

## INTRODUCTION

Some people claim baseball is the national sport. If you've played a baseball game, or watched a game, you know the importance of having a good umpire. Sometimes umpires aren't the most popular folks around. If you've ever attended a Little League Baseball game, you've probably heard the expression, "Kill the Ump!" That expression came from American poet Ernest Lawrence Thayer in his 1888 poem "Casey at the Bat." In an important game between local teams, Casey came to bat for Mudville. I won't read the first few verses, but the final stanzas read:

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,  
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.  
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped—  
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one!" the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,  
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore;  
"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted someone on the stand;  
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;  
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;  
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the dun sphere flew;  
But Casey still ignored it and the umpire said, "Strike two!"

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered "Fraud!"  
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.  
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,  
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clenched in hate,  
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate;  
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,  
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright,  
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light;  
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout,  
But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out.

Over the past two months, we've been studying the Book of Job. Most of you know the plot. Job is a prosperous and happy man. Satan presents the allegation to God that the only reason Job worships Him is because God has bribed him with all his blessings. Satan says if Job lost it all he would curse God. God gave Satan permission to do anything to Job he wanted—except to take his life. In a short period of time, Job lost his wealth, estimated to be about \$45 million in today's currency. Worst than that, his 10 children were all killed when they were in a house destroyed by a tornado. But Job didn't fold. His wife said, "Curse God and die!" But Job said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, may the name of the Lord be praised." (Job 1:21)

Most of the book is devoted to the cycles of conversations between Job and three of his so-called friends who came to comfort him, but actually ended up adding to his torment. During this time

of suffering Job makes some profound discoveries about himself and about God.

After Bildad's observations in chapter eight, Job cries out in Job 9:2: "Indeed I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God?" Then as he continues with this thought, he expressed his frustration at not being able to talk to God as an equal. He cries out for an umpire, a mediator.

In Job 9:32-35 he says, "He is not a man like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both, [The New American Standard Version says: "There is no umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both."] someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more. Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot."

In this message I'll address this issue from two perspectives. First, I'll briefly examine the problem, and then I'll talk more about God's solution to the problem.

## **I. OUR PROBLEM: WE DESPERATELY NEED A SPIRITUAL UMPIRE**

Job makes two important observations causing him to come to a logical conclusion.

### **1. God isn't like me**

Job says God is not a man like him. God is eternal; we are finite creatures. God is perfect; we are imperfect. The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

I was reading some of the "dumb criminal" stories recently. In Kansas City five guys were placed in a police lineup. Each of them was asked to say, "Give me all your money, or I'll shoot." When they came to the fifth guy he said, "But that's not what I said!" Spiritually speaking, we're all like that guy. In God's court, we all stand accused and guilty.

On the other hand, God is sinless. He is holy. He can't even look at sin. God doesn't really have eyes like we do, but when the Hubble Telescope captured an image of the Helix Nebula; they named it God's eye. The Bible says, "Oh, God, are you not from everlasting? Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong." (Habakkuk 1:12-13)

### **2. My sins have separated me from God**

The second part of our problem is our sins have broken our relationship with God. When Adam and Eve were created in the Garden of Eden, their souls were pure and undefiled. They could walk with God and talk with God in the cool of the evening. But when sin entered their lives, that precious intimacy was lost.

The Bible says: "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you." (Isaiah 59:2) After making these two fundamental observations about man and

God, Job comes to this profound conclusion:

### **3. Therefore: I can't relate to God without a qualified mediator**

In the midst of his pain and suffering Job cried out that he needed someone to lay one hand on God and one hand on him to work out their problem. He needed someone to negotiate with God so His rod of punishment would be withdrawn. He needed an umpire—a mediator.

While most of us think of an umpire as someone who calls balls and strikes at a baseball game, the meaning of the word goes beyond the baseball diamond. According to [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) the definition of an umpire is "A person appointed to settle a dispute that individuals or parties have been unable to resolve; an arbitrator."

Too many people think they don't need this spiritual mediator. They think they can find God on their own. But if you've ever committed one sinful act, or had one sinful thought in your life, you have disqualified yourself from being a mediator with God.

Sometimes in court cases, a defendant chooses to be their own attorney. That's allowed under our legal system. But among lawyers, there's a saying that "the person who has himself as his own attorney has a fool for a client." That's what Job was recognizing. We all need someone to arbitrate between us and God.

## **II. GOD'S PROVISION: HE HAS GRACIOUSLY GIVEN US A SPIRITUAL UMPIRE**

Job expressed the central problem we all face in our lives. How can we, as sinful creatures, relate to a holy, perfect God? God has already provided the solution. Religion is man reaching out for God; Christianity is God reaching out to man in the person of Jesus Christ.

We have a spiritual mediator—and umpire—in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus bridges the gap between sinful man and holy God. The Bible says: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all men." (I Timothy 2:5-6)

Surveys reveal people in America are more spiritual than ever before, but they are trying to find God using their own methods. They think they can manufacture their own relationship with God and don't need Jesus.

