

Perceptions ...

influence behavior. Even before Christ came to this earth, God sought to reveal His character through the prophets. But erring human nature constantly distorted man's perception of Him, and He came to be thought of as either cruel or permissive. These false concepts of God made it impossible for man to overcome evil. Jesus came to correct these perceptions.¹ By His own life Jesus demonstrated God's care for, and fairness toward, all people. It is the essence of His very being to serve and *to give*. Jesus pointed out that God "*makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*" (Matthew 5:45). But above anything else God could give, Jesus Himself is ...

GOD'S GIFT TO YOU AND ME

1. How did Jesus Himself feel about the amazing gift that the Father was willing to give?

*"You know the **grace**² of our Lord Jesus Christ."* "[He], being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:6-8). *Grace* is a voluntary gift. By willingly leaving behind the glories of heaven, putting on humanity, and then enduring abuse for our sins, Jesus demonstrated His own generous mindset—aside from the Father's—toward a lost world.

¹ John 1:18.

² The word "grace" means "a gift," "the generosity of a giver," or "divine influence operating on the human heart."



2. In what unenviable position did sin place humankind?

“Through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin [we inherited Adam’s nature], and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Breaking the moral law places a person **under** its condemnation. *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.... If thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty”* (James 2:10-12 KJV).

3. Will living good lives from now on clear us of our past transgressions?

“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). Being “really good” from now on cannot atone for a single sin. Only the shedding of the blood of Jesus in our place can clear us from sin.³

4. How has Jesus’ sacrifice changed our position?

“For you are not under law but under grace” (Romans 6:14). Through love’s sacrifice, sinners may choose to be forgiven of their sins—set free from the condemnation of the moral law to bask in God’s mercy and affection. At the same time, God lovingly continues to call those who carry their loads of unforgiven sins.

**“FOR YOU ARE
NOT UNDER
LAW BUT UNDER
GRACE.”
ROMANS 6:14**



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³ 1 Peter 1:18-19.



**“NEITHER DO I CONDEMN YOU;
GO AND SIN NO MORE.”**

JOHN 8:1-11

5. When we are under grace, should we just continue sinning?

“Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (John 8:1-11). Christ forgave Mary Magdalene for her past sins, but He urged her to change her lifestyle to meet God’s standard.⁴

6. What happens if we neglect God’s help to overcome sin?

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). The moral law defines morality; any violation of it—in deed, thought, or neglecting to do right—disqualifies us from eternal life. For the sinner to be cleared of sin, he must surrender it. And in spite of all that the press, the public, and secular laws may say to the contrary, God labels many modern liberties as “abominations.”

7. Does God then not love “great” sinners?

“Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7-8). A person’s love for something is measured by the price he is willing to pay to save it. Yes, God

⁴ John 8:1-11; Isaiah 1:16.

loves all sinners! But sinners would not benefit from merely receiving eternal life. Sin inevitably causes suffering; and admitting people who remain sinners at heart to heaven would serve only to perpetuate misery for them and those around them. Therefore, God originated a plan that would forever immunize us from sin and, finally, remove every trace of sin from the universe.

8. What was the apostle Paul's personal experience with grace?


"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15 KJV). Before his conversion, Paul had been a self-righteous Pharisee and a relentless persecutor of Christians. But he learned the meaning of guilt and of pardon. Grace was very precious to him. Hence, he lavished his letters, and both opened and closed them, with "grace."

9. Are there more examples of how God's grace has helped sinful people overcome sin?

Jacob was a deceiver and a liar; Moses, a murderer. David was an adulterer and a murderer. Peter denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. The disciple John was a rash, revengeful man. John Newton was a slave broker; and John Bunyan, a profane "party animal." Yet, *"where sin abounded, grace abounded much more"* (Romans 5:20). With Jesus' help, these people turned their lives around and recovered their self-respect and usefulness.



**"CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS,
OF WHOM I AM CHIEF." 1 TIMOTHY 1:15, KJV**



“MY LITTLE CHILDREN, THESE THINGS I WRITE TO YOU, THAT YOU MAY NOT SIN. AND IF ANYONE SINS, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS.”

1 John 2:1

10. What happens if a believer who has given up sin falls into sin again?

“My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses.... Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (1 John 2:1; Hebrews 4:15-16). We human beings will fail. But when this happens and we repent, Jesus will grant mercy, impart strength to overcome sin, and renew our incentive to “learn to maintain good works” (Titus 3:14). Sanctification is the process by which God helps us learn the joys of living a holy life. It takes time.

