

illustrations

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Friend's Gift



Imagine it's the morning of your birthday. Your mum surprises you with an expensive gift - the latest iPhone. "Wow! Thanks Mum!" you say. Then you reach into your pocket for some change to pay your mum. If you pay, would it be a gift? No it wouldn't. Also, trying to pay your mum would be an insult.

Or let's say you want to encourage your daughter to work hard in school so you tell her, "If you get all A's this year I'll buy you an expensive dress for Christmas."

At the end of the year she gets all A's and, true to your word, you buy her the dress. Is it a gift? No. It's actually a reward for performance.

A gift must be freely given and be freely received. If you have to pay, or do something in return - it's not a gift.

The bible tells us that heaven is a completely free gift.

Omelette



Suppose you were making an omelette that needed six eggs. One by one you crack open each egg and drop the yolk into a bowl. You get to the last one, crack it open and drop it in. Suddenly you turn your head away and pinch your nose. The last egg is rotten. What do you do?

You have no choice but to throw it all away. Although there are five good eggs in the bowl, one bad egg spoils everything.

Just as you wouldn't serve your family an omelette contaminated by one bad egg, we can't bring to a holy God a life contaminated by even one sin and expect him to accept it.

Bank Robber



Imagine that a desperate man decides to rob a bank. He walks up to the teller, points a gun at her and gruffly demands money. The frightened teller hands it over.

He shoves the money into a garbage bag and rushes to the exit. But on the way he trips on the carpet and falls heavily, dropping the gun. The bank security guards overpower him.

When in court, the judge asks the robber, "How do you plead?"

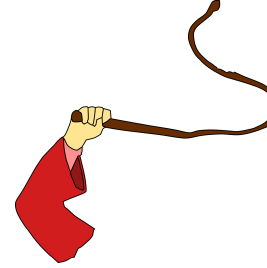
"Guilty," he responds softly. He has no other option. The evidence against him is overwhelming.

"Your honour," the robber continues, "This is my first offence. I didn't hurt anyone. The bank got all the money back. Can you please forget what I've done and let me go?"

Would the judge be just if he let the robber go? No he wouldn't. The judge has to uphold the law and the law requires that a person found guilty of robbery should be punished.

God is even more just than any human judge. He cannot and will not excuse our sin.

Garcia



There is a story about a group of rebels that were led by a man called Garcia. They were being chased by the army so they ran away to a high mountain.

Food was scarce. They had to share it among everyone and eat a little every day. Garcia gave orders that anyone caught stealing food would be tied to a tree and their back would be lashed. Everyone agreed.

One day his men came to him and told him that they had caught someone stealing food. Garcia was furious. He shouted, "Bring that person here and tie them to that tree! Get the whip ready!"

But his men said, "Sir the thief is your mother."

Garcia was shocked. But he knew that justice had to be done. He also knew that his old mother would not survive the beating. So he shouted, "Bring her here and tie her to the tree!" Then when she had been tied he said, "Get ready to whip her." One of his strongest men took the whip, stood behind her and got ready to beat her.

Then Garcia took off his shirt, went over to his mother, put his arms around her and covered her with his body. Then he shouted, "Now whip me!"

In that way his mother's crime was punished, but she did not have to take the punishment.

You see God loves us but at the same time he is just and must punish our sin. To solve this problem, God took all our sins and placed them on Jesus. Then, he punished Jesus for our sins. All your sins have been punished. They just weren't punished in your body.

Boat



Imagine you're out sailing. You are caught in a violent storm. Huge waves come crashing over your small boat. One of them sinks the boat and you end up in the icy water clinging desperately to a piece of wood.

A rescue boat spots you and rushes over. The captain comes to the handrailing and shouts, "Hey! I'm throwing you a life preserver. Grab It! We'll pull you to safety."

In the same way, God sees us drowning in our sin. We are powerless to save ourselves. So he calls out to us, "I've already thrown you a life preserver. His name is Jesus. Let go of the piece of wood. Grab on to him and I will pull you to safety."

We must choose - either keep holding onto a piece of wood (trying to save ourselves) or let go and trust Jesus to save us.

Jesus is the only way to eternal life. He's God's only life preserver. In order to receive the gift of eternal life we must place our faith in Jesus Christ alone.