Not long ago, I read an interview with Sarah Michelle Gellar. I've never seen the show, but the article says she stars in a show called "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," and a lot of teen horror movies. When asked about God, she expressed the position of many confused young people. She said: "I consider myself a spiritual person. I believe in an idea of God, although it's my own personal ideal. I find most religions interesting, and I've been to every kind of denomination: Catholic, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist. I've taken bits from everything and customized it." (Quoted from *Parade Magazine*)

But the Bible says Jesus is the mediator between God and man. There are two important aspects

of what it means for Jesus to be our mediator.

## 1. Jesus is the exclusive mediator

I Timothy 2:5 makes it clear there is only "one God and one mediator." When someone has exclusive rights to something, it means nobody else qualifies. Jesus is the *exclusive* mediator, because He claimed to be the *only* way to God. Jesus is not the *best* way to heaven: He is the *only* way. That's not a popular statement in today's culture of plurality and tolerance. Today, the politically correct position is there are many pathways to God: the Buddhist pathway, the Hindu pathway, the Muslim pathway, the Christian pathway—and many others. But to accept that position is to bring into question the exclusive claims of Jesus.

Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) He didn't say, "I am A way or A truth." He said, "I am THE way, THE truth, the LIFE." According to Jesus, He is the exclusive mediator between God and man.

You don't have to be a simpleton to accept that. One of the most brilliant individuals of the 20th Century was Clive Staples Lewis. He was a brilliant college professor at Oxford University in England. He set out to disprove the claims of the Bible and in the process became a devout follower of Jesus Christ. This intellectual giant claimed one cannot simply say Jesus was merely a great religious teacher. He once wrote: "The things Jesus says are different from what any other teacher has said. Others say, 'this is the truth about the Universe. This is the way you ought to go,' but He says, 'I AM the truth, and the Way and the Life. No man can reach absolute reality, except through Me.'" (*God in the Dock*, p. 160) In *Mere Christianity*, he continued this train of thought: "The man who said the sort of things Jesus said would not be simply a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher." (*Mere Christianity*, p. 55)

## 2. Jesus is the expensive mediator

I Timothy 2:6 says Jesus "gave himself as a ransom." A ransom is a price paid to purchase someone's freedom. In 1193, the English King Richard I, also known as Richard the Lionheart, was returning from leading a Crusade to the Holy Land. As he returned through Europe, Leopold V captured him in Austria. The Holy Roman Emperor demanded a ransom for Richard's release. The price was to be 150,000 marks, equal to three tons of silver. This was an enormous ransom demand. But the people of England so loved their king they submitted to extra taxation, and many nobles donated their fortunes for Richard's release. After many months, the money was raised and King Richard returned to England. That's where we get the expression, "a king's ransom."

But to us, the term "a King's ransom" could better be applied to the tremendous price Jesus, the King of Kings paid for our sins on the cross. This King wasn't being ransomed; He *paid* the ransom so we can be set free. It is the most expensive ransom in the history of mankind.

In another story that came from the Crusades, Norman Lord Grimbald de Pauncefort was captured by the Saracens. When asked the ransom price for his release the Turkish prince demanded the severed right hand of de Pauncefort's young bride, Eleanor. In a tremendous act of courage and sacrifice, Lady Eleanor complied, and had her left hand amputated and sent to ransom her husband. That's what Jesus did for you, but He didn't just give His hand, He gave His life.

## CONCLUSION

Notice I Timothy 2:6 again. It doesn't say Jesus gave his life as a ransom for a few chosen few. He gave His life as a ransom for ALL men—even if they don't accept the free gift of eternal life He offers.

A few years ago, I read a story explaining the ransom Jesus paid for us in a way that's hard to ignore. I don't know if this actually happened; I haven't been able to confirm it. So let's just call it a parable: a Salvation Parable of Donuts and Pushups.

In a Christian college there was a Theology professor named Dr. Christianson. Every semester he taught a Bible Survey course all freshmen were required to take. Even though he tried hard to explain the meaning of salvation and Christ's atonement, most students seemed bored and unimpressed.

One year there was a student who played on the football team named Steve in the class. Steve was a gifted 4.0 student as well as a great athlete. After class, Dr. Christianson said, "Steve how many push ups do you think you can do?" Steve said, "I usually do about 200 pushups a day." Dr. Christianson said, "Would you be willing to do some pushups for me in class tomorrow to illustrate salvation?" Steve said, "Sure." Then Dr. Christianson explained to Steve exactly what he had in mind.

The next day, when the students arrived, they found Dr. Christianson had a couple of boxes of donuts on his desk. These weren't ordinary donuts; they were the big, thick, extra-delicious kind. The students' mouths began to water as they figured out they were going to have a donut party instead of class.

