



# Christian BASICS

**BY GRACE ALONE**

God's Gracious Gift of Salvation

BY EDWIN D. ROELS



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## FOREWORD

### *It's All By Grace*

It's sometimes difficult to recognize and acknowledge that our salvation is truly all by grace. We are often tempted to take at least some credit for who we are spiritually and for making some significant progress in our walk with God. We may have made some good choices and decisions in our lives while others made bad or foolish choices. And we may have seriously and humbly tried to do what is most pleasing to God when others went their own way apart from God.

The Bible makes it very clear, however, that our salvation is totally by God's grace and not because of any "good choices" we have made on our own. We may be very pleased with the good choices we have made, but our ability to make those choices and decisions comes from the gracious work of God in our lives.

When we are walking humbly and faithfully with God, it may be easy for us to look at the failures of others and then take personal credit for some of the much better choices we have made. But the ultimate credit for every good choice or decision we have made must be given to the Lord of Grace.

It's encouraging to read, therefore, that some of the greatest "saints" in the Bible gratefully give all the credit to God for any good things they have done. If we lose that perspective, we may too quickly take credit for the good we do and too quickly judge others for the bad things they have done or the good things they have left undone.

It is both comforting and encouraging, therefore, to read in the Bible that God often chooses some of the most "unlikely" people to carry out His plans purposes. In both the Old and New Testaments we read

stories of people whom God wonderfully used to His glory even though others would never have chosen them for a special work or ministry of any kind.

God is certainly never pleased with any acts of disobedience or selfishness or pride, but He continues to demonstrate his grace at times by choosing “the least of us” and even the “worst of us” to carry out some of His very special purposes in such a way that we are humbled and He is glorified.

As you study this course, may God give you the grace to live in a way that brings all glory and praise to Him, the gracious source of our salvation.

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# IT'S ALL BY GRACE

## Lesson One

### BY GRACE ALONE

#### Personal Testimony

In most ways my grandfather was a very ordinary man. Few people remember him and most people never heard of him. However, on his death bed he taught his children and grandchildren a powerful truth which none of us will ever forget.

*When my Grandpa was dying at the age of 81, he was lying on my parents' bed in our family home. His strength was almost gone. His breathing was shallow and he spoke in little more than a whisper. We all knew that his life was slowly ebbing away. Soon he would be gone from us and at home with the Lord.*

*The family gathered closely around his bed to hear his final words. As he lay there dying, he repeated the same few words over and over again. **"IT'S ALL BY GRACE. All by Grace. All by grace."** His voice got softer and softer but his words remained the same. He repeated these precious words until his breath was almost gone. And then, with eyes closed and with a final effort he repeated it once more: **"It's all by grace."** And then he was gone. The gates of heaven were opened and by the grace of his Lord he entered the presence of the One he loved and served for so long.*

To me as a grandson, this is a very touching story. However, more important than the story itself is the truth my grandfather emphasized: Our salvation, our forgiveness, our confidence of spending eternity with Jesus, our victory in life and our peace in death are all by grace . . . and by grace alone.

## WHAT IS GRACE?

In its simplest form God's grace may be described as ***God's unmerited and undeserved favor toward us***. Without that grace, we would have no joy or peace in this life and no hope for a blessed life after our earthly life is over. Every breath we take, every moment we enjoy, every gift we receive, every skill we possess, every work we accomplish and every hope we have for the future is ours only because of God's grace. Even the love and kindness we show to others and the love and kindness we receive from others are possible only because of God's grace. God is the ultimate source of everything in this world that we consider "good" or pleasant or desirable.

*This is especially true in regard to our salvation. God's grace alone covers all our sins, forgives all our failures, and removes all our guilt. If God did not show His love and forgiveness to us, we would be forever lost. No matter how much we pray or how hard we try to live a more holy life, we will never be able to merit salvation by what we do. By ourselves we will never be "good enough" for heaven. We do not minimize the importance of prayer or obedience or Bible study, but we must always recognize that we can add absolutely nothing to what Jesus Christ has already done for our salvation. **Our salvation is based totally on the marvelous grace of God.***

## HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO GOD'S GRACE?

If Jesus has done all that is needed for our salvation, does it then still matter how we live or what we do? It certainly does! The Bible teaches that we must sincerely trust in Jesus as the perfect Savior who, by His grace, paid the penalty for our sins and then we must earnestly seek to live a life of love, obedience, gratitude and good works through the power of Christ who lives within us.

The Apostle Paul summarized this teaching in his letter to the Christians in Ephesus. He wrote:

*"For by **grace you have been saved through faith**. And this is not your own doing: it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."* Ephesians 2:8-10



The Apostle James also emphasized the importance of works when he wrote: “Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead . . . For just as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” James 2:17, 26

In this course we will read again and again that our salvation is “All by Grace.” However, we should never forget that while the Bible consistently emphasizes that our salvation is **by grace alone**, it also teaches that the way we live our daily lives will demonstrate whether or not we have been truly saved. On the Day of Judgment, therefore, our deeds as well as our words will be significant in determining our final destiny. (See, for example, Matthew 25:21-46, John 5:28-29, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, and Titus 3:8-12.)

### **WHEN DO WE FIRST READ IN THE BIBLE ABOUT GOD’S SAVING GRACE?**

Though the word “grace” is not found in the first chapters of the Bible, God demonstrated His grace over and over again, beginning with the story of Adam and Eve. When God created Adam and Eve, He created them in His own image and after His own likeness. He gave them authority over the earth that He had created and told them to rule over it, care for it, and be fruitful and increase in number. He placed them in the beautiful Garden of Eden where everything was peaceful and delightful. They had a wonderful place to live, a great variety of things to eat and enjoy, and many meaningful things to do (Genesis 1:26-30; 2:8-9). There were no arguments, no disagreements, and no frustrations. There were no disappointments or failures, no sickness or pain, no sorrow or death, no guilt and no fear. **In His grace**, God had created a perfect environment for Adam and Eve in which to live.

However, God gave Adam one very clear command—a command not to eat the fruit of one specific tree in the Garden. God told him that the penalty for breaking that command would be death (Genesis 2:16-17). He made this unmistakably clear when he told them: *“Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”* (Genesis 2:17). The command was simple and the punishment for breaking the command was clear: “Eat and you will die!”

Later, when Satan came in the form of a serpent and tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he aroused in them a desire for something they did not yet have. He told them that if they ate the forbidden fruit, they would become like God Himself, gaining a personal knowledge of good and evil. As a result, Adam and Eve began to question God's motive for giving them the command not to eat the fruit from that tree. As a result, they decided to believe the lie of Satan rather than the truth of God . . . and they ate! (Genesis 3:1-6)

As a result of their disobedience and sin, they immediately died spiritually and became alienated from the God who created them, loved them, and blessed them. Their bodies became subject to suffering and pain and death. The once-perfect earth began to produce thorns and thistles. And God told Adam that from that moment on he would eat its fruit only through painful toil. Adam and Eve also became conscious of their physical (and spiritual) nakedness, and in their guilt and shame they sought to run away and hide from God (Genesis 3:8-10). They also became alienated from one another and began to make excuses for their sin, blaming one another or the serpent for their disobedience (Genesis 3:11-13). The results of their sin were sad beyond anything they could have imagined!

But God did not leave Adam and Eve alone in their nakedness and guilt. ***In His grace***, He took the initiative and went “looking” for them. He could have let them die in their sin without mercy—but He didn't. He sought out Adam and Eve in their lost and confused condition and questioned them about what they had done. They responded with feeble efforts to excuse themselves by putting the blame on someone else. Their pitiful response simply showed the depths to which they had already fallen. But God, ***in His grace***, responded with a message of hope.

Before pronouncing His judgment on Adam and Eve, God pronounced a curse upon the serpent (Satan) who had deceived them. He also promised that someday one of their descendants would crush the head of the serpent (Satan) and would win a victory over sin and death (Genesis 3:15). However, He also indicated that this victory would come at great cost to the “seed” (descendant) of the woman. At this point, God's **promise of grace** was veiled in language that Adam and Eve could not begin to understand. But the promise of grace was there, and the promise would never fail.

Because of God’s grace, both Adam and Eve knew that there was HOPE for them and for all their descendants. Though the results of their sin would be terrible and painful (Genesis 3:16-17), death would not be the final word. Someday there would be a glorious victory—a **victory of grace!**

God also demonstrated His grace to Adam and Eve in another significant way before He banished them from the Garden. He made “garments of animal skin” for them to cover their nakedness (Genesis 3:21). Earlier they had tried to cover their nakedness by sewing fig leaves together (Genesis 3:7), but God showed them that He alone could provide the covering they needed.

This animal “substitute” in Genesis 3:21 pointed ahead to the time when God’s own Son (Jesus) would come into the world as the *“Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). Though Adam and Eve could not understand all this, God demonstrated that sinful people would never be able to atone for their sins through their own effort. The payment for their sin required the death of a perfect Substitute who would someday die in their place. And God, **in His grace**, loved the world so much that He gave His own Son (Jesus) to die so that all who believed in Him would not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

## **FURTHER DEMONSTRATIONS OF GRACE IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS**

Sometime later, God gave Adam and Eve two sons, Cain and Abel. When Cain killed his younger brother, God pronounced judgment on him for what he had done. At the same time, God showed Cain special grace by protecting him from those who might want to kill him or hurt him. Cain apparently lived as a fugitive for the rest of his life, but God, **in His grace**, spared his life so that he did not immediately perish (Genesis 4:13-16).

After the death of Abel, God, in His grace, blessed Adam and Eve with another son named Seth. Through Seth’s descendants, God would carry out His promise to provide someone who would be their Savior and Redeemer. It was during the lifetime of Seth’s son that people began for the first time to call on the name of the Lord.

In Genesis 5, we read the “roll call” of people who died in the days after Adam and Eve. Even though the people in those days lived a very long time, the penalty that God had pronounced on Adam and Eve was being carried out, one generation after another.

However, in the midst of the somber repetition of the words “*And then he died,*” there is an encouraging sign of **God’s continued promise and grace**. Enoch, one of Adam’s descendants, “walked with God” and did not die. Instead, he was taken directly to heaven to be with the God he loved and served (Genesis 5:21-24). Here again we have a wonderful sign of **hope and grace** in the midst of despair and death.

## **GOD PROMISES TO HEAR HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEY PRAY**

God knows our deepest longings and understands our most earnest desires. He understands our thoughts even when we are not able to express them. He hears our groanings and feels our sighs. He knows our hurts and sees our tears. He knows when we fall and when we are confused. He understands our fears and our inward pain. He hears our feeblest cries and responds to our most urgent calls. God fully understands exactly what we are going through. In every experience of joy or sorrow, God is there. And in every situation of need or blessing, He is willing and eager to hear our prayers.

## **God’s Grace in the Days of Noah**

Several generations after the time of Adam and Eve, sin became so deeply entrenched in human life that God decided to destroy mankind from the face of the earth by means of a flood. In Genesis 6:5 we read, “*The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” Almost everyone had forgotten about God and no one seemed to have any concern about life after death. People lived to be very old and they did what they pleased, and for them that was all that mattered.

Because of this pervasive evil, God pronounced judgment on everyone except for one man called Noah and his family (Genesis 6:8-9). **In His grace** God spared Noah and his family from the flood because he was considered “blameless” and “righteous” among the people of his time. Noah was not without sin, but he was a man who believed God, trusted Him, and sought to do what was pleasing to Him. As a result, God graciously spared Noah and his entire family from death in the devastating flood (Genesis 7:1).

For many years before the flood came, Noah preached to others to repent of their sins and change their ways, but no one turned to God in repentance and no one forsook his life of sin. Noah, however, believed what God had

told him and, in spite of the unbelief and mockery of the people around him, he demonstrated his faith by doing everything God told him to do. The unbelief and disobedience of the people led to their destruction. The faith and obedience of Noah led to his salvation.

Did Noah “earn” his salvation because of his obedience in building the ark God as told him to do? Not at all. Noah was far from perfect (see Genesis 9:20-23), but by doing what God told him to do, he demonstrated that he truly desired to serve God and trusted Him to save him from the destruction that was coming.

When the earth dried up again after the flood, Noah offered sacrifices to God in gratitude for what He had done. After Noah offered these sacrifices to the Lord, God **graciously** promised that He would never again destroy the entire world with a flood (Genesis 9:8-11). He also provided a unique “sign” of His promise by placing a beautiful rainbow in the sky. This rainbow would remind all people of God’s gracious covenant promise which He first gave to Noah (Genesis 9:12-17). Though God would still punish people for their sins, there would never again be a world-wide flood to destroy all mankind.

## SUMMARY

In the beginning God created a perfect world in which Adam and Eve, the first people on earth, enjoyed the gifts of God’s grace in a most wonderful way. However, through their sin and disobedience, they lost much that was precious and beautiful. Through their disobedience they “earned” the wages of death (Romans 6:23) and all their descendants would also share in that penalty (Romans 5:12, 18-19).

Later, because of the terrible sinfulness of Adam’s descendants, God sent a devastating flood to destroy everyone on earth except for a righteous man named Noah and his family. After the flood, however, God, **in His grace**, provided the rainbow in the sky as a sign that He would never again destroy the entire earth with a flood.



## LESSON 1 – TEST QUESTIONS

### TRUE OR FALSE

Circle T or F.

1. T F The word “grace” refers to the kindness God will show to us if we choose to follow Him and live for Him.
2. T F No one has ever served and loved God enough to earn or merit a place in heaven.
3. T F Though Adam and Eve sinned greatly against God, God saved them because they had lived a holy and righteous life up until the day that they disobeyed His command.
4. T F After Adam and Eve sinned against God, they immediately recognized their sinfulness and eagerly sought forgiveness through God’s mercy and grace.
5. T F When Cain killed his brother Abel, God spared Cain’s life because he repented of his terrible sin.
6. T F Before God pronounced punishment on Adam and Eve, he promised that someday there would come someone who would destroy the enemy who had led them astray.
7. T F Enoch was the first of three people mentioned in the Old Testament who were taken directly to heaven without dying.
8. T F God saved Noah from the flood because of Noah’s faithfulness and obedience.
9. T F God gave the rainbow as a reminder that people who live righteous lives will not suffer the judgment of God as the sinful people did in the days of Noah.
10. T F Ephesians 2 in the New Testament teaches us that salvation is not a result of our works but a gift of God’s grace received through faith.



## **MULTIPLE CHOICE**

**Choose which of the three statements is correct. Circle A or B or C.**

1.
  - A. In Old Testament times, people were saved by their works of obedience and faithfulness.
  - B. In the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, people were saved by grace alone.
  - C. In the Old Testament, people who were not in the family of Abraham were not saved at all.
2.
  - A. Adam and Eve never had a real chance to resist the temptation they faced because their enemy was far too strong.
  - B. Adam and Eve were originally perfect and definitely could have resisted the temptation presented them if they had trusted in God and asked Him for His help.
  - C. Adam and Eve were always surrounded by good things and had no idea that anything bad would really happen if they violated the command of God.
3. In the New Testament we read that:
  - A. "Faith, if it does not have works, is dead."
  - B. "Good works will always please the Lord more than simple faith will."
  - C. "Good works were important in the days before Christ came, but after He came and paid the penalty for our sins, good works are of minor significance."
4.
  - A. The word "grace" is of such great importance that it is found in seven of the first twelve chapters of Genesis.
  - B. One of the great gifts of God's grace in the beginning was that He created Adam and Eve in His own image, gave them authority over the rest of His creation, and gave them a beautiful place in which to live.
  - C. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in spite of all the blessings He gave them, they obviously gave up any possibility of again experiencing the grace of God on this earth.
5.
  - A. After Adam and Eve realized the significance of what they had done, they begged God for His forgiveness and pleaded for His grace.
  - B. Both Adam and Eve immediately took the blame for what had happened and recognized that they had grievously sinned against the One who had blessed them so richly.
  - C. Adam and Eve knew something terrible had gone wrong but they were not willing to take the blame for what had happened.

6.
  - A. Before God spoke to Adam and Eve about the punishment they would receive, he made it clear that the “serpent” who had tempted Adam and Eve would ultimately be destroyed.
  - B. Adam and Eve clearly understand what God had said to the “serpent” and they were grateful and expressed their thanks to the Lord.
  - C. After Adam and Eve heard the punishment that would come to the “serpent,” they felt relieved that their own punishment wouldn’t be so very serious.
7.
  - A. Genesis 3:15 pointed forward to the coming of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice—though Adam and Eve could not understand that.
  - B. Genesis 3:15 referred to the ultimate punishment of literal serpents who from that time on would have to crawl on the ground and be enemies of human beings.
  - C. Genesis 3:15 was only a “general” promise that Satan would eventually be defeated, but it does not in any way refer to the coming of Jesus into the world.
8.
  - A. There were many righteous people on earth at the time of Noah but God graciously chose Noah as the person to build the ark for the “salvation” of himself and his family.
  - B. Noah was the most righteous man on earth at the time of the flood.
  - C. Noah may not have been perfect, but we never read in the Bible about any moral failures he may have had.
9.
  - A. Adam and Eve died within a fairly short time after they disobeyed and sinned against God.
  - B. Most people who were born after sin entered the world died at an early age as a result of God’s judgment on Adam and Eve and their descendants.
  - C. Adam and many others who followed him lived for a very long time on the earth.
10. God’s grace may be described as:
  - A. “God’s blessing upon those who love and obey Him.”
  - B. “God’s care for those who are in need of His love and help.”
  - C. “God’s unmerited and undeserved favor and blessing.”





## LESSON 1 – ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. How would you define the word “grace” as it is used in the Bible?
2. Why is grace so important?
3. What does it mean that we are saved by grace alone? Do our own thoughts and prayers and actions have nothing at all to do with our salvation?
4. Fill in the blanks in the following sentence (based on Ephesians 2:8-10):  
“We are saved by \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.”
5. What changes took place in the lives of Adam and Eve after they sinned?
6. What did Adam and Eve do to cover their nakedness?
7. A. What did GOD do to cover their nakedness?  
B. What was the significance of God’s “covering”?
8. What great promise did God give to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15?
9. A. Was this promise given to them before or after God pronounced the punishment they would receive?  
B. What does the answer to question “A” tell us about God’s grace?
10. How did God show His grace to Cain after he killed his brother Abel?
11. Do you think Cain “deserved” to be given special treatment by God? Please give the reason for your answer.
12. A. What does the Bible tell us about the man called Enoch (Genesis 5:21-24)?
13. After reading all of Genesis 5, are you left with a feeling of hope or a feeling of despair?  
Please give the reason for your answer.
14. How does the Bible describe the sinfulness of man in Genesis 6:5?
15. Do you think the situation was really as bad as Genesis 6:5 describes?  
Please give the reason for your answer.
16. How does the Bible describe Noah in Genesis 6:8-9?

17. Do you think that Noah was sinless?  
Please give the reason for your answer.
18. What promise did God give to Noah and his family in Genesis 9:8-11?
19. What “sign” did God give Noah in connection with this promise?
20. A. Did God’s promise mean that He would never again punish the entire world of unbelievers in any way?  
B. What does 2 Peter 3:3-7 teach about this?

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION**

1. A. Would you agree or disagree with this sentence: “The most important word in the Bible is “GRACE”? Please give the reason for your answer.  
B. How would you respond to someone who says that the most important word in the Bible is “LOVE”?
2. Thoughtfully evaluate the following sentence: “If salvation is all by grace, then it doesn’t really matter whether we love and obey God or whether we don’t.”
3. What practical difference would it make in your own daily life if God saved you on the basis of your works rather than through your faith in Jesus Christ?
4. What would you say to someone who says, “The more I sin the more I experience the grace of God. So I intend to keep on doing whatever I please so that I may experience the grace of God more fully”? Prepare your own answer and then compare it with Paul’s teaching in Romans 6:1-14.
5. What would you say to someone who says: “I am a terrible sinner and know that I do not deserve God’s grace, so I might as well continue in my old way”?

# THE COVENANT OF GRACE

## Lesson Two

### BY GRACE ALONE

#### Introduction

God always had a deep concern for all people in the world, but after He scattered the rebellious people at the Tower of Babel, He limited His special revelation for the next two thousand years primarily to one man and his descendants. The person God chose for this very special honor was a man named Abram (later called Abraham). By focusing on Abraham and his descendants, God did not forget about the other nations in the world. Rather, by focusing on the descendants of Abraham, God worked out His plan of **grace** to bring salvation to people from every nation on earth.

Eventually, a child would be born in the line of Abraham who would be the Savior of the world. That person would be Jesus Christ who took on human form when He was born to a young Jewish girl in the land of Israel (Luke 2:10-11). This Holy Child was given the name “Jesus” (meaning “Savior” or “the Lord saves”) because He would save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

#### GOD’S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

When God called Abraham to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldeans (in an area known today as Iraq), He gave him a very special promise. God said, *“I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”* (Genesis 12:1-3).

What a fantastic promise that was! God had never promised anything like that to anyone before. So why did God choose Abraham for this special blessing? Did Abraham earn this blessing somehow? Did he have a record of doing great things for God? Did his family have a long history of loving and serving God?

