life, the way we relate to our parents, friends and spouse. He is a Person after all and invented personality and He created you. All the while yearning for that relationship which will allow you to slowly understand Him more and more.

What if this was to fulfill that massive itch we try and scratch with alcohol, drugs, sex, money and entertainment? What if relationship to God was the only source of true and lasting happiness? What if this new life helps us understand our past?

“When a man is getting better he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still left in him. When a man is getting worse he understands his own badness less and less. A moderately bad man knows he is not very good: a thoroughly bad man thinks he is all right. This is common sense, really. You understand sleep when you are awake, not while you are sleeping. You can see mistakes in arithmetic when your mind is working properly: while you are making them you cannot see them. You can understand the nature of drunkenness when you are sober, not when you are drunk. Good people know about both good and evil: bad people do not know about either.”

*C.S. Lewis, “Mere Christianity”*
GROWTH

Many of the analogies Jesus uses to describe a growing believer are gardening analogies. Nothing in our gardens grows quickly. But if a plant is alive, it will grow. Even two of the same plant species won’t grow in the same way or at the exact same rate. Spiritual growth is an organic process. It is not quick or easy but it is certain. It would be nice if the new life Christ gives us when we trust in His Sacrifice were to instantaneously make us perfect. For whatever reason, God wants us to grow up in maturity in a slow and sometimes difficult process known as “sanctification.”

Once you accept Christ as your only hope of forgiveness, you will be greatly relieved. As time goes on, you will notice, however, that there is still sinful desires in your heart. This is inevitable. Even the apostle Paul, late in his life, complained of the sin that still stirred in his heart (Romans 7:14-20). And the apostle John made sure new believers understood the reality of on-going sin in their lives:

**If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.**

1 John 1:8

Thankfully, God understands this and asks us to come to Him for forgiveness, any time we are caught in sin:

**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

1 John 1:9

We are not perfect simply because God’s Son has paid for our sins and God’s Holy Spirit has come into our hearts. But we will be growing into Christ. This is part of the Good News. We are free from God’s Judgment which will come to all men (Hebrews 9:27), we are now God’s royal children and He has an exciting plan for
our lives, filled with purpose and meaning (Jeremiah 29:11) and He has come to refresh us with a whole new way of being:

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

20 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

21 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 22 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 23 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Galatians 5:19-26

**HEAVEN**

Christ comes into our lives now and begins to refresh us. Yet the best is yet to come. The ultimate destination for the man or woman who follows God is the New Heaven and the New Earth. A place where sin and its effects will never again be able to occur. Hope is not just for now, although this is a wonderful aspect of the “Good News.” But it is also for Eternity beyond the earthly grave of a believer.

So if God implements suffering in this life, in order to ensure we reach our proper destination, is it not a mercy in disguise?

“God, who has made us, knows what we are and that our happiness lies in Him. Yet we will not seek it in Him as long as He leaves us any other resort where it can even plausibly be looked for. While what we call “our own life” remains agreeable we will not surrender it to Him. What then can God do in our interests but make “our own life” less agreeable to us, and take away the plausible sources of false happiness?”

C.S. Lewis, “The Problem of Pain”