

Gateway Christian Fellowship

Meeting every Lord's Day (Sunday) at 11.30a.m. in the Maldron Hotel (Butcher Street).

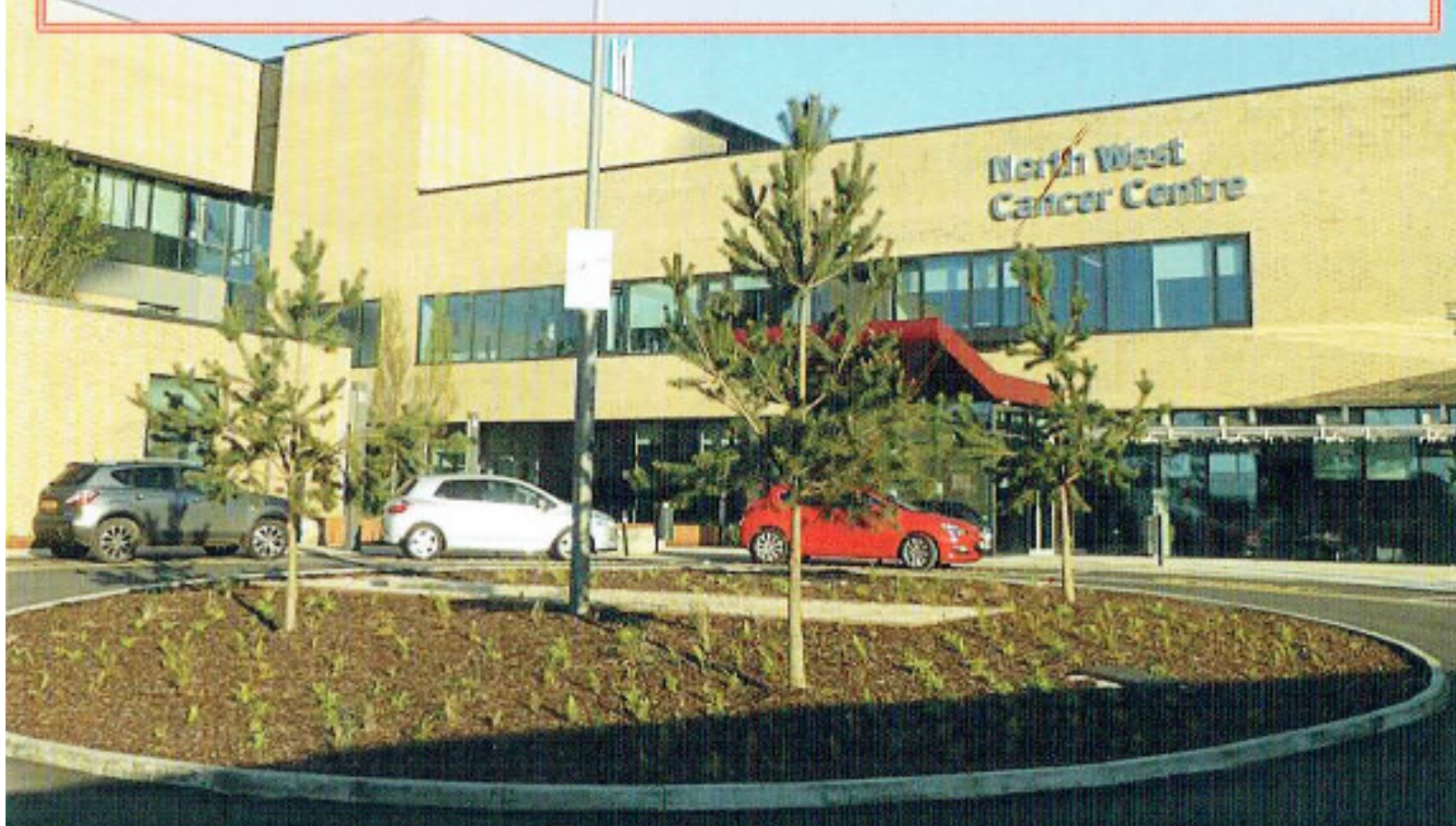
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Number 1002



Freddie Mercury, the lead singer of Queen, famously sang the question on this leaflet – Who wants to live for ever? In the song he sounds wistful, as if he would like to live for ever but knows it won't happen. Can he grasp immortality in one touch, 'one sweet moment'?

Who wants to live for ever?



Recently an extension to the radiotherapy unit in Altnagelvin Hospital has been opened (the North West Cancer Centre above). It will treat patients north and south of the border. It may even speed up a cure for cancer. We human beings are made in the image of a for ever God. We feel cheated by death. Is there life beyond death? Surely that depends on whether or not there has been life *before* death!

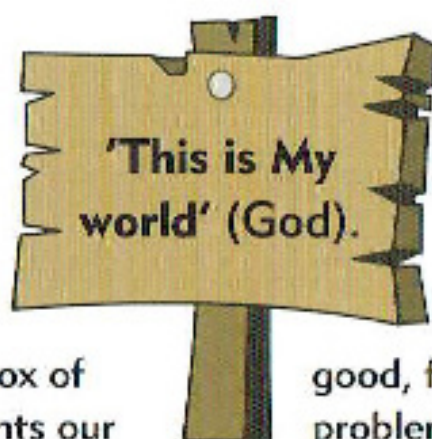
“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

The **PROBLEM**

Let's come at this matter of life and death through the verse above. The Bible is God talking to us. He has had it put into English and Irish for us. We would be as foolish to ignore God's words there as the label on a box of tablets. This verse presents our problem and its solution too.