The answer to all those questions is a very strong NO! We know very little about Abraham's ancestors other than the fact that they apparently were idol worshipers (Joshua 24:2 and 24:15). God definitely did not choose Abraham because of his merits or his worthiness or his background. God called Abraham because of His grace. And when God called him, Abraham trusted Him and did what God told him to do.

It was by faith that Abraham went out to the land of Canaan and it was by faith that he continued to trust and obey God throughout his life, even when he was tested and challenged over and over again. Because of his steadfast faith in the promises of God, Abraham is referred to in the New Testament as the father of all believers—people who trusted God, believed His promises, and obeyed His commands (Romans 4:11).

## **GOD'S GRACE FOR THE WORLD**

When God called Abraham, He not only promised to bless *him* and his descendants. He also promised to bless the people who blessed Abraham and promised to curse those who cursed Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). The primary reason for that, however, was not simply for the personal benefit of Abraham. Rather, God promised that the coming Savior would someday be born into Abraham's family. So any person or nation who protected or blessed Abraham and his descendants would receive special blessing from God. At the same time, those who interfered with God's plan of redemption by opposing Abraham and his descendants would face condemnation and destruction. By destroying those who opposed His "chosen people" and by blessing those who favored them, God **graciously** preserved His people and continued to carry out His divine plan to redeem the nations of the world through them.

*(Note: in the Bible the descendants of Abraham are often called Israelites or "the children of Israel." They are named after Abraham's grandson whose birth name was Jacob but was later called Israel. The Israelites were often victorious over their enemies*

*in amazing ways while their enemies were frequently destroyed because they opposed God's plan to save the world through Abraham's descendants.)*

**In His grace**, God wonderfully blessed Abraham and his descendants in so many ways—even though they often lived lives of selfishness, sinfulness, pride, and disobedience. They even forgot God on many occasions and chose to worship other gods instead. When that happened, God punished them just as He punished other nations or individuals who opposed Him. However, when the people of Israel repented and earnestly turned back to the Lord again, God graciously forgave them. They never earned God's blessing but, **in His grace**, God continued to bless them, protect them, and provide for them.

God's ultimate purpose in choosing Abraham was not simply to shower blessings on him and his family. God's purpose was to bless the entire world through them. He would do that in two ways.

First and foremost, God, in His grace, would bless the entire world by providing a Savior for everyone who would believe in Him and put their trust in Him. This purpose would surely be fulfilled, even though Satan would often seek to destroy Abraham's descendants or cause them to disobey or distrust the Lord.

Secondly, the people of Israel were called to live lives of faith and holiness as **examples** to the rest of the world. Israel alone had God's laws and God's promises and the Israelites were called to demonstrate to the rest of the world what it meant to live as the children of the one true God.

## **THE PROMISE OF A SON**

In Genesis 13:14-16 we read that God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as uncountable as the dust of the earth—even though Abraham had no children at the time. The amazing thing about this promise is that Abraham was getting old and his wife Sarah was not able to have children. In spite of that, however, Abraham believed what God had promised.

However, as time went on and Sarah remained childless, Abraham felt that God might somehow have to raise up descendants for him through his trusted servant rather than through a child of his own. But that was

definitely not God's plan! God said to him: *"This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir"* (Genesis 15:4).

Then God took Abraham outside and said, *"Look toward heaven and number the stars, if you are able to number them. . . . So shall your offspring be"* (Genesis 15:5). Even though Abraham had no idea how this would be possible, he believed what God said and the Lord *"credited it to him as righteousness"* (Genesis 15:6).

Here, as always, God's promises were given to Abraham before Abraham demonstrated his obedience—not afterwards. It was God's grace, not Abraham's faith, that came first. Earlier Abraham had left his homeland in Iraq and headed for far off Canaan, trusting that God would truly bless him in the new land. On the way to Canaan he left most of his family behind in Syria and by faith went on to travel without them (Genesis 11:31-32). When Abraham later lived in the land of Canaan, he let his nephew Lot choose whatever part of the land he wanted for himself (Genesis 13:1-12), since he (Abraham) believed that God would graciously grant him everything He had promised.

Abraham's obedience always followed from his faith and his faith always followed from God's promises. **God's grace always came first!**

## **ABRAHAM'S FAITH**

Several years later, God again promised Abraham that he and his wife Sarah would have a son together, and Abraham again believed what God had promised—even though by this time he was very old and his wife was well beyond her normal child-bearing years. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul describes their situation this way:

*"In hope he [Abraham] believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, 'So shall your offspring be.' He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised"* (Romans 4:18-21).

Since both Abraham and Sarah seemed physically incapable of having children at that point, it was obvious that God would have to perform a great miracle if they were ever to have a child. By waiting until there seemed to be no hope at all that Abraham and Sarah would have a child of their own, God demonstrated that *He* would be the one who would make salvation possible. Abraham obviously had to obey as well as trust, but the birth of the promised child was clearly a special gift from the Lord—another demonstration that salvation would always be **a gift of God’s grace**.

## **THE COVENANT OF GRACE**

After Abraham lived in the land of Canaan for a number of years, God gave him a great and wonderful promise which is often referred to as the ***Covenant of Grace***. In Genesis 12:1-3, we read that God promised Abraham that He would make him into a great nation, that He would make Abraham’s own name great, and that all peoples on earth would be blessed through him.

In Genesis 15 God promised Abraham that he would have a son and a multitude of descendants. He also promised that the land of Canaan would be his inheritance.

In Genesis 17:1-8 God formally established “The Covenant of Grace” with Abraham, promising that He would be Abraham’s God and the God of his descendants for generations to come. God said, *“I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you”* (Genesis 17:6-7).

God also promised that He would give Abraham’s descendants the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession and that He would be their God (Genesis 17:8).

Abraham believed that God would do everything He promised. His promises would result in wonderful blessings for Abraham and his family, but the greatest blessing would be that all people throughout the world would be blessed through him and his descendants (Genesis 12:3).

This wonderful promise was repeated on various occasions in the Old Testament and again in the New Testament. (See Psalm 72:17; Acts 3:25;

Galatians 3:8-9.) All these special promises to Abraham clearly demonstrated that mankind would be saved **by God's grace** and not by human effort.

## THE SIGN AND SEAL OF THE COVENANT

In Genesis 17:14 we read that God determined that the Covenant promise in Genesis 17 was to be sealed by the sign of circumcision. (See Acts 7:8 where the Covenant of Grace is referred to as the “Covenant of Circumcision.”) Circumcision was not an arbitrary sign and neither was it optional. The people of Israel always regarded circumcision as the distinguishing mark of the “chosen people” and they looked down upon all those who were not circumcised. (See, for example, Exodus 12:48 and Judges 14:3.) All male converts from non-Jewish nations had to be circumcised if they were to be included as members of the family of God. Even after the death and resurrection of Jesus, some Jewish believers still insisted that non-Jewish converts to Christianity had to be circumcised (Acts 15:5).

Since the line of promise was continued among the people of Israel through the males in the family, the sign of the covenant was given only to male children.

As a sign of the Covenant of Grace, circumcision was particularly relevant for at least three reasons.

- (1) The covenant sign would be intimately involved in the procreation of the children God promised to bless. Each time a child was conceived, the seed of the father would pass through the sign of the covenant even before the child was born. Each child was thus “holy unto the Lord” from the time of conception. (See Genesis 17:7, 10-14.)
- (2) Circumcision was a sign of the removal of defilement or impurity. The physical act of circumcision was significant, but it was of minimal value for those whose **spiritual** impurity or defilement was not removed. (See Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4, 9:25-26; and Romans 2:28-29.)
- (3) Circumcision involved the shedding of blood. Parents were reminded that each child, even though a child of covenant promise, was born in sin. (See Psalm 51:5.) Cleansing and forgiveness would ultimately be possible only through the shedding of blood.



Circumcision was faithfully practiced by the people of Israel and also by Gentile converts throughout the Old Testament. It was not until Jesus provided the perfect sacrifice for our sins that the shedding of blood was no longer necessary and circumcision was no longer of any spiritual value (Colossians 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6, and Galatians 6:15).

## **ABRAHAM AND HIS SON ISAAC**

When Abraham's son Isaac was a teenager, God told Abraham, *“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you”* (Genesis 22:2).

Abraham knew that Isaac was the son through whom all God's promises would be fulfilled. How could God possibly demand that he sacrifice this son! But God's command was clear and Abraham determined to obey—without question or argument. However, just before Abraham raised his arm to slay his son who was already on the altar, God called to him and told him not to harm him. Instead, God provided a ram as a substitute to be sacrificed in the place of Isaac (Genesis 22:1-14).

Immediately after Abraham's exceptional act of faith and obedience, God said to him:

*“Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice”* (Genesis 22: 16-18).

Abraham's willingness to offer his beloved son was clearly an act of obedience. But even more than that, it was an act of absolute **faith** in God. As Hebrews 11:19 explains: *“He [Abraham] considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.”*

God's provision of a ram as a substitute for Isaac clearly pointed forward to **the gracious sacrifice of God's own beloved Son** many centuries later. When Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, it was in the very same area where Abraham “offered” his own beloved son

two thousand years before. Abraham did not realize that this would happen, of course, but God did. God again provided a **sign of grace** which we today can only marvel at.

When Isaac grew up and married Rebekah, they discovered that she, like Sarah before her, was not able to have children. However, in answer to Isaac's prayer (Genesis 25:21), God **graciously** give them twin boys named Esau and Jacob. Esau was the firstborn who would normally receive the special blessing and favor which the firstborn son received in those days. However, God chose to carry out His covenant promise through Jacob rather than through Esau (Genesis 25:23 and Malachi 1:2-3).

God did not choose Jacob over Esau because Jacob was going to live an exemplary life of obedience. Quite to the contrary! Jacob was a man of many weaknesses and failures and deception. He certainly was not rewarded because of his obedience. He did become a man of great faith, but it was **God's grace** that preceded Jacob's faith.

Sometime after the birth of Esau and Jacob, there was a famine in the land of Canaan. God told Isaac not to leave the land but to stay in Canaan and trust Him to receive what he needed. God then renewed the promise He had made earlier to Abraham. He said to Isaac:

*“Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you. . . . I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed”* (Genesis 26:3-5).

Abraham's obedience and faithfulness were clearly very important in the sight of God. However, God's initial promises to him were not based on the things Abraham had done. **His promises were based totally on His grace.** Abraham was even disobedient to God at times, but **in His grace**, God always forgave him and never went back on His promise. Nor did God go back on His promise to Isaac (Genesis 26:24), even though Isaac's faith temporarily failed almost immediately after God gave him the promise! (See Genesis 26:7-11.)

## **ISAAC AND HIS SON JACOB**

When Isaac was old and nearly blind, Jacob deceived his father and managed to get for himself the blessing that normally would have gone to his twin brother Esau who was born first. As a result of his deceit, Jacob

had to flee from the land of promise (Canaan) and run to his relatives in another country. While he was on his journey, God sent Jacob a dream in which he saw angels going up and down a ladder from earth to heaven.

Though Jacob had been dishonest and was running away from the land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants, God, in His grace, repeated to Jacob the promise that He had given to Abraham long before. He said:

*“The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring . . . In you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. . . . I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you”* (Genesis 28:13-15).

God did not give Jacob this special blessing because of his obedience or holiness! Both before and after he had this special dream, Jacob was known as someone who would do whatever he thought was necessary in order to get what he wanted. Why, then, did God bless Jacob so richly? **Because of His own grace and promise!** If God would have dealt with Jacob simply on the basis of his “works,” Jacob would never have received the blessings he did.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

After the building of the Tower of Babel, God worked out His plan of redemption primarily through Abraham and his descendants. These descendants were known as the people or children of Israel, the grandson of Abraham. God’s purpose was not simply to bless Abraham’s descendants, but also (1) to use these chosen people to serve as examples to all other peoples and (2) to bring Jesus Christ into the world as the “seed of the woman” whom He had first promised in Genesis 3:15. Through Jesus God would graciously bring redemption to all the nations of the world.

After reading this brief summary of the story of Abraham and his descendants, it should be very clear that **we are saved by God’s grace and by grace alone**. Salvation was and always will be a gift of God’s grace, received by faith, and lived out in joyful obedience.



## LESSON 2 – TEST QUESTIONS

### TRUE OR FALSE

Circle T or F.

1. T F Already before God “called” Abraham, he and his parents were known for their obedience and trust in God.
2. T F When God made His special promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, He made it very clear that the promises would be fulfilled only if Abraham continued to obey all His commands.
3. T F Abraham obeyed God and left his homeland to go to a land that he knew very little about.
4. T F God said that He would bless those who blessed Abraham and curse those who cursed him.
5. T F In Romans 4:2 we read that Abraham was “justified by his works.”
6. T F God’s promise to bless all nations through Abraham was never fulfilled because of the disobedience of Abraham’s descendants.
7. T F The special sign of God’s covenant with Abraham was given to all of his male descendants.
8. T F Abraham was willing and ready to sacrifice his son Isaac on the altar even though God had said that His promises to Abraham would be fulfilled through Isaac.
9. T F Jacob, Abraham’s grandson, had to run away from the Promised Land because his twin brother wanted to kill him.
10. T F The names “Abraham” and “Sarah” were not their original names.



## MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose which of the three statements is correct. Circle A or B or C.

1. Why did God choose to make a special covenant with Abraham and his descendants?
  - A. God chose him because of His sovereign grace.
  - B. Abraham came from a family of people who loved and served the true God.
  - C. Abraham was a person known for his wisdom and integrity.
2. God made some very special promises to Abraham recorded in Genesis 12:1-3. Which of the following was NOT promised to Abraham?
  - A. Abraham's descendants would become a great nation.
  - B. All the families of earth would be blessed in Abraham.
  - C. Abraham's descendants would never be defeated in battle.
3. God promised Abraham that He would bless those who blessed him (Abraham) and curse those who cursed him. Why did God do this?
  - A. Those who encouraged Abraham would further God's purpose and those who opposed Abraham would interfere with God's purpose.
  - B. God didn't want anyone to interfere with the happiness and prosperity which Abraham earned by being a humble, faithful, and obedient servant of God.
  - C. Abraham came from a pagan background, so God wanted to make sure that others would encourage Abraham as he sought to increase in faith and obedience.
4. God told Abraham to circumcise all the male members of his family as a sign that all of his descendants were members of God's covenant with Abraham. How did they respond?
  - A. Many of his descendants did what God had commanded while others did not.
  - B. The Jews in the Old Testament obeyed what had God commanded but by the time Jesus was born most Jews disregarded God's command.
  - C. The Jews in both Old and New Testament times faithfully did what God had commanded.
5. God gave Abraham many promises recorded in Genesis. Most of these promises were made:
  - A. After Abraham had faithfully served God for many years.
  - B. Before Abraham demonstrated his faith and obedience.
  - C. After Abraham demonstrated his abilities when he rescued his nephew Lot from the people who had captured him.

6. What does Romans 4:18-21 teach us about Abraham's faith?
  - A. Abraham sincerely thanked God for the promise that he would have a son, but in his heart he really didn't believe that it would happen.
  - B. Abraham believed what God had promised even it seemed impossible for him to have a son when both he and his wife were very old.
  - C. Abraham humbly asked God why He didn't fulfill His promise.
7. When God told Abraham to sacrifice his son on the altar:
  - A. Abraham prepared to do all that God had commanded.
  - B. Abraham tearfully asked God to please change his mind.
  - C. Abraham asked his son whether he was willing to make this sacrifice.
8. When God told Abraham later that he did not have to sacrifice his son Isaac:
  - A. God prepared a "substitute" for Isaac who pointed forward to the coming of Jesus who would give His own life as a sacrifice for our sins.
  - B. The "substitute" did not really give up his life any more than Isaac did.
  - C. The event described in Genesis 22 did not actually happen but was told as a story to point forward to the coming of Jesus.
9. God chose Isaac's son Jacob to carry out His plan of redemption rather than his older brother Esau because:
  - A. Jacob would be known as a man of great faith and also a man of holiness and obedience.
  - B. Esau was a schemer and could not be trusted to do what God asked of him.
  - C. God made His choice on the basis of His divine grace and not on the basis of Jacob's merit.
10. This lesson clearly teaches and demonstrates that:
  - A. Salvation was and always will be a gift of God's grace.
  - B. Some people are able to earn their salvation while others are saved only by grace.
  - C. Only a few people are worthy of salvation since everyone has a significant weakness of one kind or another.

## LESSON 2 – ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. God established His Covenant of Grace with a man called Abram (Abraham). Where was Abraham living when God first called him?
2. Why did God choose Abraham for this honor? Choose A or B or C.
  - A. God chose him because of His sovereign grace.
  - B. Abraham came from a family of people who loved and served the true God.
  - C. Abraham was a person known for his wisdom and integrity.
3. List four great promises God gave to Abraham (as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3).
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
  - D.
4. What was God's ultimate purpose in calling Abraham and working through him?
5. How did Abraham respond when God called him to leave his homeland and go to a new land about which he knew little or nothing?
6. How does the apostle Paul describe Abraham in Romans 4:11 and 4:16?
7. God promised Abraham that He would bless those who blessed him (Abraham) and curse those who cursed him. Why did God do this? Choose A or B or C.
  - A. God chose Abraham to be a blessing to all the nations on earth. Those who encouraged Abraham would further God's purpose and those who opposed Abraham would interfere with God's purpose.
  - B. God didn't want anyone to interfere with the happiness and prosperity which Abraham earned by being a humble, faithful, and obedient servant of God.
  - C. Abraham was personally not yet firmly anchored in his faith, so God made sure that others would encourage Abraham as he gradually increased in faith and obedience.

8. List two ways in which the people of Israel were called to be a blessing to the other nations of the world. (See the Lesson notes.)
- A.
- B.
9. Were these two purposes (from question 8 above) fulfilled? Please explain your answer.
10. A. What promise of God is recorded in Genesis 13:14-16?  
B. Why was this promise so significant?  
C. How did Abraham respond when God gave him this promise?
11. A. What additional promise did God give to Abraham in Genesis 15:4-5?  
B. How did Abraham respond to this new promise?  
C. How did God respond to Abraham's faith? (Genesis 15:6)
12. What does Romans 4:18-21 tell us about the faith of Abraham?
13. Why was Abram's name changed to Abraham? See Genesis 17:1-6.
14. A. What promise did God give to Abraham in Genesis 17:6?  
B. What promise did God give to Abraham in Genesis 17:7?  
C. What promise did God give to Abraham in Genesis 17:8?
15. God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham and his descendants was first recorded in Genesis 12:3. List three other places (outside of Genesis) where this promise was repeated in the Bible.
- A.
- B.
- C.
16. A. What was the sign of the Covenant of Grace that God made with Abraham and his descendants? (Genesis 17:11-13)  
B. How important was this sign in the sight of God? (See Genesis 17:14.)  
C. How important was this sign to the Israelites?



17. A. When God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac as an offering, how did Abraham respond?  
B. When God spared Isaac's life, what "substitute" did God provide?  
C. In what ways does this story of Abraham and Isaac point forward to the coming of Christ? (See Genesis 22:2, John 1:29, John 3:16.)
18. A. When Isaac and his wife Rebekah were not able to have children, what did Isaac do?  
B. When Rebekah later gave birth to twin sons, which one of them was chosen by God to continue the "covenant line"?  
C. Why was God's choice so significant?
19. Jacob (also called Israel) had to run away from his home in Canaan because he had deceived his father and cheated his brother. When God appeared to him in a dream while he was running away, what did God promise him? (Genesis 28:13-15)
20. Did Jacob deserve to receive this promise?  
Give the reason for your answer.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. Out of all the stories and events listed in this Lesson, select two that, in your mind, best illustrate that salvation is by grace alone. Then explain why you have chosen these two stories.
2. According to the Lesson notes, what was the significance of choosing circumcision as a sign of the Covenant of Grace? Can you think of any other reasons why God might have chosen this particular sign?
3. In the New Testament Abraham is called "The father of believers." Do you think this is an appropriate title for Abraham? Give the reason for your answer.
4. Give some examples from Genesis that demonstrate that "God's grace precedes His commands."
5. In the book of Genesis God often showed kindness, grace, and love to people who failed to trust or obey Him consistently. Do you think God still does that today? Can you give some examples from your own life?

# THE BLESSING OF GOD'S GRACE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Lesson Three

### BY GRACE ALONE

#### Introduction

The first two Lessons emphasized that no one can be saved from the punishment and guilt of sin except by God's grace. There is nothing we can do to atone for our sins and nothing we can do to earn our salvation or merit God's favor. Every spiritual gift we receive is because of God's grace.

In the Old Testament God frequently demonstrated His grace for His chosen people in many wonderful ways. Though the people of Israel faced many challenges in their lives and frequently disobeyed their God, they continued to experience God's grace over and over again.

#### GRACE FOR THE ISRAELITES IN CAPTIVITY

After the deaths of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the people of Israel lived for four hundred years as slaves in the land of Egypt. They had left the land of Canaan during a time of great famine and had gone to find food in the land of Egypt where Jacob's son Joseph had become one of the highest rulers in the land.

Joseph suffered much because of the antagonism of his brothers and the actions of some people in Egypt, but God **graciously** used all those negative circumstances to keep the people of Israel alive during the time of famine (Genesis 50:20).

After Joseph died, the new rulers in Egypt forgot what Joseph had done and began to mistreat the people of Israel and make slaves of

them. Eventually the Israelites would return to the land of Canaan, but not until they had spent four hundred years as “*sojourners in a land that is not theirs*”— just as God had told Abraham many years before (Genesis 15:13).

During their time in Egypt, the people of Israel suffered much, but they grew rapidly in numbers. They had actually become a “nation within a nation” and the Egyptian ruler (called Pharaoh) felt threatened by them (Exodus 1:6-10). As a result, Pharaoh made life very difficult for the people of Israel and treated them as slaves without rights and without power. But that situation would not continue.

*“The people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew”* (Exodus 2:23-25).

God determined that the Israelites would not only leave Egypt as free people but promised that they would leave with great possessions. Already four hundred years before, He said to Abraham:

*“I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions”* (Genesis 15:14).

The Israelites were totally unable to free themselves from their bondage and they certainly could not gain “great possessions” on their own while living as slaves. But God, in His grace, delivered them from slavery and also provided them with riches which they never expected to have.

When the Pharaoh at first refused to let God’s people leave Egypt as free people, God sent ten devastating plagues on the country. During the first three plagues, the Israelites suffered along with the Egyptians, but from the fourth plague onwards, God **graciously** spared them from the awesome punishment He inflicted on their heartless oppressors (Exodus 8:20-24).

By the time God sent the final plague, the Israelites knew that their God had not forgotten them or His promises to Abraham. GOD would set them free—free from bondage and free to serve and love and honor Him as they finally moved from Egypt to Canaan, the Land of Promise.

All these things would be done **by God's grace** and by God's power. The people of Israel could do nothing to redeem themselves or escape from slavery. If they were ever to be set free, it would have to come about because of what GOD would do!

## **GOD'S GRACE IN THE PASSOVER**

Before the Israelites left Egypt, God demonstrated in a powerful and unforgettable way that the freedom of His people would come at great cost—but not at great cost to them! God determined to kill all the firstborn of the Egyptians (both men and animals), but He would spare the lives of all the Israelites. However, as He spared the lives of His own people, He made it very clear to them that their deliverance would come about only through the shedding of the blood of a substitute.

God told each Israelite family to select a perfect lamb as a sacrifice and put the blood of the lamb on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses where they would eat the lamb (Exodus 12:1-7). And then He said:

*“For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, **I will pass over you**, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt”* (Exodus 12:12-13).

It was clearly God's **grace** that would save them, though the people had to believe what God said and obey what He commanded.

Throughout the Old Testament period, the Israelites were commanded to celebrate the Passover every year (Deuteronomy 16:1-3). This annual celebration continued until Jesus became the Passover Lamb to which all previous Passover celebrations had pointed (1 Corinthians 5:7). The importance of the death of the “substitute” was also re-emphasized in the book of Hebrews where we read that “*Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins*” (Hebrews 9:22).

## **GOD'S GRACE AT THE RED SEA**

When the Israelites hastily left Egypt, having been covered and protected by the blood of the Passover Lamb, they left loaded with gifts from their former masters. The Lord **graciously** inclined the hearts of the Egyptians

to send the Israelites out of their country in haste, showering them with costly treasures of various kinds. This dramatic and sudden change from bondage and poverty to freedom and wealth was amazing.

*“The LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians” (Exodus 12:36).*

**Only divine grace and power** could have accomplished what the Israelites experienced on that historic night of freedom.

As the people journeyed in the strange and barren wilderness, God led the people in a unique but very comforting way.

*“The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people” (Exodus 13:21-22).*

Living and traveling in the wilderness was a totally new experience for the Israelites after living for so many years in the land of Egypt. But God **graciously** gave them a miraculous sign that He was with them every step of the way. As long as they put their trust in Him and followed where He led them, they had nothing to fear.

However, the Israelites soon realized that their travel to the Promised Land would not be free from challenge or difficulty. Within a short time after they escaped from Egypt, Pharaoh regretted that he had let the people of Israel go and went out in force to overtake them. When he and his soldiers got close to the slow-moving Israelites, the Israelites began to panic and doubt and complain. With the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh’s troops behind them, their faith faltered and their joy dissolved. Desperately, they called out to their leader Moses, fearing greatly and complaining bitterly (Exodus 14:10-12).

God could have punished the Israelites for their unbelief and fear, but He didn’t. Through His servant Moses God told them to believe in His promises and to go forward toward the Sea. He said:

*“I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. . . . And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen” (Exodus 14:17-18).*

And then, by a **miracle of grace** and power, God caused the waters of the Sea to divide in such a way that His people were able to march through the sea on dry ground until they reached the other side. When the Egyptians boldly tried to pursue them, God caused the waters to roll back and destroy Pharaoh and all his powerful soldiers (Exodus 14:13-31).

What a tremendous miracle this was! Once again God gave His people a powerful demonstration of the fact that HE was the source of their strength, their security, and their salvation. The people had done nothing to earn or deserve this victory and they could never have won it in their own strength or by their own power. **It was God's grace that saved them!** The people simply had to believe what God said and obey what He commanded! Israel's future would not depend on what they could do by themselves. GOD would have to rescue, preserve, and provide for them over and over again.

## **GRACE IN THE WILDERNESS**

After expressing their humble but sincere gratitude for God's victory at the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1-21), the Israelites again exhibited a lack of faith and a spirit of rebellion and fear. Though God had provided one mighty miracle after another during their last days in Egypt and had also provided for them during their early days in the desert, they openly longed for the difficult but predictable days of life they had while in Egypt.

Shortly after crossing the Red Sea on dry ground, the people began to suffer from thirst. Only a short time before they were desperately afraid of the threatening waters of the Red Sea. Now they were filled with anxiety and fear because they had no water to drink (Exodus 15:22-24).

Their concern was understandable, but their complaining and grumbling demonstrated a complete lack of faith in the Lord who had already provided for them in so many wonderful ways. However, in spite of their complaining and lack of faith, God, **in His grace**, responded to their concern by miraculously turning undrinkable water into water they could safely drink (Exodus 15:25).

Immediately after demonstrating His grace once again to His unworthy people, God gave them another wonderful promise. He said,

*“If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer” (Exodus 15:26).*

After giving them this wonderful promise, God led the people to a place called Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees (Exodus 15: 27).

Did the Israelites somehow “earn” all these blessings which God continued to give them? Not at all. By trusting and obeying what God commanded, they would continue to *receive* God’s **gifts of grace**, but in no way did they *earn* them or merit them.

Shortly after God gave them His wonderful promise concerning their future health and well-being, the people again grumbled because they did not have enough food (Exodus 16:2-3).

They had been living in freedom for less than fifty days, witnessing God’s grace in one miracle after another, but they still continued to live in rebellion, doubt, and fear. There was one brief period in which they paused to give God thanksgiving and praise (Exodus 15:1-21), but their worship soon gave way to grumbling and their gratitude gave way to complaints.

Even then, however, God’s **grace** continued to guide them, protect them, and provide for them. And as God’s glory appeared to them in the cloud, He left no question that it was HE, the God who **graciously** brought them out of the slavery of Egypt, who was leading them every step of the way (Exodus 16:9-10).

## **GRACE FOR DAILY NEEDS**

When the people continued to grumble and complain, God sent them a large supply of quails to satisfy their yearning for meat. He also provided a daily supply of manna for them to eat. He provided this manna for them each day (except for Sabbath days) for the next forty years (Exodus 16: 11-35)! Later God provided the people with an abundant supply of water when Moses struck a rock at God’s command (Exodus 17:1-7).

Even then, however, the people tested the Lord, saying, “*Is the LORD among us or not?*” (Exodus 17:7). The people almost seemed deliberately intent on forfeiting the blessings God had promised them!

Both the manna and the water which God miraculously provided pointed forward to the coming of Jesus who would be born many centuries later. Over and over again, events that took place in Old Testament times pointed forward to the life and ministry of Jesus.

In John 6:32, for example, Jesus referred to Himself as “*the true bread from heaven.*” In John 6:33 He called Himself “*the bread of God*” who “*gives life to the world.*” In John 6:35 and 48 He said that He was “*the bread of life.*” And in John 6:51 He said that He was “*the living bread that came down from heaven. . . . If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.*”

On another occasion, while talking with a non-Israelite at the well of Jacob, Jesus discussed the importance of drinking “living water” (John 4:4-10). He said:

*“Everyone who drinks of this water [from Jacob’s well] will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”* (John 4:13-14).

Just as God provided for the physical needs of the Israelites in the wilderness, so He later provided for the spiritual needs of all who would trust and believe in Jesus. And, just as the Israelites did not “earn” the manna that they ate for 40 years or the water that God provided for them, so no one could earn or merit the “Living Water” or the “Bread of Life” which came from heaven. “Living water” and the “Bread of Life” were always **gifts of grace**.

## **GRACE IN BATTLE**

As the Israelites continued their journey in the wilderness, a group of people called Amalekites came out and attacked them. Up to this point the people of Israel had never been involved in fighting a war. They had lived as slaves and had been involved in building store cities for the Egyptians, but they were totally inexperienced in warfare.



They may have had some weapons which they could use in the battle, but their enemies were almost certainly much better equipped for fighting than they were. Once again, therefore, they had to depend completely on the **grace of God** to win a victory.

The most significant “weapon” the Israelites had for this battle was prayer. So Moses appointed one man (Joshua) to lead the Israelites in battle while he and two others went to the top of a hill to pray.

*“Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed” (Exodus 17:11).*

When Moses’ hands grew tired, his two companions continued to hold up his hands in prayer until the battle was won (Exodus 17:12). The lesson was unmistakable. Unless the Lord protected them and defended them, they would not be able to win any of the battles they would face in the future. The Bible says that *“Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword”* (Exodus 17:13), but it was very clear that God gave him the victory in answer to the prayers of Moses.

## **GRACE THROUGH THE GIFTS OF OTHERS**

**In His grace**, God chose the descendants of Abraham to be His “Chosen People.” He promised to bless them, care for them, protect them, guide them, and direct them in all their ways so that they could someday be a blessing to all the nations of the world.

But God didn’t always bless His people directly without the help of others! Already early in their history God used Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, a *non-Israelite*, to be a blessing to Moses and the people of Israel. Jethro had been a priest in the land of Midian (Exodus 2:16, 21), presumably serving other gods, when Moses married his daughter. However, when Jethro heard from Moses about all the things that God had done for the people of Israel, he exclaimed:

*“Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods. . . . And Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God” (Exodus 18:10-12).*

Jethro then gave Moses some very important advice on how he (Moses) could best serve the people of Israel as their spokesman and their judge (Exodus 18:17-23). His advice was excellent and Moses immediately followed it (Exodus 18:24-27). God could obviously have given this advice directly to Moses without the help of Jethro, but He chose to use someone from outside the nation of Israel to accomplish His purposes.

**God's grace often takes many forms** and comes into our lives in many different ways—even in ways that might seem unusual or very surprising to us. Moses had been appointed and called directly by God to lead His people while his father-in-law had only recently come to faith in God. However, because Moses humbly recognized and followed Jethro's advice as coming from God, both he and the people of Israel were richly blessed . . . and God was honored and glorified.

## **GRACE AT MOUNT SINAI**

When the Israelites encamped at Mount Sinai in the wilderness, God gave Moses a message to pass on to the people. It was a tremendous promise, one built on the covenant promise given earlier to Abraham, and one that would set the nation of Israel apart from all other people in the world. God said:

*“You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”* (Exodus 19:4-6).

All that follows in the book of Exodus from this point on is related to (1) The Covenant of Grace that God had made with Abraham in Genesis and/or (2) The Covenant Promise made to the nation of Israel in Exodus 19.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Both before and after God led His people out of slavery in the land of Egypt, He demonstrated His grace and power to them in many wonderful ways. He delivered them, enriched them, protected them, fed them, and gave them victory over their enemies. Though they were often stubborn, disobedient, and unfaithful, God remained faithful to the promises He had given long before to Abraham.

He would soon be giving them laws and commands to guide them in the days and years ahead, but **BEFORE** He gave the people His laws, He reminded them of the wonderful blessings He had already given to them by His **grace**. In the midst of trials, difficulties, and fears, He had carried them “on eagles’ wings” and had brought them to Himself.

God did not do all this because the people of Israel had obeyed Him or honored Him or done anything that would cause Him to choose them over others. In fact, their continued failures and complaints and lack of faith demonstrated how totally unworthy they were of receiving any favor or blessing from God. God made it very clear, therefore, that He had chosen them over all other nations to be His treasured people *solely because of His grace*.

In the next Lesson we will study the circumstances surrounding the giving of the Ten Commandments and other laws as we seek to answer the question: “If God saved His people purely by grace, why did He give them so many laws?”



## LESSON 3 – TEST QUESTIONS

### TRUE OR FALSE

Circle T or F.

1. T F The people of Israel frequently disobeyed God's commands and often complained about their situation, but God still showed them His grace over and over again.
2. T F Because God was so gracious, He never punished the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land.
3. T F God indicated that He would destroy all the firstborn males of Egypt, but He did not carry this out because the Egyptians gave many gifts to the Israelites before they left Egypt.
4. T F The killing of the Passover lamb pointed forward to the death of Jesus.
5. T F When Pharaoh and his army chased after the Israelites, the Israelites were not afraid since they were confident that God would deliver them.
6. T F Some of the Israelites longed to go back to Egypt in spite of the fact that God had blessed them so richly and in so many ways.
7. T F After living on manna for several years, the Israelites learned how to provide food for themselves in the desert, so they no longer needed or received the manna during their last years in the desert.
8. T F The manna and fresh water which the Israelites received in the desert pointed forward to the coming of Jesus who was the Bread of Life and the Light of the World.
9. T F Although Moses' father-in-law was not an Israelite, he gave Moses some very helpful advice which Moses welcomed and followed.
10. T F When the Israelites were at Mount Sinai, God promised that they would be His treasured possession if they obeyed Him and kept His covenant.



## **MULTIPLE CHOICE**

**Choose which of the three statements is correct. Circle A or B or C.**

1. How long did the people of Israel live as slaves in Egypt?
  - A. 70 years
  - B. 120 years
  - C. 400 years
2. What did Joseph do when he first made himself known to his brothers who had sold him into slavery:
  - A. He forgave them and said that God meant it all for good.
  - B. He scolded them severely for causing their father and himself so much suffering.
  - C. He promised to take care of them and provide for them in the future if they showed remorse for what they had done in the past and did not repeat it in the future.
3. If Abraham suddenly appeared in Egypt and met with his descendants:
  - A. He would have been amazed that his descendants lived in a foreign land for so many years.
  - B. He would have felt that God had failed to keep the promises He had made to him earlier.
  - C. He would not have been surprised because God had told him these things were going to happen.
4. How many of the Ten Plagues affected both the Egyptians and the Israelites?
  - A. One of them
  - B. Three of them
  - C. Six of them
5. What did the Israelites have to do in order to have the angel of death “pass over” their houses?
  - A. They had to kill a lamb and put its blood on the doorposts of their houses.
  - B. They had to spend the entire night in prayer with their families.
  - C. They had to promise God that they would serve only the Lord as they went through the desert on the way to the Promised Land.

6. Why did the Israelites win a military battle over their enemies when they first left Egypt?
  - A. They had become exceptionally strong during their years of slavery.
  - B. Two men held up Moses' arms in prayer to God while the fighting was going on.
  - C. The Israelites vastly outnumbered the people they were fighting
7. Why did the Israelite leave Egypt with great riches?
  - A. The Egyptians began to realize that the Israelites deserved to receive some compensation for all their years of slavery.
  - B. The Egyptians were extremely eager to get the Israelites out of their country because of all the sufferings they were going through during the Ten Plagues.
  - C. The Egyptian leaders did not want the Israelites to leave their country with negative feelings, since some day they might come back and try to punish or destroy them.
8. When God led the Israelites across the Red Sea on dry ground, how did the people respond?
  - A. They sincerely promised never to doubt God's power and grace again.
  - B. They rejoiced and praised God for their deliverance.
  - C. They took their deliverance for granted since God has promised to protect them.
9. When the Israelites complained that they needed food in the wilderness:
  - A. God miraculously took away their pressing hunger.
  - B. Every two days God sent them a supply of a special food called manna.
  - C. Each day, except for the Sabbath day, God sent them a supply of manna and did so until they entered the Promised Land.
10. What great promise did God give to His people in Exodus 19:5-6?
  - A. He promised that He would be their God and they would be His people.
  - B. He promised that He would lead them directly to the Promised Land (Canaan) without having to face any more enemies.
  - C. He promised that everyone who had left Egypt would arrive safely in the Promised Land.

### LESSON 3 – ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Joseph's brothers treated Joseph very unkindly for many years.
  - A. Was Joseph willing to forgive his brothers for all they had done?
  - B. What did Joseph say about the treatment he had received from his brothers? See Genesis 50:20.
3.
  - A. Why did the Egyptian rulers treat the people of Israel so harshly?
  - B. How did God respond to the groaning of His people in Egypt? (See Exodus 2:23-25.)
4. What reason did God give for sparing the Israelites from some of the plagues? (See Exodus 8:22.)
5.
  - A. What was the tenth plague that God sent on the Egyptians?
  - B. Fill in the blanks in the following passage from Exodus 12:13. "The \_\_\_\_\_ shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are.  
And when I see the \_\_\_\_\_, I will \_\_\_\_\_."
6. What does 1 Corinthians 5:7 tell us about Jesus Christ?
7. What does Hebrews 9:22 teach us?
8.
  - A. How did God lead the people as they traveled through the wilderness? (See Exodus 13:21-22.)
  - B. Do you think these miraculous signs were comforting or frightening?  
Please explain your answer.
9.
  - A. How did the Israelites react when Pharaoh and his army chased after them?
  - B. What promise did God give them at this time? (See Exodus 14:17-18.)
10. How did God give the Israelites a victory over Pharaoh and his army?
11.
  - A. What did the Israelites do to deserve or earn this victory?
  - B. How did they respond to this great victory? See Exodus 14:31.
  - C. Did their response of trust and gratitude last for a long time or only a short time before they again grumbled and complained?
12.
  - A. When the people had no water to drink, what did they do? (See Exodus 15:22-24.)
  - B. How did God respond to them? (See Exodus 15:25.)

13. A. According to Exodus 16:2-3, what did the murmuring Israelites want to do?  
B. Why do you think they wanted to do this?
14. A. What great promise did God give the Israelites in Exodus 15:26?  
B. What had the people done to earn or deserve this exceptional promise?  
C. Why did God give them this promise?
15. A. When the people complained that they did not have enough food or water, how did God provide for them?  
B. How did the people respond to God's miraculous provision? (See Exodus 17:7.)  
C. What does their response teach us about the "worthiness" of the people to receive God's blessings?
16. How did the manna which God provided point to Jesus Christ in the New Testament?
17. How did the water that God provided point to Jesus?
18. A. The people of Israel would fight many battles before they would conquer the land of Canaan. (See the book of Joshua.) With whom did they fight their first battle in the wilderness?  
B. How many of the Israelite men were trained and experienced fighters?  
C. How did they win a victory in this battle?  
D. How would this encourage them in the future?
19. A. Who was Jethro?  
B. How did God use Jethro to be a blessing to Moses and the Israelites?
20. A. What great promise did God give to His people in Exodus 19:5-6?  
B. What does this promise teach us about God's grace?





## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. A. God blessed the Israelites in many wonderful and even miraculous ways during their time in the wilderness. Why do you think they continued to be so rebellious, ungrateful, and without faith most of the time?  
B. Are Christians today much better in this regard than the Israelites?  
C. Please give specific examples that support or explain your answer.
2. God used Jethro, someone who probably served false gods much of his life, to give some very good advice to Moses. Do you think God still uses “new” believers or even “non-believers” to bless and help His people today? Please give specific examples which support or explain your answer.
3. After God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, they may have thought that the way ahead would be smooth, pleasant, and without challenges. As a result, they sometimes longed for their old life in Egypt, even though that life was far from pleasant or easy. Do you think some Christians today expect that their new life in Christ will be smooth, pleasant, and with few challenges? If they do, do some of them sometimes long to go back to their “old ways”?  
A. Please give specific examples that support or explain your answer.  
B. How would you encourage Christians who have problems and challenges that they did not anticipate when they became Christians?
4. When the Israelites were in the wilderness God miraculously led them by a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. In this way they were continually reminded of the presence of God with them. In spite of that, however, and in spite of the many miracles God performed for them, they still wondered whether their God was truly with them (Exodus 17:7).  
A. Is it possible for Christians today to doubt that God is truly with them?  
B. How does God demonstrate His presence with believers today?  
C. How would you respond today to a believer who doubts that God is always with him?
5. This Lesson seeks to demonstrate that the blessings which God gave to His people were always undeserved. It was only by His grace that they enjoyed freedom from captivity, victory over their enemies, a daily supply of food and drink, forgiveness for their many failures, and some very special promises from the Lord. List five stories or situations in your own life or in the lives of people you know which demonstrate that God’s blessings and salvation are truly all by grace.

# GOD'S GRACE AND GOD'S LAWS

## Lesson Four

BY GRACE ALONE

### Introduction

Some people believe that the way of salvation in the Old Testament is completely different from that in the New Testament. They teach that people in the New Testament were saved by grace while people in the Old Testament were saved by keeping God's laws. However, a careful study of the Old Testament clearly demonstrates that **people have always been saved by God's grace and by grace alone.**

*But if this is true, why did God give His people hundreds of different laws in the Old Testament? And why does the Old Testament put so much emphasis on the keeping of these laws, the blessing of obeying the laws, and the punishment which follows from disobeying them? If no one can be saved by keeping these laws, why did God give them to us? And if no one is able to keep those laws perfectly, why did He promise that those who kept them would be blessed while those who broke them would be punished?*

Those are good questions and this Lesson will focus on answering them.

It is definitely true that God's people in the Old Testament were given hundreds of commands to obey and obligations to fulfill. They had regulations which covered virtually every area of their personal lives and also laws which governed their public or civil lives. In addition, the requirements for worship and sacrifice were spelled out in great detail with feasts to observe, sacrifices to offer, duties to perform, and tithes to present.

It is also true that for many of the Jews, the laws seemed not only endless but also burdensome (Acts 15:10). How could the Lord of grace give his people so many laws—laws which seemed in some ways to be almost as burdensome as the slavery the Israelites experienced for hundreds of years in Egypt?

God did have a divine purpose for giving these laws, but that purpose was definitely not to provide a “new” way of salvation. After giving His people one blessing after another by His **grace**, He did not suddenly decide that they would have to start “earning” their salvation in the future.

God knew very well that the people of Israel could never merit salvation on their own or be “good enough” to earn eternal life. And the people themselves should have realized that, too. Their record of trust and obedience during the first weeks after they left Egypt was terrible. But for some reason they didn’t fully understand their weaknesses or the depths of their failures. So when they first heard the words God gave Moses to pass on to them, they responded with confidence and enthusiasm: “*We will do everything the Lord has said*” (Exodus 19:8).

Their response may have been serious, but it was also totally unrealistic. The people obviously did not understand the holiness of God or their own spiritual limitations. Though they had experienced God’s grace in so many ways, they had so much to learn about this God of Grace. And God was ready to teach them!

## **THE GIVING OF THE LAW**

After living in idolatrous Egypt for many years, the people of Israel had very little awareness of the absolute holiness of God. They grumbled against Him, made demands on Him, and kept on asking Him for one blessing after another. They had very little awareness of their own weaknesses and did not even begin to understand the great distance between God’s infinite perfections and their own great sinfulness.

So before God gave His laws to Moses, He told him to prepare the people for their “meeting” with God on the third day. They were to consecrate themselves for the next two days, wash their clothes, and abstain from sexual relations (Exodus 19:10-11, 14- 15). They were also to keep away from the mountain where God would come near to them, not even touching

it. Those who did touch the mountain would be put to death (Exodus 19: 12-13).

Exodus 19:16-19 describes the situation in these solemn words:

*“On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.”*

Exodus 19:16-19

This was probably the first time that the people became aware of the holiness and majesty of their God. They had often seen His power through the miracles He performed, but they were never fully aware of His supreme holiness. They did not fully understand the reality or the seriousness of their sin or realize how their lives were frequently out of harmony with God’s will for them. But now they were introduced to something new and awesome, and they were humbled and afraid.

*“When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, ‘Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.’”*

Exodus 20:18-19

**THE FIRST REASON**, then, why God gave His laws and commandments to the people was to help them understand His majestic holiness and their own dreadful sinfulness.

Most of the people seemed to be living in spiritual ignorance. They did not have a Bible to read and there had not been a prophet or spiritual teacher among them for many years. The gods of the Egyptians had obviously not helped them understand anything about the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Many of the people had seemingly adjusted themselves to the lifestyle of the people around them and remembered little about the history of their ancestors.

There were probably many God-fearing people among them who still served the Lord (such as Moses’ family), but they had no divine law,

no central place of worship, no sacrificial system, and little knowledge of the things that God taught them later in the wilderness. If God did not give them His laws, they would never know how often they failed to live the way He wanted them to live. As a result, they would never realize or understand their need for repentance and forgiveness. And they would never understand **the riches of God's grace** which continued to surround them and bless them.

After Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, their hearts and the hearts of all their descendants were inclined to sin rather than to holiness (Ephesians 2:1-3). They did not understand that *"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure"* (Jeremiah 17:9). And they had never been taught that, in God's sight, *"There is no one who does good, not even one"* (Psalm 53:3).

Most of the people did not understand or realize that man, left to himself, is inclined toward selfishness, pride, jealousy, envy, greed and many other forms of evil. And they were not fully aware, as Jesus taught, that *"out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander"* (Matthew 15:19).

Though the people of Israel had repeatedly been sinning against God during their first few months in the wilderness through their grumbling, disobedience and unbelief, they were sadly unaware of it. Perhaps they were comparing themselves with the people in Egypt. Or maybe they had simply taken God for granted and did not realize how holy He was and how sinful they were. They needed God's laws to help them understand their true status in the presence of a holy God.

Centuries later the Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the church in Rome:

*"Through the law we become conscious of sin" . . . "I would not have known what sin was except through the law."* Romans 3:20; 7:7

So when the people of Israel heard the Lord speaking to them from the mountain, many of them began to understand their sinfulness for the very first time. As a result, the people trembled with fear (Exodus 20:18-19). God was far more holy and they were far more sinful than they had ever imagined or understood!

**THE SECOND REASON** why God gave the laws and commandments was to keep His people from sinning against Him. When the people trembled with fear after hearing the voice of God, Moses said:

*“Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.” Exodus 20:20*

Up to this point the Israelites did not really know how God wanted them to live. They had been taking God’s **grace** largely for granted and offered Him little love or obedience in return. God had graciously taken the first step in bringing them to Himself, but if they were going to continue to receive His blessings, they had to know how God wanted them to live.

By keeping God’s commandments, therefore, they would not be earning their salvation, but they would be living in obedience to the God who had already delivered them (Exodus 19:4). So when God gave them the Ten Commandments, He reminded them first of all that He was the God who had delivered them from the bondage and slavery of Egypt (Exodus 20:2). The laws were not given as a way of salvation or deliverance, but they taught the people how they could walk in joy and peace and thankfulness with the God who had already chosen them, delivered them, and blessed them.

If they continued to walk in faith and obedience, they would continue to receive God’s gracious blessings (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 6:1-3; Deuteronomy 28:1-14). If they did not trust and obey, they would forfeit many of the blessings God had promised them and they would suffer punishment and distress instead (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

But God is so gracious that, even when His people forfeited His blessings through disobedience and wickedness, He continued to regard them as His treasured possession. One of the most impressive passages in the Old Testament concerning this truth is Exodus 34:6-7 where we read a wonderful message that God Himself proclaimed to Moses.

*“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”*

The people of Israel could never even begin to earn or merit the wonderful blessings which God promised them by His grace. **Salvation was always a gift of grace!**

**A THIRD REASON** for giving the law was to help people live in positive and constructive relationships with one another. After the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, people’s natural inclination was to live for

themselves rather than for God and to serve themselves rather than to serve others in His name. God's laws would therefore help them understand what it meant to love and help their neighbors rather than always seeking to satisfy their own selfish wants and desires—often at the expense of others.

Though the laws given in Exodus and Leviticus might seem at first to be unnecessarily detailed, God wanted His people to know that they were to live for Him all the time and in every situation. He therefore gave them laws regarding work, health, hygiene, marriage, sexual relationships, servants, clothing, finances, business, property, civil life, legal matters, and every other aspect of their lives.

The laws also taught them about justice, integrity, honesty, sincerity, compassion and every other virtue that pleases God. All these laws and commandments provided a more detailed and explicit description of what it means to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18). God wanted to impress on their minds and hearts that there was no time, no place, and no situation where they were free to live their own way rather than His way!

**A FOURTH REASON** for giving the laws was to emphasize how much the people needed a perfect Savior to fulfill God's laws in their behalf and to pay the penalty for their own failure to obey those laws. No one could ever keep God's laws and commandments perfectly. There were always failures of action or failures of motive as people's sinful nature led them again and again to live in ways that did not please the Lord.

It's very important, therefore, to remember that the laws taught the people how God wanted them to live, but the laws themselves did not give people the power to obey Him! Without the **gracious** work of God in their hearts, the people would continually fail to obey those laws and fall into sin. Over and over again they would need to be cleansed, purified and forgiven. And forgiveness and cleansing would never be obtained by human effort but only by God's mercy and **grace**. (Read Psalm 51:1-3, 7, 9-10.)

Many of the laws God gave through Moses therefore involved the worship life of the people. God gave the people detailed laws concerning sacrifices and offerings and appointed priests who would offer sacrifices in their

behalf. These laws, too, were numerous and detailed. The rituals they had to follow for cleansing and purification were carefully spelled out and the animals that were to be offered as sacrifices had to be the very best the people could find. Even the place where the sacrifices were to be offered (the Tabernacle) was to be built exactly as God had commanded (Exodus 25:40, 26:30).

*Though the people of Israel may not have fully understood the significance of all these things, the laws and instructions God gave to them pointed forward to God's **grace** in providing the perfect Lamb of God who "takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).*

**A FIFTH REASON** for giving the law was to help God's people live in a way that would give a strong and consistent witness to the nations around them. As Psalm 147:19-20 emphasizes, other nations did not have the blessing of God's law or understand His decrees. Most people, therefore, continued to live in spiritual ignorance and without the special blessings which the people of Israel enjoyed. By living in obedience to God, the people of Israel would not only continue to receive God's blessing themselves, but they would also bring honor and glory to the Lord in the sight of other nations. See, for example, Psalm 67:1-2 and 7:

*"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. . . . God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him."*

(See also Psalm 102: 15, 21-22; Psalm 105:1, Isaiah 12:4; 1 Chronicles 16:8-9; Jeremiah 4:1-2; Romans 15:8-12.)

If God's people failed to live the way He wanted them to live, they would not only bring dishonor to God, but they would also keep others from knowing God and from receiving the blessing that God gave to all people who loved and served and honored Him.

The ultimate blessing that the "other nations" would receive through the people of Israel would not come until the Savior would be born (Genesis 3:15; 28:14). However, already in Old Testament times, non-Jews were often blessed by God's people who were living the way God wanted them to live. (See, for example, Daniel 3:25-29; Esther 8:15-17; and Psalm 72:17-19.)

**A SIXTH REASON** for giving the law was to provide the Israelites with a way to receive God's special blessings in their lives. God promised that He



would **graciously** give His people many wonderful blessings if they lived in obedience and faithfulness. However, if they did not love and serve Him or live according to His commandments, they would forfeit the blessings they might have received and would instead experience punishment and loss.

*In Lesson Six we will read many Old Testament passages that refer to the blessings God promised to those who loved and served Him and obeyed His laws.*

## **THE BREAKING OF THE LAW**

After God spoke the Ten Commandments in the hearing of the people, the people remained at a distance “*while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was*” (Exodus 20:21). God proceeded to give Moses additional laws of various kinds to govern the lives of His people.

The very first thing the Lord emphasized in His message to Moses was the great importance of the first two of the Ten Commandments. He remembered that the Israelites had lived for four hundred years among the idolatrous Egyptians and He knew that in the years ahead the Israelites would frequently encounter people who made idols as objects of worship. So He warned them with these words:

*“You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven. Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold”* (Exodus 20:22-23).

Later, when Moses went up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments from God written on tablets of stone, the cloud covered the mountain and “*the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai. . . . To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain*” (Exodus 24:15-17).

Moses stayed on the mountain with the Lord for forty days and forty nights (Exodus 24:18). During this time the people became impatient as they waited for Moses to return. When he didn’t return soon enough, the people gathered around Aaron, Moses’ brother, who was the spiritual leader of the people when Moses was not present. They said, “*Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him*” (Exodus 32:1).

Incredibly, Aaron listened to them and did what they asked! He took the gold which the Egyptians had given to them before they left Egypt and “made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt’” (Exodus 32: 2-4).

How could Aaron and the people of Israel even think of doing this!? It was only a short time before this that they trembled with fear when they heard the voice of God. And they had been overwhelmed when they saw the shining glory of God which burned like a fire on the top of the mountain! And now they glibly talk about “gods” after all that the one true God had said to them and done for them!

This terrible act of disobedience made it crystal clear that the people still did not understand the holiness and awesomeness of their God. They had witnessed His power, seen His miracles, enjoyed His provision, and received His clear instructions on how they should live. But in spite of all these things, they still understood so very little about the majesty and holiness of **the gracious God** who had delivered them from slavery and guided them in the wilderness.

God severely punished the people for what they had done and even threatened to destroy them and make Moses into a great nation in their place (Exodus 32:9-10). But Moses pleaded with God to show mercy and grace to the people for the sake of His own honor and glory (Exodus 32:11-12).

Moses also appealed for mercy on the basis of the promises which the Lord had given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob hundreds of years before (Exodus 32: 13). In no way did Moses ask for mercy on the basis of anything that the people had earned or deserved or promised to do in the future. **His plea was simply and completely based on the GRACE of God.** God heard Moses’ plea and **graciously** granted what he had asked for (Exodus 32:14).

*How obvious it was that the people of Israel would never be able to earn or merit salvation by keeping God’s laws. The law clearly revealed their sin but it definitely did not provide a remedy for it!*

**If the people were not saved by God’s grace, they would never be saved at all!**

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The people of Israel, chosen by God's grace to be His own treasured possession, were the most blessed people on the face of the earth. To them God showed Himself as the only true God, a God who is powerful, loving, compassionate and gracious.

After God delivered His people from bondage and slavery in Egypt, He gave them His laws and commandments to teach them how He wanted them to live in gratitude and obedience. If they obeyed His commands, they would continue to receive the abundant blessings He promised them. If they disobeyed or no longer trusted, honored, and served Him, they would suffer punishment and lose the promised blessings.

### **Always, however, God's promises and grace preceded the giving of His laws and commands.**

The laws were never intended to establish a saving relationship between God and His people but rather to preserve and strengthen that relationship. The laws would guide them as they sought to live in a way that pleased and honored God and which would also enable them to be a witness to the nations around them. But the laws themselves could never provide what the laws demanded.

Since the people were totally unable to obey all the laws and commands that God had given to them, the commands clearly demonstrated that they needed Someone to obey God's laws in their behalf **and** to make atonement for their failures and sins. Many of the laws and commands in the Old Testament, therefore, pointed forward to Jesus Christ, the Redeemer who was first graciously promised already in Genesis 3:15.

Throughout the Old Testament God repeatedly provided forgiveness and grace for those who repented and confessed their sins. But the salvation was granted not on the basis of what the people did or would do. Rather salvation was based on the future work of Jesus who paid the penalty for their sins and who earned eternal life for all those who put their faith and trust in Him. **Salvation was always and only by God's grace.**



## LESSON 4 – TEST QUESTIONS

### TRUE OR FALSE

Circle T or F.

1. T F The way of salvation in the Old Testament is completely different from the way of salvation in the New Testament.
2. T F For many of the Jews, the laws that God gave them seemed to be a great burden.
3. T F When God revealed Himself to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, the people trembled and were frightened.
4. T F If God had not given the people His laws, they would never have understood or appreciated the riches of His grace.
5. T F After God revealed Himself to the Israelites in awesome ways at Mt. Sinai, the people had a much deeper appreciation of His holiness which resulted in both humility and obedience.
6. T F Before the Lord gave the Israelites His laws, they really didn't understand or realize how He wanted them to live.
7. T F The laws of God clearly revealed the sins of His people but they did not provide a remedy for them or forgiveness for them.
8. T F If the Israelites lived according to God's commands, they would not only please God but they would also serve as a witness to other nations who did not know God.
9. T F When Moses was on the mountain with God for forty days, the Israelites asked Moses' brother to make some "gods" for them to worship—and he did what they asked.
10. T F God was not at all pleased with what Aaron had done, but He never punished Aaron or the people for it.



## MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose which of the three statements is correct. Circle A or B or C.

1.
  - A. Before the coming of Jesus into the world, people were saved by their good works.
  - B. In Old Testament times, the Israelites were saved by their faithful observance of the Ten Commandments and non-Israelites were not saved at all.
  - C. The only way that people could ever be saved was through the grace of God.
2. While the Israelites lived in Egypt:
  - A. They did not seem to know very much about the God of Abraham.
  - B. Most of the people of Israel who lived in Egypt faithfully worshipped and served the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
  - C. They obediently observed the Ten Commandments even though they did not yet have them in written form.
3. When God appeared to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai:
  - A. The people were very afraid and did not want God to speak to them directly.
  - B. The people rejoiced in finally having a direct encounter with their God.
  - C. The people rushed to the mountain to give praise to the God who had delivered them from their slavery.
4.
  - A. If the Israelites continued to walk in faith and obedience, they would continue to receive God's gracious blessings.
  - B. Even if the Israelites failed to walk in faith and obedience, they would still continue to receive all the blessings God had promised them.
  - C. The obedience or disobedience of the people would make no difference in the way God dealt with His people.
5.
  - A. "The Israelites were always fully aware of their sinfulness even before God gave them His laws at Mt. Sinai."
  - B. "The Israelites in Egypt had a clear understanding of God's will for their lives, but because of their slavery they had no opportunity to do what God wanted them to do."
  - C. "When the Israelites first came to Mt. Sinai, they were confident that they could and would do everything the Lord commanded."

6. The beautiful and comforting word of Exodus 34:6-7:
  - A. Were spoken by God from Mount Sinai before He gave the Ten Commandments to His people.
  - B. Were spoken by Moses to the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai after they had broken God's law.
  - C. Were spoken by God to Moses after the Israelites had sinned against Him.
7. When the Israelites were living in the wilderness after leaving Mount Sinai:
  - A. They were fully aware that they were often displeasing God and felt genuinely sorry for their sins and failures.
  - B. They often rebelled against God in one way or another, while complaining to God rather than confessing their sins.
  - C. They were thankful to God most of the time and were grateful that they were no longer slaves in the land of Egypt.
8.
  - A. When the Israelites obeyed God's laws, they often received special blessings from the Lord.
  - B. The obedience or disobedience of the Israelites made little or no difference in the way God treated them in the desert.
  - C. None of those who rebelled against God in the desert were ever punished for it.
9. While Moses went up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments from God:
  - A. His brother Aaron taught the Israelites to obey God more faithfully.
  - B. The people demonstrated that they had learned much about God when He spoke to them earlier from the mountain.
  - C. Both Aaron and the people deliberately broke the first two commandments that God had given them.
10. When Moses came down from the mountain where he had spent some precious time with God:
  - A. He asked God to forgive the people for their idolatry because they had already suffered so much during their slavery in the land of Egypt.
  - B. He appealed for God's mercy solely on the basis of God's grace.
  - C. He asked God to forgive them because he was sure they would never again do what they had done while he was on the mountain

## LESSON 4 – ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following statements is correct? Choose A or B or C.
  - A. In the Old Testament salvation was gained by grace plus obedience and good works.
  - B. In the New Testament salvation was a gift of grace while in the Old Testament salvation was gained primarily by obedience and good works.
  - C. Salvation from sin has always been a gift of God's grace.
3. According to Acts 15:10, how did some of the Jews feel about God's laws?
4. A. When Moses told the people at Mt. Sinai to prepare to "meet with God," what did they have to do to prepare for this meeting? (See Exodus 19:10-15.)  
B. Why do you think this preparation was necessary or important?
5. A. What did the people say when they saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet blast and saw Mt. Sinai in smoke? (See Exodus 20:19.)  
B. Why do you think they were so afraid?
6. According to the Lesson notes, what was the first reason why God gave His laws and commandments to His people?
7. What do the following passages teach us about man's sinfulness?
  - A. Ephesians 2:1-3
  - B. Psalm 53:3
  - C. Jeremiah 17:9
  - D. Matthew 15:19
8. A. What does the apostle Paul teach in Romans 3:20?  
B. What does Paul teach in Romans 7:7?
9. A. According to the Lesson notes, what is a SECOND REASON why God gave the people His laws and commandments?  
B. Write out the Scripture verse which teaches this.
10. Which of the following statements is correct? Choose A or B.
  - A. By giving the Israelites His laws and commands, God provided the people with a new way of salvation—if they chose to follow it.
  - B. God's laws and commandments provided the people a way to demonstrate their love for God and their desire to please, honor, and serve Him.

11. A. List (but do not write out) three passages that teach that God would continue to bless His people if they loved, served, and honored Him.
- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
- B. List (but do not write out) two passages that indicate God would punish His people if they failed to love, serve, and honor Him.
- 1.
  - 2.
- C. In Deuteronomy 28, which is longer: (1) the list of blessings for those who would obey God or (2) the list of punishments for those who would not obey Him?
- D. Why do you think the one list is so much longer than the other?
12. Write out Exodus 34:6-7.
13. A. What is the THIRD REASON listed for giving the law?
- B. Where in the Bible do we read that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength?
- C. Where in the Bible do we read that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves?
14. A. According to the Lesson notes, what is the FOURTH REASON for giving the law?
- B. What does the apostle Paul teach us in Galatians 3:24?
15. Read Psalm 51:1-10, a psalm of David. What does this passage teach us about the basis or grounds for the forgiveness of sins?
16. A. What do Exodus 12:5 and Leviticus 4:3 (and various other passages) teach about the animals that the people would offer for sacrifice?
- B. Why do you think only these animals could be used as sacrifices?
17. A. What do Exodus 25:40 and 26:30 teach about the building of the Tabernacle?
- B. Why do you think this was so important?
18. What is a FIFTH REASON for giving the law?