11. How does God present Himself to us?

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you” (Jeremiah 29:11; 31:3). It cannot be overemphasized that, after man fell into sin, God presented His most valuable gift; He sent His own Son to a world that loved Him not. Offered from the overflowing generosity of the Father’s heart, Jesus—in coming to earth as a vulnerable human to live and die among perverse people—remains God’s greatest manifestation of love ever.

“THANKS BE TO GOD FOR HIS INDESCRIBABLE GIFT!”

2 Corinthians 9:15

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

THE EXTENT OF GOD'S GRACE?

- **Can a converted person fall from grace?**

Yes. Only *“he that shall endure unto the end ... shall be saved”* (Matthew 24:13 KJV). Until the final judgment, we are free to return to our old, sinful ways of life. Therefore the Saviour cautions us to watch and pray, and Peter reminds us to be vigilant because the devil wants to destroy everyone. But if we stay close to God, He will keep us on the right track.

- **I feel unable to do God's will. Can He do anything for a person like me?**

Yes, He can! And it is right for you to feel that way, because it is true. *We are all unable to do His will.* But Paul discovered, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:13). Faith teaches us that. As you learn to go to Him for help, you will overcome and find yourself capable of doing what you could never do before! Don't choose the option of giving up. *“Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart”* (Psalm 27:14).

- **I have confessed my sins. Why do I still feel that God is angry with me?**

This is a feeling that lingers with some people. But remember that feelings are not reliable; they come and go. How *we* feel is *no* indication of how *God* feels about us! His Word assures every conscientious believer: *“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine”* (Isaiah 43:1). While seeking to do His will in all things, we are free to ignore our feelings, to trust His promises, and to rest in the precious assurances of His love.

When life seems hopeless, problems appear unsolvable, and even the help offered by friends just isn't sufficient, try tapping into the partnership principle of personal victory in every area of life. Find out that guidance “From Above”—presented in Lesson 15—is *always* the right answer!

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Please answer the following questions—and send them to us so we can help you with any misunderstandings. Note that multiple-choice questions may have more than one correct answer. *Circle the letters of all correct answers.*

1. How did Jesus feel about being sacrificed by God?

- a) He did not really want to be bothered.
- b) He volunteered.
- c) He and His Father have the same generous mindset.

2. In what situation did sin place man?

- a) Under the condemnation of the moral law.
- b) On death row.
- c) In a position to look at sin as a minor issue.

3. How does Jesus' sacrifice change our position as sinners?

- a) It makes us eligible for eternal life.
- b) It got rid of the moral law so sinners don't have to change.
- c) It makes God's grace available to us.

4. When we are under grace,...

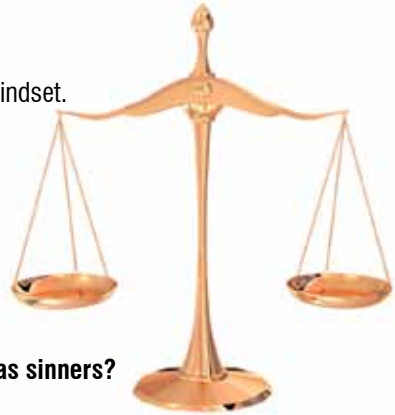
- a) it is a little bit safer to sin.
- b) we are required to stop sinning.
- c) sin that is not surrendered will disqualify us for eternal life.

5. If we sin,...

- a) there is no hope for us.
- b) we have an Advocate with the Father.
- c) we can still obtain mercy, renewed incentive, and strength to overcome sin.

6. Christ died ...

- a) for those who are evil as well as those who are good.
- b) only for those who love Him.
- c) while we were still sinners.



**“I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST
WHO STRENGTHENS ME.” PHILIPPIANS 4:13**

7. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of _____ and not of evil, to give you a _____ and a _____” (Jeremiah 29:11).
8. “I have _____ you with an _____ love; therefore with _____ I have drawn you” (Jeremiah 31:3).
9. “Offered from the _____ generosity of the Father’s heart, _____—in coming to earth as a _____ human to live and die among _____ people—remains God’s _____ manifestation of _____ ever.”

To receive your next free New Horizons Bible Correspondence Course lesson, include your name and address on the lines below. Then cut along the dotted line on the right and fold, insert into an envelope, and mail this answer sheet to the address below.

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