The reason God gives here for death coming into the world is sin. This is God's world. He has put up ownership signs to tell us that. The food we eat, the rain we complain of and the sunshine we love, as well as the regular cycle of seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, are signs of His care and control. The library of DNA in each of our cells is God's signature on us. But we have lived to please ourselves, as if God did not exist.

We have taken all the good things He has sent us and maybe given Him a few pounds or confessed a few more obvious sins. We haven't admitted our wholesale rebellion against Him, our desire to take His place, to be God ourselves. By



nature we want to squeeze this generous God out of His world.

This sin problem is serious, for God says it's what brings death. *“The wages of sin is death”*.

That means *eternal* death, separation from God's love and all that's

good, for ever. Ignoring this problem won't solve it any more than ignoring a lump removes it.

The **PERSON**

However, God Himself has done something about it. He knows the problem. He tells us the disease – sin – is fatal. But He prescribes a remedy. Sometimes the medicine we have to take tastes really nasty. Well, God's prescription is nasty, not for us, but for Himself. For in the person of His Son, God came to earth to deal with our sin problem. That meant being misunderstood, ridiculed and rejected. People thought they could cure themselves with a little religion. That's why they resisted Him when He said they had to come



to Him for treatment. Jesus is the only One never to have sinned.



He was conceived in a unique way to show He had no taint of sin. He could say to a paralysed man,

"Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). Only the pure and perfect God can forgive and restore like that. At one point Jesus asked a hostile audience to show He had committed sin (John 8:46). No-one spoke.

Jesus never told a lie or twisted the truth. He never acted out of spite or hatred. He never entertained

an impure thought. At His trial the Roman governor said He was innocent and the centurion at the cross declared, **"Surely this was a righteous man!"** (Luke 23:47). Sin had no hold on Him. Jesus had no need to die. The wages of sin could pass Him by.

The PENALTY

Yet of all we know about Jesus, His death is the clearest. Crosses on churches and Bibles remind us how He died. But not everyone grasps *why* He died. Another Bible verse tells us that on the cross God

'made Jesus sin' (2 Corinthians 5:21). The word 'made' doesn't mean God forced Jesus to sin. No – it means that God treated Jesus as He would treat sin. Only someone who had no sin could pay for the sins of others. I can't take away your sins because I have my own to answer for. That is why Jesus had to be perfect. And from the cross we hear Him crying out in innocence, **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"** (Mark 15:34).

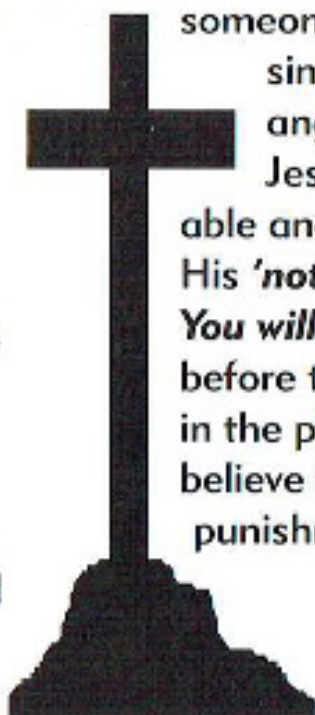
He's asking about the rightness of it all. Why should He be treated like this? For the killing of Jesus was a most sinful act.

But on a deeper level He's accepting this death. He's quoting from Psalm 22, written 1,000 years earlier. He's saying that's how it had to be. We sinners need

someone who can pay for our sins, who can turn God's anger away from us.

Jesus is the only One able and willing to do it. With His **'not what I will, but what You will'** (Mark 14:36) hours before the cross, He will die in the place of those who believe they deserve God's punishment.

Jesus had no need to die – so why did He?



The PROVISION

Jesus's death isn't an accident or just an example. It actually achieves something. That's why, just before He dies He cries out "*It is finished!*" In His death the death penalty and the hell penalty for sin have been paid in full. A great exchange is taking place. He is paying for sin and bearing its penalty, death, in order to bring eternal life to all who believe in Him. And on the third day God raised Jesus from the dead, never to die again. His risen life is given as a gift to all who admit their sin and hate it, who believe Jesus died for it and who commit their lives into His hands. That is how to receive life *before* death, life that goes on *beyond* death.

This demands a response from everyone. You can't be neutral here. There's no fence to sit on. Either you reject this message and continue in death or you believe this and receive eternal life now.

**Eternal life begins
when we believe in
all Jesus did.**

Because we believe this is so important, we would love to talk with you more, and explore the Bible with you. We can meet you wherever you feel most comfortable. If you don't have a Bible, we can give you one! If you want to learn more about the Bible, and about Jesus, please contact Stephen Neilly on 074 2892 5764. We would love to see you at our weekly meeting, where we worship God and hear a message from the Bible.