19. A. When Moses didn't come down from the Mountain as soon as the people had expected or desired, what did they ask Aaron to do?  
B. What did the people say when Aaron did what they asked? (Exodus 32:4)
20. A. How did God respond to what the people did? (Exodus 32:9-10)  
B. How did Moses respond to the "plan" God suggested? (Exodus 32:11-13)  
C. How did God respond to Moses' plea? (Exodus 32:14)

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. The Lesson notes indicate that the Israelites did not really understand either God's holiness or their own sinfulness. Do you think that is still true of most people today? If not, why not? If so, what do you think is the best way to help people understand and realize their need for a Savior? Would it be more effective to stress man's sinfulness or to focus on God's holiness?
2. In Exodus 19:8 the people said to Moses, "We will do everything the Lord has said." Do you think they really thought they would be able to do that? Do you think there are many people today who believe they are able to do that? Give the reasons for your answers.
3. God "spoke" to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai through fire, smoke, thunder, lightning, and a loud trumpet blast. This definitely got their attention—at least for a while! (See Exodus 20:18-19). In what special ways does God "get the attention" of people today?
4. Do you agree or disagree with the following sentence? "Though the laws of God were sometimes burdensome, the giving of these laws was actually an act of grace on God's part." Give the reasons for your answer.
5. List some ways in which the Ten Commandments and other laws point people to Jesus.



# WORSHIP and SACRIFICES

## Lesson Five

BY GRACE ALONE

### Introduction

What would you have to do in Old Testament times if you tried to be saved by your “good works”?

First, you would have to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5). You would also have to perfectly love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). And then, while loving God and your neighbor without fail, you would also have to perfectly observe all 630 laws and commandments in the Old Testament!

Not only would you have to do exactly what each law required, but you would also have to obey every law with perfect and pure motives at all times and in every situation (James 2:10).

Obviously, if the way to be saved in the Old Testament was by perfectly obeying all of God’s laws, no one would ever be saved! No one except Jesus Christ has ever been perfect and free from sin. Everyone else has been conceived and born in sin (Psalm 51:5) and continues to fall short of what God requires (Psalm 14:3; Romans 3:10-12). Rituals and laws and sacrifices, therefore, could never make it possible for anyone to earn salvation.

The sacrifices which people offered in Old Testament times were never indications of their righteousness or holiness. Rather, when the people offered their sacrifices, they opened their hearts and lives to receive **the grace God promised them**. Their sacrifices also pointed to the one perfect sacrifice that Jesus Christ would someday make so that the sins of all who put their faith in Him could be washed away.

*How thankful we should be that salvation never  
had to be earned by human efforts!*

## **THE BUILDING OF THE TABERNACLE**

When Moses spent forty days with God on Mt. Sinai, God gave him some very detailed instructions concerning the building of a Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting where He would meet with His people (Exodus 25). In this Tabernacle the people could worship God and bring Him their sacrifices and offerings.

The Tabernacle itself was divided into two rooms separated by a heavy curtain or veil. The outer room, called the Holy Place, could be entered only by the priests. In this room there was an altar on which incense was burned, table where loaves of freshly baked bread were placed each week on the Sabbath Day, and a gold lamp to provide light for the Holy Place. The second room, called the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies, contained only one item, a wooden gold-covered box called the Ark of the Covenant. The cover of the Ark was called The Mercy Seat and at each end of the cover was a golden cherub (or angel) as part of the cover. In the Ark were placed the Ten Commandments, some manna, and the rod of Aaron the High Priest.

Only the High Priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place, and he might do so only once a year on the Day of Atonement. Whenever he entered this most sacred place, he had to come with an offering of blood which he sprinkled on The Mercy Seat (Exodus 25:17-22). When God “looked down” from heaven on the Ark with its Ten Commandments, He would “see” that The Commandments were “covered” by the sacrificial blood.

The Tabernacle itself was surrounded by an enclosed “court yard” or enclosure where the people would bring their sacrifices to be offered by the priests. The first thing most people would see when entering the courtyard was a large altar. Anyone who came to the Tabernacle to be “near to God” would immediately be reminded that no one should seek to approach the Lord without an appropriate offering or sacrifice. God also made it very clear that this altar was the only place where people were permitted to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings to Him.

In the courtyard there was one additional item between the altar of sacrifice and the Tabernacle itself. This was a laver or wash basin where the priests would wash their hands and their feet every time they entered the Holy Place and before they offered a sacrifice on the altar (Exodus 30:17-21). The priests needed to be made physically clean after the bloody work of sacrificing the offerings, but they also needed to be spiritually clean when they were in the presence of the Lord.

God gave detailed and explicit instructions regarding the building of the Tabernacle and also all the activities that would take place there (Exodus 25:40). Nothing was to be done without those instructions. GOD Himself determined when and where and how He was to be worshiped.

## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TABERNACLE**

In the New Testament we read that Jesus Christ was the eternal Word of God who came to this earth in the form of a man and who “tabernacled” (or “lived”) among us (John 1:1,14). In Jesus, God personally lived on this earth and demonstrated His love, grace, and compassion to His people. Jesus came to fulfill many of the things that the Tabernacle symbolized or foreshadowed.

Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for man’s sins (John 1:29), the true light who came into the world (John 1:9; 8:12; 12:46), and the true bread from heaven (John 6:48-51). And in Romans 3:25 we read that “God put forward [Jesus] as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

It is also interesting to note that there was only one entrance to the Tabernacle. *This may have pointed to the fact that the Savior (Jesus) who would someday come and make the perfect sacrifice for our sins, would be the only way through which people could come to God the Father* (John 14:6).

The Tabernacle was always placed in the middle of the camp whenever the Israelites settled for a period of time. It was a reminder to the people that their God was truly “in the midst “of them. This was further emphasized by the pillar of cloud or fire that rested above the Tabernacle whenever the people camped (Numbers 9:15-23).

*When the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the people knew they were supposed to move. When the cloud stayed in a certain place, the people knew they were supposed to stay. In this way they knew that their God was always there with them!*

### **Sacrifices for the People's Sins**

The first thing people would see when entering the Tabernacle grounds was the altar where all the sacrifices were offered. This altar taught the people two very important truths:

- (1) They needed to offer a blood sacrifice because of their sins.
- (2) God was willing to forgive their sins on the basis of a perfect sacrifice which would someday be offered on their behalf (Leviticus 1:3-9).

Though the people did not fully understand the way in which God would later provide a perfect sacrifice for their sins, most of them must have realized that the sacrifice of an animal could definitely not atone for their sins.

*As we read in Hebrews 10:4, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."*

It was also very obvious that as long as sacrifices were being offered on the altar over and over again, the perfect sacrifice for their sins had not yet been made.

### **Washing and Cleansing**

The laver or basin for washing served as a reminder that every believer needed to be washed and cleansed spiritually when coming into the presence of the Lord. When King David sinned against the Lord and earnestly desired to have his sins forgiven, he wrote:

*"Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. . . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities" (Psalm 51: 2, 7, 9).*

In the New Testament we read:

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).*

*“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God”*  
(1 Corinthians 6:11).

### **Prayers and Incense**

The burning of incense on the golden altar was symbolic of the prayers of God’s people that were continually being offered to the Lord (Exodus 30:7-8). See also Psalm 141:2 and Revelation 5:8. Faithful Israelites knew that the incense was being offered to the Lord each morning and evening so that incense would burn continually before the Lord throughout the coming generations (Exodus 30:8).

### **The Curtain in the Tabernacle**

The heavy curtain or veil that separated the two rooms in the Tabernacle (and later in the Temple) indicated that people in Old Testament times did not yet have full and free access to God the way we do today (Leviticus 16:2). God was truly with them and He did accept them as His children, but there was still a significant barrier between the people and God.

It was not until Jesus offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice for our sins that people could come directly to God without going through a human mediator (such as a priest or other spiritual leader).

This truth was miraculously demonstrated when the veil in the Temple was torn from the top to the bottom when Jesus died on the cross (Matthew 27:50-51). That truth was also explicitly taught later in the book of Hebrews (4:16 and 7:25).

### **The Perfect Sacrifice**

Since sacrifices were continually being offered in the Tabernacle (and later in the Temple), it was clear that sinful people were continually in need of God’s forgiving grace. Not even the High Priest, the God-appointed representative of the people, could die for the sins of others, since he needed forgiveness for his own sins (Hebrews 9:6-10).

Only a perfect human being could die for the sins of others (Hebrews 2:14-17). That is why Jesus, and Jesus alone, can make atonement for our sins. (See also 1 John 2:2 and Colossians 1:19-20.)

After Jesus made a perfect sacrifice for the sins of all who believe in Him, blood sacrifices were no longer required (Hebrews 10:18). *Jesus “has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14).

## **LAWS, RULES, AND REGULATIONS**

The books of Leviticus and Numbers contain many commands, laws and regulations regarding sacrifices, offerings, defilement, purification, personal cleansing, clean and unclean food, duties of the priests and Levites, feast days, celebrations, punishments for disobedience and rewards for obedience.

God commanded the Israelites to serve Him, worship Him, honor Him and obey Him in every area of their lives. There was no area of life which was unimportant to God.

The laws regarding sacrifices were specific and detailed. Only perfect animals (who pointed forward to the perfect Lamb of God) could be accepted for sacrifice. The priests had to wear special garments and perform all their activities in a way prescribed by God. The High Priest, who alone could enter the Most Holy Place, had to wear special garments which only he could wear. He also had to observe certain requirements and commands that God gave especially to him, and he had to follow detailed laws in a very precise way.

The words ***“HOLY TO THE LORD”*** were inscribed on a gold plate on the High Priest’s turban, so that neither he nor the people would forget that he was appointed by God to perform his sacred tasks. Everything had to be done in the way that God had prescribed.

It was only one year earlier that the Israelites were living as slaves in a pagan land. Now they were set apart from all others as *“a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”* (Exodus 19:6). God, therefore, required them, as His “holy nation,” to worship and serve Him exactly as He had commanded.

## **THE HIGH COST OF DISOBEDIENCE**

There is one brief story recorded in Leviticus that indicates how absolutely important all these regulations were in the sight of God. This story involves two of the sons of Aaron the High Priest. These sons had a very special role to play in the activities in the Tabernacle and were given very special honor. However, on one occasion they did not perform their duties in the

exact way the Lord had commanded. Instead of doing what the Lord had told them to do, they deliberately “*offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them*” (Leviticus 10:1). As a result, God immediately put them both to death.

*“Fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD has said: ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified’” (Leviticus 10:2-3).*

Not long before this event, Aaron himself made a golden calf to “help” the people worship God. As a result of Aaron’s serious violation of God’s command not to make idols of any kind, God punished a large number of Israelites with death. But even that severe punishment did not keep the sons of Aaron from doing things their way rather than God’s way. The Israelites were very slow to learn!

This story of Aaron’s sons again demonstrates that sinful human beings can never even begin to earn their salvation. If God punished two of the sons of the High Priest in such a dramatic way for a single offense, how could anyone believe that any human being could ever merit salvation by perfectly doing everything God has commanded? No one (except Jesus) ever came close to living the perfect life that God required . . . and no one ever will. We must, therefore, always continue to emphasize God’s **gracious forgiveness** of our sins rather than focusing on our feeble efforts to try to earn our salvation.

One of the very special blessings of being saved by grace is that it makes salvation a reality and a certainty for those who sincerely confess their sins and trust in God to forgive them for the sake of Jesus. Those who put their confidence in their own efforts to earn salvation will always have to wonder whether they have ever “done enough.” And sooner or later they will realize that they haven’t!

## **THE SPECIAL MINISTRY OF THE HIGH PRIEST**

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest went “behind the veil” into the Most Holy Place to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat.

The High Priest first bathed in water, put on sacred garments, and offered a sacrifice for his own sins and those of his family (Leviticus 16:3-6). He then took some of the blood of this sacrifice and sprinkled



it in the Most Holy Place (Leviticus 16:11-14). Later He did the same thing with the blood of another sacrifice for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:15). He also made atonement for the altar “to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the people of Israel” (Leviticus 16:18-19).

All of these passages emphasize the uncleanness of the people and the uncleanness of everything associated with their activities. Everyone, including the High Priest, needed to be cleansed, purified and forgiven. The sacrifices, as they pointed forward to Christ, “atoned” for their sins, but the believers themselves needed to be cleansed from the defilement and impurity that resulted from those sins.

All of the sacrifices pointed directly to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The fact that the people could not fully understand all of this does not take away from the truth emphasized in the book of Hebrews that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

In addition to the sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonement, there was one other significant event that took place on that day. After the High Priest had sacrificed the animals and sprinkled their blood in the Most Holy Place, he took a live goat, put both of his hands on the head of the goat, confessed over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites, and put them on the goat’s head.

This goat was then taken out to a solitary place and released into the desert, carrying on its head “all their sins” (Leviticus 16:20-22). The sins of the people were thus not only “atoned for” but they were also symbolically carried away never to be “seen” again. (See Psalm 103:12.)

Through all these activities the Israelites were not only continually reminded of their sins, but they were also continually reminded of **God’s gracious provision for the forgiveness of those sins**. Everyone who would witness the seemingly endless offering of sacrifices and shedding of blood would become aware of the seriousness of his sins and **the greatness of God’s grace** in His willingness to forgive them.

It was only God’s grace that provided the grounds for their forgiveness — not the work of the High Priest or the offering of sacrifices, but **the grace of a merciful God**.

## THE TEMPLE

When the Israelites first entered the Land that the Lord had promised to Abraham hundreds of years before, the Tabernacle was set up in a central location as the place of worship and sacrifice. For many years the Israelites continued to come to the Tabernacle to bring their sacrifices and offerings, since God had commanded that sin offerings and burnt offerings might not be offered at any other place or in any other way than He had commanded.

After some years, however, God revealed that a permanent structure should replace the Tabernacle as the central place of worship and sacrifice. Under the leadership of King Solomon, son of King David, a beautiful, costly and impressive Temple was built in the city of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem became “the holy city” and the temple was built along the same pattern as the Tabernacle. It had a Holy Place, a Most Holy Place, and a large and impressive courtyard where people worshiped the Lord, offered their gifts and sacrifices, and learned more about their gracious God.

Since the Temple was the only place where acceptable sacrifices could be offered, the people of Israel made frequent visits to Jerusalem for the offering of sacrifices and for the presentation of their gifts and offerings. The Temple was also the place for the celebration of the special festivals which the people were commanded to observe.

*All prescribed activities that took place at the Temple pointed forward to the time when God Himself would “tabernacle” among mankind in the person of His eternal Son, Jesus Christ.*

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Old Testament teachings on worship, sacrifice, and offerings demonstrate unmistakably that God’s people were always **saved only by His grace** and never by observing laws or offering sacrifices or bringing gifts. No one ever came close to keeping all of God’s laws and no one lived in perfect obedience to all His commands. The extensive and detailed commands regarding the sacrifices which people had to offer were a constant reminder of their continual need for forgiveness and cleansing.

The sudden death of Aaron's two sons was a solemn warning that the people were to obey God always and in everything. The Tabernacle and its furnishings not only provided the people with a place to worship God and bring Him their sacrifices, they also pointed forward to the time when a perfect sacrifice would be offered that would provide believers with complete forgiveness and eternal peace with God.

God demonstrated His presence among His people through pillars of cloud and fire and glory, but all of these also pointed forward to the time when He Himself would not only live among His people but would also live within them through His Holy Spirit.



## LESSON 5 – TEST QUESTIONS

### TRUE OR FALSE

Circle T or F.

1. T F Before Jesus came to the earth, it was possible for humble and faithful people to be saved through their obedience, sacrifices, and good works.
2. T F The offerings and sacrifices that people offered in the Old Testament paid for the sins of those who offered them humbly and sincerely.
3. T F In Old Testament times the senior priests took turns to enter the Most Holy Place once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people.
4. T F The altar in the Tabernacle (and later in the Temple) was the only place where people were permitted to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings to the Lord.
5. T F Two of Moses' sons were punished by sudden death in the Tabernacle because they did not reverently offer sacrifices in the way God had commanded.
6. T F After Jesus died on the cross, it was no longer necessary or appropriate for the people to offer animal sacrifices on the altar in the Temple.
7. T F The heavy curtain in the Tabernacle was an indication that there was a significant barrier between a holy God and his unholy people.
8. T F Only perfect animals could be accepted as a sacrifice on the altar in the Tabernacle.
9. T F The only day on which the high Priest might enter the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle was on the Day of Atonement.
10. T F After Jesus died on the cross, the heavy curtain in the Temple was torn from the top to the bottom to indicate that sacrifices in the Temple were no longer necessary.



## **MULTIPLE CHOICE**

**Choose which of the three statements is correct. Circle A or B or C.**

1. In the part of the Temple called "The Most Holy Place":
  - A. There was a box called the Ark of the Covenant and a special wash basin for the High Priest.
  - B. There was the Ark of the Covenant which contained the Ten Commandments, some manna, and the rod of Aaron the high Priest.
  - C. There was nothing at all so the High Priest could meditate on God without any distraction.
2. A. Moses had the task of choosing who would serve as the High Priest in Israel.
  - B. A new High Priest was chosen each year by the heads of each of the twelve tribes of Israel.
  - C. God Himself decided who would be the High Priest.
3. The first thing most people would see when they entered the courtyard of the Tabernacle was:
  - A. A large altar where the priests offered sacrifices.
  - B. A large laver or wash basin where the priests would wash their hands and feet.
  - C. A golden altar where the priests offered incense to the Lord.
4. When God wanted the people to move forward in the desert:
  - A. The priests blew their ram horns to get the attention of the people.
  - B. Moses and Aaron sent out messengers to the heads of each of the twelve tribes.
  - C. The pillar of cloud or fire above the Tabernacle was taken up as a signal that they should move.
5. A. People who brought their animals to the Tabernacle killed them in the courtyard.
  - B. The priests did the actual sacrificing of the animals that the people brought.
  - C. The priest made sacrifices in the Temple courtyard only when the High Priest was there.

6. The laver or wash basin in the courtyard was used for personal cleaning by the priests, but it also served as a reminder:
- A. That everyone needed to be washed and cleansed spiritually.
  - B. That the High Priest was the only one who was worthy of making a sacrifice to God.
  - C. That the priests appointed by God were more holy than others in Israel.
7. A. Burning incense on the golden altar was symbolic of the people's sorrow for their sins.
- B. Burning incense on the golden altar was symbolic of the prayers of the people rising to God.
- C. Burning incense was a reminder that the people needed purification because of their sins.
8. Where do we read that "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins"?
- A. Hebrews 8
  - B. Hebrews 9
  - C. Hebrews 10
9. What words were written on the gold plate on the High Priest's turban?
- A. HOLY TO THE LORD
  - B. BE HOLY BECAUSE I AM HOLY
  - C. GOD ALONE IS HOLY
10. When the Israelites finally entered the Promised Land:
- A. They immediately built a permanent Temple to replace the moveable Tabernacle.
  - B. They continued to worship God and offer sacrifices in the Tabernacle for many years.
  - C. They erected altars in various parts of the country so the people could offer their sacrifices without having to travel all the way to Jerusalem.



## LESSON 5 – ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Read James 2:10 and fill in the blanks: “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in \_\_\_\_\_ has become accountable for \_\_\_\_\_ of it.”
2. What does Psalm 51:5 teach us?
3. Which of the following statements is most correct? Choose A or B or C.
  - A. People who offered all the required sacrifices would be saved and forgiven on the basis of their obedience.
  - B. People who offered the required sacrifices that God commanded would be saved and forgiven because these sacrifices showed how sorry they were for their sins.
  - C. People who offered the required sacrifices would be saved and forgiven because their sacrifices demonstrated their trust in God’s grace to forgive them as He promised.
4. A. Is the following statement true or false? “Even if Jesus had never been born and had never died on the cross, the Old Testament sacrifices would have been sufficient for the forgiveness of sins.”  
B. Write out a Biblical text that supports your answer.
5. Which one of the following statements is NOT true?
  - A. Only the High Priest might enter the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle.
  - B. The people of Israel were permitted to enter the outer court of the Tabernacle but might not enter the Tabernacle itself.
  - C. The High Priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place whenever he chose to do so IF he wore the proper garments and washed from head to foot before entering it.
  - D. The priests were permitted to enter the Holy Place but not the Most Holy Place.
6. A. What three items were found in the Holy Place in the Tabernacle?  
B. What one item was found in the Most Holy Place?  
C. What three articles were found in the Ark of the Covenant?
7. A. What was the “Mercy Seat”? (Also called the “Atonement Cover” in some Bible versions.)  
B. Why do you think it was given this name?
8. In John 1:14 we read that “The Word [Jesus] became flesh and dwelt among us.” What is the literal meaning of the Greek word translated into English as “dwelt”?

9.
  - A. Which New Testament passage refers to Jesus as the “Lamb of God”?
  - B. Which New Testament passage refers to Jesus as the “Light of the World”?
  - C. Which New Testament passage refers to Jesus as the “Bread of life”?
10.
  - A. How many entrances were there to the Tabernacle?
  - B. How many ways are there to salvation?
  - C. Write out John 14:6.
11. How did the people of Israel know that their God was present with them when they were in the wilderness? (See Numbers 9:15-23.)
12.
  - A. What was the first thing people would usually see when they entered the courtyard of the Tabernacle?
  - B. Why was this significant?
13. What was the significance of the Laver or Wash Basin that was in the Courtyard?
14.
  - A. What separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle?
  - B. What was the significance of this barrier?
  - C. When and how was this barrier removed?
15. Are the following statements true or false?
  - A. Since the people were commanded to continue offering sacrifices, this showed that the people were continually in need of forgiveness.
  - B. Since the people were commanded to continue offering sacrifices, this showed that the blood of bulls and goats could not really take away sins.
16.
  - A. When did blood sacrifices for the forgiveness of sin become unnecessary?
  - B. Write out a Bible passage that supports your answer to “A.”
17. Why did God require the Israelites to offer only “perfect” or “unblemished” animals in their sacrifices?
18. What two major things did the High Priest do on the Day of Atonement?
  - A.
  - B.



19. Are the following statements true or false? Write True or False for each statement.
- A. The High Priest did not have to offer sacrifices for his own sins, since he was holier than the rest of the people.
  - B. If the High Priest did not come with blood into the Most Holy Place, he would die.
  - C. Moses was the first High Priest in the Old Testament?
  - D. The High Priest in Israel was chosen each year by the people.
20. A. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "The doctrine of salvation by grace alone is found in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament."
- B. Give the reason(s) for your answer.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

How would you respond to each of the following five statements? Respond to each statement separately. If possible, provide at least one Scripture passage to support your answer.

- 1. "I'm glad that God is willing to save ungodly and sinful people by His grace. However, I have always lived an obedient and God-fearing life and don't really need His grace."
- 2. "God commanded people to obey His laws and He expected them to obey them because He knew they could obey them if they really wanted to."
- 3. "God was unnecessarily harsh in punishing the two sons of Aaron with death. They may have done wrong, but what they did definitely did not deserve the death penalty."
- 4. "Being saved by our works provides us with much more certainty and confidence than being saved by grace. We know when we do good, but we can never be sure about grace."
- 5. "It's far better to have too many laws than to have too few of them. If there is a law for everything, we can know exactly what God wants us to do and we can then go ahead and do it."

# BLESSINGS OF GRACE

## Lesson Six

### BY GRACE ALONE

#### Introduction

In previous Lessons we learned about some of the laws and commands that the Lord had given to the people of Israel. These laws did not provide a way for people to earn their salvation, but it did teach them their need for salvation. Even the sacrifices that God commanded the people to offer did not by themselves atone for their sins, but they pointed forward to Jesus who would make a perfect sacrifice for the sins of all who would put their faith in Him.

The laws did much more, however, than teach people about sin and forgiveness. The laws also provided a way for people to honor God and to receive many wonderful blessings from Him. God knew that no one would perfectly obey all His laws, but **in His grace He promised special blessings to those who sincerely sought to obey Him and do what He commanded.**

The Bible records many encouraging stories of people who were wonderfully blessed by the Lord because of their faith and obedience, even though none of them ever “earned” these blessings through perfect obedience. Since no one perfectly did everything God required and no one lived without sin, every blessing God gave to His people was always a blessing of grace.

#### GOD BLESSES HIS PEOPLE BECAUSE OF HIS LOVE FOR THEM

*“It is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery. . . .*

*Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.”*

Deuteronomy 7:8-9

*“The LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.”*

Deuteronomy 10:15

## **GOD IS GLORIFIED BY GIVING BLESSINGS TO HIS PEOPLE**

*“Thus says the Lord God: ‘It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name . . . And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name . . . and the nations will know that I am the LORD.’”* Ezekiel 36:22-23

*“You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. . . . You shall know that . . . I am the LORD your God and there is none else.”*

Joel 2:26-27

## **GOD PROMISED SPECIAL BLESSINGS TO THOSE WHO OBEYED HIM**

*“And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season . . . and you shall eat and be full.”* Deuteronomy 11:13-15

*“Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to [keep the commandments], that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD the God of your fathers has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.”* Deuteronomy 6:3

*“[Be] careful to do according to all the law . . . that you may have good success wherever you go . . . For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”* Joshua 1:7-8

## **GOD PROMISED MATERIAL PROSPERITY TO THOSE WHO OBEYED HIM**

*“If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments . . . then I will give you rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. . . . You shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely. I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid.”* Leviticus 26:3-6

*“There will be no poor among you; for the LORD will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess—if only you will strictly obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all this commandment that I command you today. For the LORD your God will bless you, as he promised you, and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow, and you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you.”* Deuteronomy 15:4-6

*“The LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.”* Deuteronomy 16:15

*“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test . . . if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.”* Malachi 3:10-12

## **GOD PROMISED HEALTH AND LONG LIFE TO THOSE WHO OBEYED HIM**

*“You shall serve the LORD your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from you. None shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.”* Exodus 23:25-26

*“Because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the LORD your God . . . will love you, bless you, and multiply you. . . . You shall be blessed above all peoples . . . And the LORD will take away from you all sickness.”* Deuteronomy 7:12-15

*“You shall therefore keep the whole commandment that I command you today, that you may be strong . . . and that you may live long in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give to them and to their offspring.”* Deuteronomy 11:8-9

## **GOD PROMISED VICTORY IN WAR TO THOSE WHO OBEYED HIM**

*“I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. . . . You will chase your enemies . . . Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.”* Leviticus 26:6-8

*“If you are careful to do all . . . that I command you to do . . . then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you. . . . No one shall be able to stand against you.”* Deuteronomy 11:22-25

## **THE PSALMS CONTAIN MANY PROMISES TO THOSE WHO LOVE AND OBEY GOD**

*“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”* Psalm 1:1-3

*“Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! His offspring will be mighty in the land; . . . Wealth and riches are in his house . . . Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous. . . . The righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news, his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord . . . he will not be afraid.”* Psalm 112:1-8

Psalm 119, the longest of all the Psalms, recounts the wonderful blessings which come from observing and meditating on God’s law. In this Psalm the law is not seen as something negative or oppressive or burdensome but rather as a source of guidance, delight, and blessing.

The Psalms also contain words of warning to those who depart from God’s law, but the positive blessings that come from obeying His law clearly predominate. (See, for example, Psalm 119:1-2, 11, 32, 45, 165 and many others.)

## **GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO CONFESS THEIR FAILURES AND THEIR SINS**

God's gift of grace was frequently shown to those who humbly confessed their sins and asked Him for forgiveness. This promise of grace to repentant sinners is clearly one of the greatest of all God's blessings. If God would bless us only if we did everything He commands us to do, we would have few blessings in the present and no hope for the future. But **because of His grace**, we can live confidently and thankfully in spite of our weaknesses and failures when we acknowledge, confess and forsake them.

Some of the most encouraging stories in the Old Testament are stories of forgiveness and restoration—even when people had deliberately disobeyed God and totally forfeited His mercy and grace. Read each of the following **stories of grace** with thanksgiving and praise.

### **The Story of King David**

David was given some wonderful promises from the Lord and was richly blessed in every way. He loved and served his Lord and sincerely sought to do what God commanded Him to do. However, David was also a man with great weaknesses and at times sinned grievously against the Lord. Later, when he humbly and sincerely confessed his sin, he was forgiven.

Though David's sin had some very negative consequences both for himself and his family, the Lord forgave him and continued to use him in many significant and wonderful ways. Read 2 Samuel 7:8-29; Psalm 51:1-12; 2 Samuel 12:13-23.

### **The Story of King Manasseh**

Manasseh was the son of Hezekiah, one of Israel's greatest and best kings. However, Manasseh became one of the most wicked and sinful kings that Israel ever had. He was taken as a captive to Babylon and there he humbled himself in the sight of God and repented of his sins.

Eventually Manasseh returned to Jerusalem where he served the Lord and sincerely tried to undo some of the terrible things he had done earlier. Read 2 Chronicles 33:1-20.

### **The Story of Hosea**

Hosea was a well-known prophet in Israel whose story is told in the Old Testament. He married a woman named Gomer according to God's

instructions. Gomer gave birth to three children but then became a prostitute (Or, possibly, Gomer went back to a life of prostitution which she had pursued before she married Hosea.)

This story was a picture of Israel's unfaithfulness to the God who loved His people and "took them back" after their unfaithfulness. Read the fascinating story of God's grace in the book of Hosea. (See especially Hosea 3:1; 11:8-9; 14:1-9.)

### **The Story of Abraham**

Abraham is known in the Bible as the "father of all believers." His faith was strong, his love for God was unailing, and his life was in many ways exemplary. Yet, on two occasions, Abraham's faith seemed to waver when he thought he was in danger of losing his wife. At another time, he seemed to doubt that God would really give him a son through his wife Sarah so he fathered a child with his servant girl Hagar.

In spite of Abraham's failures, however, God graciously continued to work out His covenant promises through him. Read Genesis 12:10-20; 15:1-6; 16:1-4; 20:1-18.

**The Story of Hezekiah.** Hezekiah faithfully served the Lord, trusted Him, obeyed Him, and faithfully encouraged his people to serve and trust the Lord. However, at one point Hezekiah became proud, wandered from God, and brought down the wrath of God on himself and his people.

*After Hezekiah repented, he and his people again received the favor and blessing of the Lord.* Read 2 Chronicles 32:25-26.

### **Blessings That Come From Confession and Repentance**

*"For after I had turned away, I relented . . . I was ashamed and I was confounded, because I bore the disgrace of my youth.'" [And God responded] "Is Ephraim my dear son? . . . For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him, 'I will surely have mercy on him, declares the LORD.'" Jeremiah 31:19-20*

*'Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.'*" Isaiah 1:18

*“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” Proverbs 28:13*

*“Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. . . . I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; . . . and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.” Psalm 32:1, 5*

*“Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression . . . He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” Micah 7:18-19*

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

When one reads the hundreds of laws and commands in the Old Testament, it might seem that God imposed a tremendous burden on His people which would drive them to despair. Who could even remember all those laws! And even if someone did remember them, how could he expect to obey all the laws all the time with perfect motives and no failures? Obviously, no one (aside from Jesus) could ever do that. And no one ever did.

But God didn’t give people His laws simply to help them see their sinfulness. He truly wanted them to love and trust and obey Him. And to those who did love and serve Him—in spite of their repeated failures—He promised innumerable blessings which would set His people apart from all others and blessings which would also bring Himself honor and glory.

Those who put their trust in their merciful and gracious God and sincerely sought to do His will were richly blessed. But the blessings were not blessings of merit but always blessings of grace. From the very beginning of human history, people were chosen by grace, forgiven by grace, and guided, upheld, and strengthened by grace. And after this earthly life is over, God’s children will live with Him forever in endless joy, perfect delight, and eternal gratitude. AND IT’S ALL BY GRACE!





## LESSON 6 – TEST QUESTIONS

### TRUE OR FALSE

Circle T or F.

1. T F God's laws gave His people a way to honor Him and also a way to receive special blessings from Him.
2. T F None of the blessings God gave to His people were ever given to them because of their obedience.
3. T F God rarely promised to bless His people if they obeyed Him, because they were expected and commanded to obey Him.
4. T F God sometimes promised to give His people wonderful blessings, but He said that they would receive them only if they obeyed Him and observed His commandments.
5. T F Jesus emphasized the importance of obeying the "spirit" of the law and not simply the letter of the law.
6. T F There were people who opposed Jesus when He lived on earth, but no one could or did ever accuse Him of disobeying any Old Testament laws.
7. T F The Old Testament mentions the physical and material blessings of obeying the law more than the New Testament does.
8. T F Every promise given to God's people in the Old Testament is valid for all believers today as well.
9. T F The prophet Isaiah gives us this beautiful message: "God does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."
10. T F All the passages in this Lesson that refer to God's gracious dealing with His people are from the Old Testament.



## MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose which of the three statements is correct. Circle A or B or C.

1. In Deuteronomy 7:8-9 we read: "The Lord redeemed you from the house of slavery:  
A. Because you have faithfully obeyed the Lord in every way."  
B. Because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers."  
C. Because you have obeyed the Lord more faithfully now than you did while you were in the land of Egypt."
2. A. God not only promised spiritual blessings to those who trusted and obeyed Him, but He also promised them many material blessings.  
B. God knew that His people needed spiritual blessings far more than material blessings, so He never focused on the material ones.  
C. God never promised material blessings to His people, but in His grace He often gave such blessings to them.
3. In Leviticus 26 we read: "I will give you rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit :  
A. If you promise to serve me with the gifts I am giving to you."  
B. If you love me with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself."  
C. If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments."
4. Where do we read this promise from the Lord: "Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword"?  
A. Deuteronomy 11  
B. Leviticus 26  
C. Psalm 112
5. Psalm 119, the longest Psalm in the Bible, frequently refers to God's law:  
A. As a great blessing for those who obey it.  
B. As a burden for those who live under it.  
C. As a warning to those who disobey it.
6. Where do we find in the Bible this statement: "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy"?  
A. Micah 7  
B. Proverbs 28  
C. Jeremiah 31

7. Who lived the first part of his life as a notorious sinner but in his latter years sincerely repented and served the Lord the rest of his days on earth.
- A. King Manasseh
  - B. The prophet Hosea
  - C. King David
8. After God answered Hezekiah's prayer for healing from a deadly illness:
- A. He became proud and didn't give God the credit for his restored health.
  - B. He used his own healing as an incentive to urge others to pray to God.
  - C. He served God more joyfully and sincerely than ever before.
9. In Deuteronomy 28:1 and 15 we read that:
- A. God promised the same blessings to Israel whether they obeyed Him or did not obey Him, because He loved them.
  - B. God promised blessings to Israel if they obeyed Him and punishment if they didn't.
  - C. God encouraged them to love and obey Him, but He did not tell them what the results would be if they obeyed Him or not.
10. In Deuteronomy 9:1-6 God promised that He would go before His people like a consuming fire and would destroy the giants which they would face because:
- A. His people had earned these blessings through the uprightness of their hearts.
  - B. His people obeyed God most of the time while they were in the wilderness.
  - C. The nations they would destroy were very wicked.



## LESSON 6 – ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Indicate which of the following statements is not true.
  - A. God promised to bless His people who faithfully observed the laws He had given them.
  - B. There are many Old Testament stories of people who did obey God's laws and were blessed because of it.
  - C. Salvation is always a gift of God's grace.
2. What promises did God give to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3?
3. According to Deuteronomy 4:37, why did God bless the people of Israel?
4. What great promise is given in Isaiah 1:18?
5. Complete this sentence from Ezekiel 36:22. "Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but \_\_\_\_\_"  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_."
6. What promises did God give His people in Ezekiel 36:26 and 27?
7. In Joel 2:18-26 God gave the people several promises. When God fulfilled these promises, what would be the result? See verse 27.
8. In Deuteronomy 4:29 God promised: "You will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if \_\_\_\_\_."
9. According to Deuteronomy 11:13, God promised to bless His people in many wonderful ways if they met certain conditions. What were those conditions?
10. Read Joshua 1:7-8. What command did God give to Joshua?
11. What promise did God give to Joshua?
12. Read 2 Chronicles 21:21. What did Hezekiah do that was pleasing in God's sight?
13. What was the result of doing what Hezekiah did?
14. What promise did God give to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 28:1 if they obeyed Him?
15. How would other nations respond to the Israelites if they obeyed God and God blessed them? See Deuteronomy 28:10.
16. Read Leviticus 26:9. What promises did God give to Israel in this passage?
17. What promises of God are recorded in Deuteronomy 11:8-9?

18. Complete this sentence from Malachi 3:10. "Put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and \_\_\_\_\_."
19. Read Deuteronomy 9:3 and 6. Indicate which one of the following statements is NOT true.
- God promised to go before His people like a devouring fire.
  - God promised to destroy the giants which the Israelites would face.
  - God promised to give His people a good new land to live in.
  - God promised all these things because the people had become righteous through their faithfulness and obedience.
20. Fill in the blanks in this statement from Psalm 1. "Blessed is the man who \_\_\_\_\_ not in the counsel of the wicked, nor \_\_\_\_\_ in the way of sinners, nor \_\_\_\_\_ in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the \_\_\_\_\_ and on his law he meditates \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. In the Old Testament there are more promises of earthly and material blessings for believers than there are in the New Testament. Do you think believers today should take all these Old Testament promises and apply them to their lives today? Please give the reason(s) for your answer.
2. Since the blessings promised to the people of Israel were so many and so wonderful, why do you think the Israelites so frequently disobeyed God and forfeited the blessings they could have had if they were obedient? In general, does it seem that Christians today are more obedient than the Israelites were in the Old Testament? Please give the reason(s) for your answer.
3. Psalm 119 extols the great blessing of having all God's laws and commandments. The attitude of the person who wrote this Psalm was obviously very positive about having these laws while the attitude of some other Old Testament people seemed to be very negative. Why do you think the writer of this Psalm was so positive?
4. When you are living in a way that pleases God, do you believe that you will be "blessed" for that? If so, what do you think those blessings will be? Please explain your answer.
5. If a person sincerely believes that salvation is "all by grace," do you think that person will be more concerned or less concerned about the way he lives? Please explain your answer.



# GRACE IN THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS

## **Lesson Seven**

BY GRACE ALONE

### **Introduction**

Though the story of Jesus is recorded in the New Testament, Jesus lived under Old Testament conditions while He was on the earth. Old Testament laws were still binding on the people, and faithful Jews (the people of Israel) still tried to obey them. They circumcised their male children on the eighth day (Luke 2:21), they observed the Sabbath Day as carefully as possible (John 5:10), they offered sacrifices at the temple (Luke 22:7), and they came to Jerusalem each year for the three major feasts (Luke 2:41-42). In addition, they worshiped regularly at one of the Jewish synagogues—a custom that arose after the Old Testament itself was written (Luke 4:16).

The Temple in Jerusalem was still the designated place for the people to bring their tithes, sacrifices, and offerings. The High Priest still went into the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement, the Levites still occupied special places of honor and service in the Jewish community, and faithful Jews were still expected to pay tithes, to worship at the Temple, and to keep the law in every way (Matthew 23:23).

However, during Jesus' lifetime, the Jews were living under the authority of the Roman government. That made things even more difficult for them because they had to obey Roman laws as well as Old Testament laws. As a result, many Jews in Jesus' day were extremely eager to overthrow the Romans so they would no longer be under their authority. A few Jewish leaders favored the Romans and received special favors from them, but most of the people were very unhappy with their Roman rulers and thoroughly disliked them.

It was into this kind of world that Jesus was born and in which He lived His entire earthly life.

## **JESUS' VIEW OF OLD TESTAMENT LAWS**

Jesus had a very high view of the Laws of God. Early in His ministry He made that very clear. He said,

*“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”* Matthew 5:17-18

When Jesus was asked which of the Old Testament laws was the greatest, He replied:

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*  
Matthew 22:37-40

## **JESUS' TEACHING ON WHAT IT MEANS TO OBEY GOD'S LAWS**

Jesus emphasized that God required people to obey the “spirit” of the law and not simply the “letter” of the law (Matthew 23:23-26). Anything less than a sincere desire to do everything that God required was not considered to be true obedience.

People who emphasize a legalistic observance of the law are often inclined to emphasize the negative dimension of the law rather than the positive teachings of the law. Jesus Himself was careful not to do what the law forbade, but He also did what the “spirit” of the law required as He ministered to the needs of the hungry, the poor, the lost, the lonely, and the sinful.

Jesus also taught that there are times and circumstances when it is acceptable to “break” the letter of the law without violating the spiritual intent of the law. For example, in His day, people were not permitted to carry “burdens” on the Sabbath day, but Jesus healed a lame man on the Sabbath day and told him to take up his mat and walk (John 5:8-9). The



Jewish leaders regarded “healing” of the lame or the blind as work which was not permitted on the Sabbath day (Matthew 12:9-13; John 9:13-16), but Jesus healed them anyway. Jesus wanted the people to know that God’s intention in giving them Sabbath laws was not negative but positive (Matthew 12:12; Mark 2:27-28).

*Jesus was helping the people get away from the strict “legalism” of some of their leaders. These leaders did not “delight” in the law as the writer of Psalm 119 did. Rather, they chafed under the law and sought to escape from the demands of the law while still keeping up the appearance of obeying it. If they could somehow “fulfill” a law without doing what the Lord really intended, they were quick to do so. (See Matthew 15:3-9; 23:15-22.)*

Legalism is so awesome in its deception! That’s why Jesus so strongly opposed it and why he continually emphasized the importance of loving God with our whole heart and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

## **JESUS TEACHES ABOUT THE GRACE OF FORGIVENESS**

What may be even worse than the failure of some of the leaders to obey the spirit of the law was that many of them were proud and self-righteous simply because they obeyed the letter of the law. They not only led people astray but they also withheld from the people a true understanding of the **grace** of God (Matthew 23:13-15).