Dr. Christianson took a box of donuts and went to a girl on the front row and asked, "Cynthia, would you like a donut?" She said, "Yes!" Dr. Christianson turned to Steve and said, "Steve would you do 10 pushups so Cynthia can have a donut?" Steve jumped down and did ten and then returned to his seat. The students laughed and cheered, and the professor gave Cynthia a donut.

Dr. Christianson went to the next student and said, "Joe, would you like a donut." When he nodded the professor said, "Steve will you do 10 more pushups so Joe can have a donut?" Steve dropped down and did another ten pushups. And so it continued. For every student who got a donut, Steve was asked to do 10 pushups.

After six or seven students, Steve was sweating and the students were no longer cheering or smiling. Dr. Christianson came to Mike, a member of the basketball team. Mike said, "I can do my own ten pushups." Dr. Christianson said, "No, that's not the way it works. Steve has to do the pushups." Mike said, "then I don't want a donut."

Dr. Christianson shrugged and said, "Steve, please do ten pushups so Mike can have a donut." When Steve started the pushups, Mike shouted, "HEY! I said I didn't want a donut." Dr. Christianson turned to the entire class and said, "Listen and listen well: "This is my class, these are my desks, this is my plan." As he laid a donut on Mike's desk he said, "If you don't want your donut just leave it on the desk. I won't force you to eat it."

As the professor went to each student, Steve did 10 pushups. By now he was slowing down and sweating profusely. He didn't even get up between sets; he stayed on the floor waiting for the next set. By now the students were getting angry. As he came to Jenny on the third row he said, "Jenny do you want a donut?" She said, "No, and don't make Steve do pushups." The professor laid a donut on her desk and said, "Steve do ten pushups so Jenny can have the donut she doesn't want."

By now all the students were saying, "No" and the desks were covered with uneaten donuts. Steve was having a rough time trying to comply with the order to do pushups. His arms were shaking and he could hardly raise himself after each effort.

Robert was an unbeliever and when Dr. Christianson asked him if he wanted a donut, Robert angrily replied, "You're crazy, and this is a stupid plan." As Dr. Christianson put a donut on Robert's desk he said, "Some people say that, Steve do ten pushups so that Robert can have a donut he doesn't want. Robert, be sure to count and make sure Steve does all ten."

Soon, the only sound to be heard in the classroom was Steve's heavy breathing and a few quiet sobs from some of the girls as they watched Steve agonize over each effort. He had to take several seconds to try to rest between each effort. By now he had done over 25 sets of ten pushups. When Dr. Christianson came to the last student he said, "Susan, would you like a donut? With tears streaming down her face she said, "Why can't I help him?"

The professor was on the verge of tears himself as he said, "No, Steve has to do it alone. I looked in my grade book and Steve is the only student with a perfect A+ average. He's the only student who hasn't skipped class or missed turning in an assignment. Steve told me when someone messes up in football practice they have to do pushups. So Steve and I made a deal. Since all of you have messed up in my class, Steve has agreed to do ten pushups for each of you so you can enjoy the donut." He turned to an exhausted Steve and said, "Steve, do ten more pushups for Susan to have a donut." One, two, three...nine, ten. As Steve slowly finished the last pushup, he had the realization he had accomplished all that was required of him, 270 pushups, he said, "It is finished" and his weary arms finally buckled and he fell to his face.

Dr. Christianson turned to the stunned students and said, "As so it was, that our Savior, Jesus Christ, gave His all on the cross to pay for our sins. With the understanding that He had done everything required of Him He yielded up His life and said, 'It is finished.' And like some of the

students in this room, many people leave the gift on the desk, uneaten." As two of the guys helped Steve to His feet, the professor said, "Well, done, good and faithful servant. Class dismissed." And while some of those students may have still rejected the free gift of eternal life, none of them ever forgot the powerful lesson of donuts and pushups.

Four thousand years ago, Job recognized the core problem of the human species. How can we ever hope to even relate to, much less stand righteous before God? We've got to have an umpire—a mediator Who can relate to both man and God. Without the intervention of this mediator—this umpire—we cannot every hope to relate to the Creator of the Universe. On the basis of His humanity, Jesus offers you His nailed pierced hand. Based upon His Deity, He reaches into heaven and takes the hand of His Heavenly Father. And as He died on the Cross He said, "It is finished!"

Whenever I hear someone yell "Kill the ump!" I'm reminded of what happened to Jesus. That's exactly what they did with God's Umpire. They killed Him. But as the words of Sandi Patti's song say, "And finally upon a rugged cross; They killed the man who would not suffer loss. And when at last they took; What willingly He gave. He died but could they keep Him in the grave? They could not!"

I encourage you to get to know God's Umpire, Jesus Christ. Because one day each of us will stand before Him and He never makes a bad call. He will look at us and either say, "Safe! Through your faith and trust in Me." Or He'll say, "You're out! Depart from me, I never knew you." What will His call be for you?

## OUTLINE

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2. Jesus is the expensive mediator  
"gave himself as a ransom"



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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes