

It's the nature of the sinful world in which we live - even good things that happen have an aspect of bad attached to them.

Good news: you can buy new light bulbs that are more energy-efficient than the old kind. Bad news: the new bulbs are more expensive and contain mercury, a potential health-hazard should they break.

Good news: we can now make fuel out of corn. Bad news: it takes so much corn to make ethanol that food is in shorter supply and prices are skyrocketing.

Good news: due to advances in health care people are living longer. Bad news: our country soon won't have the funds to pay full Social Security benefits to our millions of retirees.

It seems that nearly every piece of good news is balanced out by some negative consequence. So we naturally are a little bit hesitant when someone tells us good news. Where's the catch? What's the fine print?

The Bible is certainly a good news/bad news book. But God's genius in designing his revelation to humankind is using his good news to completely wipe out the bad news. The bad cannot stand in the face of the good. The apostle Paul summarizes both God's bad news and good news in his letter to the Romans: "For the wages of sin is death [*bad news!*], but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord [*good news!*]" (6:23).

Many assume that there must be a catch. There must be some fine print. Surely God isn't just going to forgive people without them doing something to earn it. Surely I can't be forgiven for the terrible things I've done. But the good news is just that: good news with no strings attached.

Yes, the bad news says we ought to be punished for our sins. But the good news tells us that Jesus suffered that punishment once for all. There's no catch. We can't even say something like "all you have to do is believe it," because even faith is, according to the Bible, a gift of God. Whatever other news you hear or read today, rejoice in the perfectly good news of God your Savior. He loves you and will one day take you home with him to live forever.

Prayer: Dear Father in heaven, I cannot understand your love for me. Though I have let you down so many times in my life, you still want me to be your child. Thank you for your forgiveness. Send your Holy Spirit into my heart to remind me what my Savior Jesus did for me, that I may grow to be more like the person you created me to be. In your Son's name I pray, Amen.

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