*Jesus dealt with this matter in His parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. In that well-known parable, the proud, self-righteous Pharisee boasted publicly and loudly of his own obedience while he looked with contempt on a sinful tax collector. However, it was the Pharisee who went home from the temple unforgiven, while the repentant tax collector went home **justified by God’s forgiving grace**. (Luke 18:9-14)*

Forgiveness, Jesus taught, was always granted **by grace** and was never earned by offering sacrifices or by giving money or by performing certain “religious” acts. One of His best known and most loved parables that teaches this truth is known as the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32).

In this parable, a restless and rebellious son asks his father for his inheritance. When he receives it, he goes out and spends that inheritance in sinful and profligate living. When his funds were totally exhausted

and he had nothing left to live on, he lost his friends, his livelihood and his self-respect. As a total failure he went out to feed pigs (a terrible thing for a Jewish boy to do) and could barely stay alive. When he decided to return to his father, he went with the deepest humility, hoping to attain, at best, the status of a hired servant with some food to eat and a place to sleep.

However, when his father sees him coming, he runs to him, embraces him, clothes him in a luxurious garment, prepares a banquet for him and invites others to the party. **THAT was GRACE!** His older brother, however, was extremely unhappy with all that his father did, since he felt that his brother deserved nothing at all from his father. And that was true. His brother didn't deserve anything. But grace is a gift and not a reward!

The older son, who represented a self-righteous person who “kept the law” in his own way, knew only external obedience and knew nothing of grace. He had little genuine love for his father and no love at all for his brother. But the father, in his kindness and love for his son, demonstrated the **immeasurable grace of our Father in heaven**.

Jesus also repeatedly demonstrated the forgiving grace of God in His dealing with specific people.

A well-known prostitute who expressed great sorrow for her sin and her deep love for Jesus was declared forgiven, while her accusers were condemned (Luke 7:36-50). Another woman who was caught in the act of adultery was condemned by everyone around her but was forgiven by Jesus (John 8:1-11). And a rich, despised, dishonest tax collector was “saved” when Jesus was passing through the town of Jericho on his way to Jerusalem (Luke 19:1-10).

In none of these stories did Jesus minimize the sinful things these people had done, but He lovingly administered **the grace of God** to them. Jesus never took sin lightly (John 8:11), but He clearly taught that **God's wonderful grace triumphed over sin** in the lives of those who repented and believed.

## **JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is frequently seen as the fulfillment of many of the symbols found in the Old Testament. He is referred to as the “*light of the world*” (John 8:12), “*the bread of life*” (John 6:35), “*the Lamb of God*

*who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29), “*the good shepherd*” who gives His life for His sheep (John 10:14-15), and *the great “I Am”* who lived before Abraham was born (John 8:58). He also referred to Himself as “*the way and the truth and the life*” and *the only way to the Father* (John 14:6). And in John 3:14 He is presented as *the Son of Man who must be “lifted up” on the cross* (even as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness) so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.

At the same time, John contrasts Jesus’ ministry with the ministry of Moses in the Old Testament. He writes,

*“From his [Jesus’] fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”* John 1:16-17

By writing this, John does not intend to teach that the law was unimportant. Nor did he teach that Jesus came to contradict the law or abolish it. Rather, he taught that Jesus came to teach the true purpose and intent of God’s law, to fulfill the law in our behalf, and to reveal the grace of God to every believer who falls short of obeying the law (as we all do). The law was definitely very important, but it could not make people holy, righteous, or good. Only Jesus could do that!

Though God already demonstrated His grace many times in the Old Testament, it wasn’t until Jesus fulfilled the law and paid the penalty for our sins that people could fully understand what is meant by God’s wonderful saving grace.

## **JESUS, HIS DISCIPLES, AND THE JEWISH LEADERS**

In the Gospel accounts, Jesus rarely praised people for their obedience. Rather, He praised people more for their humility, their love, their repentance and their faith. And the ones He seemed to praise most of all for their faith were Gentile converts (Matthew 8:10 and 15:28)!

Most of the Jewish rulers seemed to be on the wrong track—either over-emphasizing external obedience to the law or minimizing the importance of grace. Even Jesus’ own disciples (at least during the first part of His ministry) rarely showed compassion, love, and concern for others. On several occasions when Jesus demonstrated His compassion for those who were hungry, lost, or in need, the disciples did not seem to share either His compassion or His concern. They seemed to be

much more concerned about themselves, their authority, and their own power. (See Matthew 9:35-38 and Matthew 14:15-17.)

Jesus rejoiced over spiritually lost people who were brought back to their heavenly Father and experienced His grace. For example, when He concluded His parable of the prodigal son, the father said to the older brother, *“It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found”* (Luke 15:32).

After Jesus told the parable about the lost coin, He said, *“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance”* (Luke 15:7). By saying this He did not mean that there are some people who never sin and therefore do not need to repent. Rather, He was contrasting those who became genuinely aware of their need for forgiveness with those who had not directly violated the letter of the law and therefore saw no need for either forgiveness or grace.

The Pharisees never seemed to rejoice over the repentance of those who were known as “sinners.” Even Jesus’ disciples seemed rather insensitive at first to the plight of those who were lost without faith in Christ. Rarely do we read that early on they were eager to save the lost or rejoice over those who were found.

For example, when the disciples returned from their first mission trip, we read that they rejoiced in the fact that they had authority and power to cast out evil spirits, but we do not read that they rejoiced over people who found new spiritual life through the grace of God (Luke 10:17, 20). Later, however, after Jesus’ death and resurrection, we read that the disciples did genuinely rejoice in the conversion of lost sinners. (See, for example, Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:33.)

When Jesus neared the end of His life, He was condemned by the Jewish leaders for claiming to be the Son of God—a claim that they regarded as a clear violation of the law of God (John 19:7). They were not seriously searching for truth but were simply looking for some kind of “legal failure” in Jesus’ life to justify their eagerness to put Jesus to death. They totally disregarded Jesus’ life of love, holiness, purity, compassion, kindness, and mercy.

They were very unhappy with Jesus’ teaching about the grace of God for sinners, and they were definitely very upset about Jesus’ public evaluation of their own moral status before God. They desperately

wanted to end Jesus' influence among the people so that they could go on with their own activities, their own lifestyle, and their own position of authority among the people.

As we briefly review the life of Jesus as presented in the Gospels, it is obvious that He definitely didn't meet the expectations of the leaders concerning the promised Messiah. They were looking for someone who was powerful enough to defeat their political enemies and strict enough to condemn those who were regarded as "sinners."

They were longing for someone who would re-establish the Kingdom of Israel with all its laws and legal procedures intact. They desired a Messiah who would honor them and establish them in positions of influence and authority. They obviously were not looking for GRACE.

***But it was GRACE that Jesus came to bring!***

Emphasizing this grace does not minimize the importance of loving and serving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Nor does it in any way minimize the importance of loving our neighbor and obeying God. But it does put our love and service in a new light.

It totally eliminates the idea that God is pleased with a legalistic righteousness or satisfied with formal obedience. It also completely removes the idea that anyone can somehow gain sufficient merits to assure himself of a place in heaven. Jesus' life, teachings and example leave absolutely no room for anyone to earn salvation by observing God's law or by keeping His commandments.

The blessed and positive message of the Gospel is this:

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16-17).*

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

By the time Jesus came into the world in fulfillment of God's ancient promises (beginning in Genesis 3:15), the Jewish people were eager to welcome their Messiah. However, most of the people were looking for

someone who would rescue the Jews from the Roman leaders—not someone who would rescue them from the penalty and power of sin!

The leaders of the Jews stressed the importance of obedience to the Old Testament laws, but they also added many laws of their own. There was a strong emphasis on doing what God commanded but **very little understanding of the grace that God provided!**

Jesus made it clear that He did not come to do away with the Old Testament laws by abolishing them. Rather, He came to fulfill the laws in the way God intended. And when He fulfilled them, He did so in behalf of all those who put their trust in Him. His righteousness is credited to our account so that we do not have to pay the penalty we deserve.

Many of Jesus' gracious teachings contradicted the teachings of the leaders of the day. They stressed external obedience, while Jesus always focused on the intention of the heart. In many ways, both through His teaching and through His example, Jesus taught the people what God really wanted from His people. And what God wanted was love for Him above all else and love for our neighbors as ourselves.

By condemning those who put their confidence in an external observance of the law, Jesus introduced some wonderful truths which most of the people had never heard or understood. Many people heard Him gladly and trusted Jesus completely, but many of the rulers despised Him and eventually crucified Him.

Through His life and death and resurrection, Jesus brought the blessedness of eternal life to all who believed in Him. **And that is why He came—not to condemn the world, but to save the world through God's wonderful grace.**



## LESSON 7 – TEST QUESTIONS

### TRUE OR FALSE

Circle T or F.

1. T F When Jesus lived on the earth, most of the Old Testament laws were no longer being observed by most of the Jewish people.
2. T F The Jews of Jesus' day had to obey the laws of the Roman government as well as the laws of Moses.
3. T F Jesus said: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."
4. T F Jesus taught that the greatest commandment was: "Love your neighbor as yourself."
5. T F Jesus taught that there are times when it is acceptable to break the letter of the law without violating the spiritual intent of the law.
6. T F It is a sin in the sight of God to obey His laws and then to proudly boast about it.
7. T F The Pharisees in Jesus day were proud of their own obedience to the law and were not very pleased when Jesus forgave some people who had broken the law.
8. T F The older son in Jesus' parable of The Prodigal Son was at first unhappy about his brother's return but later had a change of heart and warmly welcomed him back into the family.
9. T F Jesus Himself never broke God's laws and he often praised others who also kept all His laws.
10. T F The Pharisees strongly emphasized the laws of God and were quick to praise those who sincerely repented after breaking the law.



## **MULTIPLE CHOICE**

**Choose which of the three statements is correct. Circle A or B or C.**

1. When Jesus was living on earth:
  - A. He made it very clear that He was not subject to the Jewish laws as other people were.
  - B. He usually favored the Jewish authorities and ignored the authorities of the Romans.
  - C. He said that he had come to fulfill the laws of the Old Testament.
2. When Jesus was on earth, most of the Jews who were living in Palestine:
  - A. Were quite pleased to live under the authority of the Romans, since that gave them a good excuse for not obeying some of the Jewish laws they didn't like.
  - B. Found it burdensome to live under the authority of the Romans.
  - C. Simply ignored the Roman authorities and their laws.
3.
  - A. Jesus occasionally broke some of God's laws in the eyes of the Jewish leaders, but he never broke any of the laws in the eyes of God.
  - B. Jesus was very careful not to break any of the Old Testament laws in the eyes of God or in the eyes of the Jewish leaders.
  - C. Jesus frequently warned His disciples not to break the Old Testament laws, since He didn't want their weaknesses and failures to reflect negatively on Himself.
4. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son:
  - A. Jesus emphasized God's grace for those who sincerely repent of their sins.
  - B. Jesus taught that most sinners will eventually tire of living without God and, in time, will turn back to God.
  - C. Jesus emphasized that it is wise for parents not to interfere with children who choose to go out on their own, since they most likely will eventually return.
5. When a well-known prostitute came to Jesus and expressed sorrow for her sin and also expressed her sincere love for Jesus:
  - A. The religious leaders were deeply impressed and rejoiced in her repentance.
  - B. Jesus recognized that she was not really sincere and treated her accordingly.
  - C. Jesus forgave her.



6. Jesus is referred to in the Gospel of John by various names or titles. Which one of the following is NOT used in this Gospel to refer to Jesus?
- A. "The Great I Am"
  - B. "The Way and the Truth and the Life."
  - C. "A Friend of Sinners."
7. During the early years of Jesus' ministry, His disciples:
- A. Usually shared in Jesus' joy when sinners repented of their sins.
  - B. Were not impressed by His forgiveness of sinners, but they were grateful and happy when Jesus met the needs of people who were hungry, sick, or in need.
  - C. Rarely seemed to be very excited or grateful for Jesus' demonstrations of love and grace for repentant sinners or for others in need.
8. Most of the Jewish religious leaders:
- A. Were truly grateful for Jesus' ministry of love and grace and forgiveness.
  - B. Were very unhappy about the way Jesus loved and forgave repentant sinners.
  - C. Were really not very interested at all in what Jesus was doing.
9. A. Over the centuries the Jewish leaders not only emphasized the importance of the Old Testament laws but they also added many laws of their own.
- B. Since there were so many laws in the Old Testament, the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day reduced the number of laws to be obeyed by the common people.
  - C. The Jewish leaders eliminated some of the Old Testament laws, since the people also had to obey so many laws imposed by the Roman government.
10. A. Jesus did not come to the earth to condemn people for breaking God's laws but to save law-breakers through God's amazing mercy and grace.
- B. Jesus primary emphasis in coming to the earth was to help people understand God's laws and then to help them win God's favor through their obedience.
  - C. Jesus himself said: "I did not come to condemn the world, but I came to teach people the ways of God so they may obey Him and gain eternal life."

## LESSON 7 – ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. The story of Jesus' life is told only in the New Testament. Yet, the Lesson notes say that He lived His life in most ways as an "Old Testament person." What does that mean?
2. What do you think Jesus meant when He said that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law if we want to enter the kingdom of heaven? (See Matthew 5:20.)
3. Why is it so important that we obey God with our whole heart rather than simply following the letter of the law?
4. Do you think Jesus broke Old Testament laws when He healed people on the Sabbath day and when He told someone to take up his bed and walk on the Sabbath? Please give the reason for your answer.
5. Give two examples of how the Pharisees and teachers of the law "avoided" doing what the law commanded while still obeying the letter of the law.
6. What was the main message of the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector?
7. What does the parable of the Prodigal Son teach us about grace?
8. Describe in one or two sentences what Jesus said about the self-righteous Pharisees and teachers of the law. (See Matthew 23.)
9. According to the Lesson notes, what two wonderful things did Jesus do for us.
10. What do you think John meant when he wrote: "The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." ?
11. How would you compare the attitude of the writer of Psalm 119 toward God's law with the attitude of the Pharisees?
12. Describe briefly two situations in which Jesus demonstrated the forgiving grace of God for people known as "sinners."
13. What answer did Jesus give to the Pharisee who asked Him: "What is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (See Matthew 22:34-40.)
14. How did Jesus demonstrate His love for His "neighbor"?
15. After Jesus told His parable about the lost sheep, He said: "There will be more joy in heaven \_\_\_\_\_." (See Luke 15:7)
16. In general, how did the disciples respond to the blessings they experienced during their first "missionary outreach"?
17. Why did many of the Pharisees and teachers of the law feel that they didn't need God's grace?

18. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is frequently seen as the fulfillment of some of the symbols in the Old Testament that pointed forward to Him. In John 1:29 Jesus is called \_\_\_\_\_, in John 8:12 He is called \_\_\_\_\_, in John 10:14-15 He is referred to as \_\_\_\_\_, and in John 6:35 He is called \_\_\_\_\_.
19. Why were the Pharisees and teachers of the law so opposed to Jesus and His teachings?
20. John 3:16 is very familiar to most Christians. What does John 3:17 teach us?

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION**

1. Would you agree or disagree with the following statement? "Many Christians put more emphasis on what we should not do than on what we should do." Please explain your answer, giving specific examples to support your answer.
2. Evaluate the following statement: "Believers should not try to live as Jesus lived but they should try to live as Jesus taught."
3. How do you think YOU would have responded if you were the "older brother" in the Parable of the Prodigal Son? Please explain your answer.
4. In this Lesson "legalism" refers to an undue emphasis on external obedience to laws— both laws in the Bible and man-made laws.
  - A. Do you think there is a problem with legalism in our churches today? Please explain your answer, giving specific illustrations if possible.
  - B. The Lesson notes indicate that legalism is "deceptive" and "destructive." Would you agree or disagree? Please give the reason for your answer.
5. Can you think of any situations where we might please God by following what we believe is the "the spirit of the law" even if it means that we would violate the letter of the law?

# LAW AND GRACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

## Lesson Eight

### BY GRACE ALONE

#### Introduction

One of the main concerns of early Christians was to know how they should deal with the laws of the Old Testament. Were those laws still relevant? Did Christians have to obey them? Did Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles (non-Jews) have exactly the same standing before God? Were they really now “one” in Christ?

These and other questions were of great concern to early believers. They truly wanted to serve and honor the Lord, but they weren’t sure what God required of them. Many of the Jewish Christians felt strongly that all believers should obey all the laws of the Old Testament. Most Gentile believers felt they didn’t have to. The apostle Paul, as well as others, wrote rather extensively on these important, but controversial, matters.

We begin our study with some events in the book of *Acts* and then focus on the epistles to the *Romans*, *Galatians*, and *Hebrews*, while adding a few quotations from other epistles as well.

#### THE BOOK OF ACTS

The book of Acts gives us a brief history of the early church from the time of the ascension of Jesus into heaven until the time of the imprisonment of the apostle Paul. The first believers in Jesus were almost all Jews, direct descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Many of the Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost had come from other lands

where they had been scattered over the years. They were still observant Jews, but they lived far from the “Promised Land” (Canaan) where Jesus lived, died, and rose again. Some of them may never have even heard about Jesus.

On the Day of Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit from heaven upon the disciples of Jesus, enabling them to speak powerfully and boldly about Jesus in the languages of the Jews who had come from other parts of the world. When the people heard Peter speak, their hearts were stirred and they were “cut to the heart” and asked the apostles, “*Brothers, what shall we do?*” (Acts 2:37). Peter’s answer was clear and direct. He said:

*“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”* Acts 2:38-39

The very first sermon delivered by the apostles after Jesus went back to heaven emphasized that forgiveness and salvation were a gift of grace to all those who were truly sorry for their sins and who trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Those who repented and believed were immediately baptized and began to live a new life of fellowship, obedience, celebration, praise and sharing with those in need (Acts 2:41-47).

This was a wonderful time in the life of new believers. These early days would soon be followed by many miraculous signs and wonders, powerful demonstrations of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the rapid growth of the church among both Jews and Gentiles. However, it also became a time of division among the new Christians. Some taught that believers should continue to observe all the laws of the Old Testament, while others taught that these laws were no longer binding on believers.

This problem intensified as the number of Gentile (non-Jews) Christians continued to increase. When the Holy Spirit sent Peter to the home of a prominent Gentile named Cornelius, Peter was very much aware of the fact that he was violating a strict Jewish law. When he entered Cornelius’ home, Peter began his presentation with these words:

“You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean” (Acts 10:28). When he ended

this part of his message, Peter said: “To him [Jesus] all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43).

Cornelius believed and received the gift of the Holy Spirit—just as believing Jews did earlier. A short time later, however, “*the circumcision party criticized [Peter] and said, ‘You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them’*” (Acts 11:2-3). When Peter explained what had happened, the believers “*fell silent and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life’*” (Acts 11:18).

As Paul and Barnabas went out on one of their early missionary journeys, they spoke first, as their custom was, to the Jews in their synagogues. In the Gentile city of Iconium many people, both Jews and Gentiles, came to believe in Jesus.

*“But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers”* (Acts 14:2). As a result, Paul and Barnabas “*remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to **the word of his grace**, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands*” (Acts 14:3).

In spite of all this, however, some Jewish Christians continued to emphasize the necessity of obeying the Old Testament laws if a person wanted to be saved. They taught the new Gentile believers, “*Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved*” (Acts 15:1).

To resolve the confusion caused by this significant difference of opinion, the leaders of the church met together in the city of Jerusalem under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Peter, among others, spoke powerfully about what God had done and the importance of being saved by grace alone. He said:

*“Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that **we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will**”* (Acts 15:7-11).

The decisions made at this historic conference in Jerusalem settled the matter once and for all. Though some Jewish believers may have found it difficult to accept this momentous decision, the matter had officially been settled. All those who are saved, whether Jews or Gentiles, are saved by grace alone.

The apostle Paul had also spoken at the Jerusalem conference and continued to preach and write about salvation by grace through faith. In Paul's mind there was never a question about the way of salvation. Though God-glorifying works would follow salvation, they would not bring salvation.

On one of his later missionary journeys, Paul preached to a group of believers from Ephesus whom he knew he would never see again. He said to them: *“I did not shrink from . . . teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20:20, 21, 24).

Later he sent a letter to these same believers in which he again emphasized the words he had spoken to them earlier.

*“For **by grace you have been saved** through faith. And this is not your own doing; **it is the gift of God**, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:8-10).

## **PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHRISTIANS IN ROME**

Before Paul ever visited the church in Rome, he wrote the believers there a powerful letter which we know as ***The Epistle to the Romans***. In the very beginning of his letter Paul referred to *“the Gospel of God”* which *“he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning his Son”* (Romans 1:1-3). The message of grace in the Gospel was therefore not “new,” since it had been promised already long before in the Old Testament. However, it was “new” in the sense that it represented the fulfillment of promises made long before. Concerning this Gospel, he writes:

*“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith’”* (Romans 1:16-17).

In chapter three of his letter, Paul writes powerfully and convincingly that the Old Testament laws were a blessing to those who received and obeyed them (Romans 3:1-2). However, the law also demonstrated the need for a Savior, since no one was able to perfectly obey the law and thus merit or earn salvation. He wrote:

*“By works of the law no human being will be justified in [God’s] sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin”* (Romans 3:20).

Paul then goes on to present some significant truths concerning the necessity and possibility of becoming righteous in God’s sight through faith, a way to which the Old Testament Law and Prophets testified.

*“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus . . . Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded . . . For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from the works of the law”* (Romans 3:21-30).

Paul then goes back to God’s promises to Abraham which were given more than two thousand years earlier.

*“What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather. . . ? For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness’ . . . For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. . . . **That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace. . . .**”* (Romans 4:1-16).

In the following chapters in his letter to the believers in Rome, Paul continues to emphasize the importance of the grace of God and our faith in Jesus Christ. In doing this he does not minimize the significance of obedience, love and service, but he emphasizes that justification before God is based solely on the merits of Christ and not on anything we do ourselves.



*“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.**”*  
Romans 5:1-2

*“Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that . . . **grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**”* Romans 5:20-21

Because believers now live by grace and have received new life in Christ, they are no longer bound by the law. As they once were slaves to sin, they have now become slaves of righteousness. Through grace and by the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, believers are increasingly able to pursue holiness and enjoy the gift of eternal life. What we “earn” as the wages of our sin is death. **What we receive as a gift of grace is eternal life.**

*“For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. . . . Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but **the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**”* (Romans 6:14, 22-23).

Being set free to serve God does not mean that we no longer have to be concerned about how we live. We still must live in obedience to the Lord and seek to please Him in all that we do. However, our primary “guide” in helping us live for God is no longer the law of the Old Testament but rather the Holy Spirit who lives within us. Even then, however, we must not forget that our old sin nature may continue to influence the choices that we make.

*“But now we are released from the law . . . so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.”*  
Romans 7:6

*“The law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. . . . By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”*  
Romans 8:2-4

Living by the Spirit follows from our faith in the Jesus Christ. “*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit*” (Romans 8:5). We do not earn or merit salvation by living in a way that pleases God. Rather, we live in a way that pleases God because we are saved!

Romans 10:4 teaches us that “*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*” Christ has fulfilled the law in every way in behalf of those who put their faith in Him for salvation. He did what we could never do. As our representative, He did everything God required and commanded in the law. And He did it in our behalf so that we might be declared righteous in God’s sight!

## THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

The Christian believers in the area called Galatia were very troubled by the relationship between law and grace. They had accepted Christ and sincerely desired to follow Him in their daily lives, but they had come under the influence of some teachers who insisted that they had to observe the Old Testament laws if they wanted to be truly saved.

To this group of believers Paul responded by emphasizing clearly and repeatedly that salvation does NOT come from obeying the Old Testament laws, but **by grace alone**. He did not minimize the importance of obedience, but he made it very clear that no one can gain eternal life by doing what the law required.

*“We know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”*  
Galatians 2:15-16

*“The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. **I do not nullify the grace of God,** for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”* Galatians 2:20-21

*“If the inheritance comes by law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.”* Galatians 3:17-18

Throughout his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes passionately about the freedom we have in Christ. He also shared his great disappointment that the people in Galatia were trying to gain merit by obeying the law. In Galatians 5:1-26 he wrote about the freedom we have in Christ and how we should follow the leading of the Spirit rather than trying to fulfill all the demands of the law. He wrote:

*“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. . . You are severed by Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.”* Galatians 5:1,4

## **THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**

In Hebrews 8:8-12, the writer refers to a New Covenant which God had promised to make already in the Old Testament. The prophet Jeremiah, writing about six hundred years before the coming of Christ, told about this “New Covenant” which God would make with His people. This new covenant would be based upon God’s promises to Abraham and would be fulfilled in Christ. He wrote:

*“This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. . . . They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest . . . For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”* Jeremiah 31:33-34

All the Old Testament laws and sacrifices and offerings would have accomplished little if it were not for the coming of Jesus who “*appeared once for all . . . to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*” (Hebrews 9:26). What the law could never do, Jesus did! Through faith in Him “*we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*” (Hebrews 10:10). “*And where there is forgiveness [of sins], there is no longer any offering for sin*” (Hebrews 10:18).

## **OTHER NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES TO SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE**

The apostle Paul, who wrote most of the Epistles in the New Testament, grew up as a very observant Jew who was extremely diligent in observing

the Old Testament laws. He even went so far as to claim that he was faultless in regard to legalistic righteousness (Philippians 3:3-6). But he also wrote that:

*“Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ.”* Philippians 3:7-9

To Titus, Paul wrote:

*“When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit . . . so that **being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**”* Titus 3:4-7

And in his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul wrote these stirring and compelling words:

*“God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—**by grace you have been saved**—and raised us up with him . . . so that **in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not you own doing; it is the gift of God.**”* Ephesians 2:4-8

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The New Testament epistles repeatedly and emphatically teach that salvation is by grace alone through faith. We as believers cannot and need not add anything to the work that Jesus Christ has already done for our redemption. Though we are called by God and equipped by the Holy Spirit to live a life of gratitude and obedience to the Lord who has saved us, our guide for living is not found primarily in laws and rules. Rather, we are guided by the Holy Spirit to do what is most pleasing to the Lord. The New Testament gives us many laws, commands, and guidelines for

Christian living, and God expects us to obey them, but obedience follows salvation and is not the cause or the source of our salvation.



In the next Lesson we will study what it means to have “freedom” in Christ. Since we are no longer “under” the law and are “free” in Christ, we may ask whether everything now permissible for us. Are there no longer any written guidelines for us to follow? Can each of us decide on our own how we should live? Or are there some definite principles which can guide us as we seek to enjoy our “Christian liberty” without misusing it? These are some of the questions we will consider in Lesson Nine.



## LESSON 8 – TEST QUESTIONS

### TRUE OR FALSE

Circle T or F.

1. T F The first believers in Jesus were mostly Jews, descendants of Abraham.
2. T F In their first sermon after Jesus returned to heaven, Jesus' disciples stressed the importance of obeying God's laws recorded in the Old Testament.
3. T F The Christian Jews were very pleased as soon as they heard that Cornelius, a Gentile, had become a believer in Jesus after Peter had gone to his home and preached to him.
4. T F When Paul and Barnabas went out on their first missionary journey, they usually preached first to the Jews in their synagogues rather than to the Gentiles.
5. T F After Jesus came, Paul and other writers of the New Testament no longer referred to Abraham, even though he was such a prominent figure in the Old Testament.
6. T F In his letter to the Romans Paul wrote, "Where sin increased, grace decreased."
7. T F When Paul wrote to the believers in Galatia, he praised the Christians there because they understood the freedom believers have in Christ better than most other Christians did.
8. T F The book of Hebrews teaches us that all the sacrifices and offerings which the people offered in Old Testament times would have accomplished very little if Jesus had not come to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
9. T F The prophet Jeremiah wrote in the Old Testament that the Lord declared: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts."
10. T F The apostle Paul was very careless about obeying God's laws in his younger years before his conversion.



## **MULTIPLE CHOICE**

**Choose which of the three statements is correct. Circle A or B or C.**

1. At the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) who said: "We believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."  
A. Peter  
B. Paul  
C. Barnabas
2. Where in the Bible do we find these words: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God"?  
A. Romans 8  
B. Ephesians 2  
C. Acts 10
3. Who wrote: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."  
A. Peter  
B. Timothy  
C. Paul
4. Where in the Bible do we find these words: "By works of the law no human being will be justified in his [God's] sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."?  
A. Romans 3  
B. Romans 4  
C. Romans 5
5. Where in the Bible do we find these words: "We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ"?  
A. Romans 6:14  
B. Galatians 2:16  
C. Titus 3:7
6. Which of the following statements is NOT found in the book of Romans.  
A. "Sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."  
B. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift."  
C. "You who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace."

7. Paul wrote: "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Where is this testimony found in the New Testament?
- A. Ephesians 2
  - B. Philippians 3
  - C. Romans 4
8. Where are the following words found in the Bible? "God our Savior . . . saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."
- A. Titus 3
  - B. Philippians 4
  - C. Ephesians 5
9. Some of the early Jewish Christians emphasized that Gentiles:
- A. Could not be saved unless they were circumcised.
  - B. Could not be saved unless they became a member of a Jewish synagogue.
  - C. Could never be saved at all because they were not descendants of Abraham.
10. A. We gain salvation when we learn how to live a life that is pleasing to God.
- B. We learn how to live a life that is pleasing to God because we have been saved.
  - C. We can never live a life that is pleasing to God.





## LESSON 8 – ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- Only one of the three following statements is true. Choose A or B or C.
  - Most Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity believed that all of the Old Testament laws were still valid.
  - Some Jewish converts believed that most of the Old Testament laws were still valid and some did not.
  - Neither Jewish nor Gentile converts believed that any of the Old Testament laws were still valid.
- When the people asked Peter on the Day of Pentecost, "What shall we do?" what did Peter tell them? (See Acts 2:38-39.)
- When Peter went to the home of the Gentile Cornelius, what was the first thing he said to him in his presentation? (See Acts 10:28.)
- What did Peter say as he ended the first part of his presentation to Cornelius? (See Acts 10:43.)
- How did the early believers respond when they heard what Peter did at the home of Cornelius? (See Acts 11:2-3.)
  - What did they say when Peter explained what had happened? See Acts 11:18.)
- What did some of the Jewish Christians teach the Gentile believers about circumcision? (See Acts 15:1.)
- What did Peter say about this matter in Acts 15:10-11?
- When Peter discussed the way of salvation for the Gentiles, he said: "We will be saved \_\_\_\_\_ just as they will." Romans 3:20-21
- What did Paul write to the Ephesian believers about salvation in Ephesians 2:8-9?
- What did Paul write about the way of salvation in Romans 1:16-17?
- What did Paul write in Romans 3:20 about the possibility of being saved by observing the law?
- Fill in the blanks in this quotation from Romans 3:23-24: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his \_\_\_\_\_ as a \_\_\_\_\_."
- In Romans 5:1-2 we read: "Therefore, since we have been justified by \_\_\_\_\_, we have \_\_\_\_\_ with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by \_\_\_\_\_ into this \_\_\_\_\_ in which we stand."

14. Fill in the blanks in this quotation from Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is \_\_\_\_\_, but the \_\_\_\_\_ of God is \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ Jesus our Lord."
15. According to Romans 10:9-13, what is the difference, if any, between Jews and Gentiles in regard to the way of salvation?
16. What does Paul teach in Romans 8:1?
17. Fill in the blanks in this quotation from Galatians 3:11 "Now it is evident that \_\_\_\_\_ is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by \_\_\_\_\_.'
18. What does Paul teach in Galatians 5:16?
19. Fill in the blanks in this quotation from Titus 3:4-7: "When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us not because of \_\_\_\_\_ done by us in righteousness, but according to his own \_\_\_\_\_, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit . . . so that being justified by \_\_\_\_\_, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."
20. Write out two other passages in the Bible (passages that are not referred to in these questions) which teach that salvation is by God's grace and not by our works.

A.

B.



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think some of the early Jewish converts continued to stress the importance and necessity of circumcision and the keeping of the Old Testament laws?
2. What are some possible reasons why many people, even today, seem to prefer the idea that we are saved by our “good works” rather than the Biblical teaching that we are saved by grace through faith?
3. How would your own life be changed if the Bible taught that we are saved by works and not by faith? Would you live a more obedient life? Would you be less inclined to please God and live for Him? Or wouldn't it make any difference? Please give the reasons for your answers.
4. As you seek to know and do the will of God, do you think it is easier to “follow the leading of the Holy Spirit” or to follow a set of laws? Please give the reason for your answer.
5. A. What is your favorite Biblical passage concerning salvation “by grace alone”?  
B. Why do you especially appreciate this particular passage?



# GOD'S GRACE BRINGS FREEDOM

## **Lesson Nine**

### BY GRACE ALONE

#### *Introduction*

Since we are **saved by God's wonderful grace**, why should we be concerned any longer about the laws and commandments given in the Bible? Jesus has already fulfilled the law in our behalf and has given us freedom to live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So what do we have to do with laws and commandments after we are saved?

Regrettably, we who are saved by God's grace are not immediately made perfect or free from temptation or moral weaknesses. We still often have to wrestle with sinful tendencies and human frailties and the "lust of the flesh." Some of us make much greater progress than others in living holy and obedient lives, but no one besides Jesus has ever been morally perfect.

So, when the Bible teaches that we are "free from the law" and saved by grace, that does not mean that we are free to live as we please. We certainly do not have to obey all the Old Testament laws regarding worship and sacrifices and personal cleansing, but there are certain principles in the Old Testament such as honesty, integrity, justice, and concern for the poor, that are emphasized again in the New Testament. In addition, there are other commands in the New Testament that serve as moral laws or guidelines for everyone who has been saved by grace.

In this Lesson we will study various teachings in the New Testament that help us understand what it means to be "free in Christ." These teachings will also help us live in gratitude to God for His gift of salvation and show us how to serve others in His name.

## **OUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST**

New Testament writers clearly teach that **we can be saved only by grace** and not by obeying laws. Because grace is a free gift of God and because Jesus perfectly fulfilled God's law in our behalf, we no longer live under the law but are free in Christ. The apostle Paul wrote:

*"You are not under law but under grace. . . ." Romans 6:14*

*"We are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code." Romans 7:6*

*"If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."*  
Galatians 5:18

While the writers of the New Testament emphasize our freedom in Christ, they also recognize how easy it is for us to use our "freedom" to justify a way of life that does not please God or bless others.

*"You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."*  
Galatians 5:13

*"Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God." 1 Peter 2:16*

## **GUIDELINES FOR LIVING IN FREEDOM**

The Bible does not give us specific directions on how to live in every situation that may arise in our lives, but it does give us some general guidelines to help us live humbly and joyfully and faithfully in our daily walk with God. Among those guidelines are the following.

**We must recognize that freedom from the law does not mean that we are free to live as we please.**

Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament gives the believer the right to do "what seems right in his own eyes." God has standards that He demands and expects us to obey. Our "freedom" in Christ does not give us the liberty to violate any of those commands or to ignore any of those guidelines. God expects us to learn what He has revealed to us in the Bible and to live accordingly. The Apostle Paul wrote:

*“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:1-2*

*“You have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” Ephesians 4:21-24*

### **We should put more emphasis on the positive things God wants us to do rather than simply emphasizing the things we should not do.**

Some believers are so involved in determining what we should not do that their Christian life becomes primarily a matter of “don’ts.” Those who observe these negative “rules” are sometimes regarded as models of Christian living while those who do not observe them are often considered “weaker” Christians or poor examples of how Christians should live. This approach tends to create a very negative view of the Christian faith and may give non-believers a totally wrong view of what it means to be saved by grace.

Among the many positive things we should emphasize in our lives of freedom are prayer, witnessing, helping the poor and others in need, showing love for God and our neighbors, faithfully doing our daily work, living with a thankful heart, and daily demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit. If we focus on these things, we will not only please God, but it will also be much easier for us to stay away from the things we should not do. Paul wrote:

*“Encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. . . . Always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:14-18*

*“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with*

*one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Colossians 3:12-14*

### **We should make sure that our motives are pleasing to the Lord.**

The two fundamental moral commandments which have never changed are that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and that we love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-40). If our conduct does not reflect a love for God and a love for others, God will not be pleased with us. We may do kind things for others and may even sacrifice our time or money or energy for a good cause, but if our actions are not motivated by love, all these things are of little worth in God’s sight. Paul wrote:

*“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” 1 Corinthians 13:1-3*

*“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. . . . For the commandments . . . are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Romans 13:8-10*

### **We should not quickly judge others whose standards may differ from our own.**

There are some things which are clearly wrong in the sight of God and we should never take those things lightly. People who deliberately do things that God has forbidden should be lovingly warned and admonished.

There are other things, however, which are condemned by some believers and approved by others. When we focus too much on our own lists of “do’s and don’ts,” it is very easy to judge people who do not have the same lists that we do! We then begin to evaluate a person’s spirituality (including our own) on the basis of obedience to certain man-made laws. And when we do that, we begin to focus again on works rather than on grace. Therefore, the New Testament warns us not to quickly judge others.

*“Judge not, that you be not judged. . . . Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?” Matthew 7:1-3*

*“Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? . . . Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. . . . So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.” Romans 14:4,10,12*

### **We should continually seek the leading of the Holy Spirit as our guide and as the source of our spiritual growth.**

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Galatia, he warned them about their efforts to make spiritual progress in their lives by relying on their own human efforts to obey the law. He asked:

*“Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” Galatians 3:2-3*

Trying to grow in Christ by observing laws and regulations is a real temptation for many believers. They begin well, trusting the mercy and grace of God for their salvation, but then they focus on laws to help them grow in Christ instead of trusting the indwelling power and work of the Holy Spirit. Paul’s approach is totally different. He wrote:

*“I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. . . . If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.” Galatians 5:16-18*

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.” Galatians 5:22-25*

### **We should not require others to obey a list of rules or laws which are not clearly based upon Biblical teachings.**

There may be some situations where it is helpful to draw up a set of rules which Christians are asked to observe. One of the reasons for that is that many believers conform too quickly to the standards of the world around



them (1 John 2:15, 16.) However, we should be careful not to bind the conscience of people who are “free in Christ” by requiring them to obey a list of rules and laws which are not directly based upon the teachings of the New Testament.

Legalism (an overemphasis on obeying laws) can be a very significant danger for sincere believers who have not learned to appreciate their freedom in Christ. Paul warned against this when he wrote his letter to the Colossians:

*“Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.”* Colossians 2:16-17

*“... do you submit to regulations—’Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch’—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom . . . but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.”* Colossians 2:20-23

Jesus was clearly opposed to a legalistic religion which focused on man-made rules and outward obedience to the laws of God. He strongly opposed and frequently condemned the religious leaders of the Jews who focused on an external obedience to God’s laws and made many new laws of their own. Jesus said:

*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. . . . First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.”* Matthew 23: 25-26 See also Matthew 23:1-28.

**We should seek to serve the needs of others, be examples to them, and build them up in their Christian faith.**

*“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who . . . emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant.”* Philippians 2:3-7

*“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.”* Hebrews 10:24

*“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Colossians 3:12-14*

**As believers who are saved by God’s grace, we should be very careful not to cause “weaker” believers to fall into sin by the things we do or by the choices we make.**

Believers, especially leaders, are constantly being watched by others, both by non-believers and “new believers.” Many younger believers may take their “cue” as to what is good and acceptable by watching an older or mature Christian. And that becomes a matter of great responsibility for the person who is regarded as a good example of how a believer should live.

Mature Christians may be able to do certain things (such as watching certain movies, reading certain books, going certain places, drinking certain beverages, wearing certain clothes) without sinning. However, a weaker brother or sister who is watching them may not be able to do the same things without sinning. Mature Christians, therefore, should never forget the potential influence they have on a younger or weaker believer and should live accordingly.

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth:

*“Take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. . . . if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.”*  
1 Corinthians 8:9-13

A believer’s primary desire should always be to promote the kingdom of God through what he does and not to please himself. There may be many things which are “permissible” for him (see 1 Corinthians 6:12), but they would not be the “best” things for him to do. **God has richly blessed us with His grace so that we may serve Him with joy and gratitude rather than simply pursuing our own interests or satisfying our own desires.**

Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome:

*“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his*

*neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself.” Romans 15:1-3*

Paul rejoiced in the fact that he was “free in Christ,” but he also knew that he was “saved to serve.” He willingly became “all things to all men” in order to win them to Christ. Though he was not “under the law,” he would on occasion “observe” the law in order to be a blessing to others. He was free to eat and drink what he chose, but he willingly gave up both meat and wine if that would help others in their Christian life.

Paul was grateful for his freedom in Christ, but he would not use that freedom simply to make life more comfortable or more “pleasant” for himself. He also readily gave up all the “credits” he once prized as a strict, law-abiding Pharisee so that he might focus on living for Christ (Philippians 3:4-9). Paul was not only **saved** by grace but he also **lived** by grace, free from the condemnation and burden of the law, and free to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in every area of his life. He wrote:

*“Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? . . . Do we not have the right to eat and drink? Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles. . . ? but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 9:1,4,5,12*

*“Though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. . . . To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.” 1 Corinthians 9:19-23*

## **SOME DANGERS OF EMPHASIZING MAN-MADE RULES**

Because of the continual danger of “being conformed to the world,” sincere believers sometimes seek to “protect” themselves and their children by drawing up a set of rules to guide them as they live out their Christian faith.

Man-made rules are often helpful, important, and necessary. However, too much dependence on rules in an effort to please God can be dangerous and even counter-productive. Instead of living by grace and trusting the

leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we replace our freedom in Christ with rules and laws that may bind our conscience and diminish our joy.

Emphasizing man-made rules and laws can easily lead to the following problems.

- (1) By focusing too much on man-made rules, we often tend to measure our holiness by what we do rather than by what Christ has already done for us. We may also worry whether we are “good enough” or “holy enough” or “strict enough.” And when we do that, we tend to forget that **we are saved by grace alone and not by our own works.**
- (2) We tend to judge others who do not conform to our rules. If they don’t do what we think is right in the sight of God, we are inclined to look down on them, criticize them, and possibly regard them as “weak” Christians.
- (3) We may unnecessarily feel very guilty if we do not observe all the rules all the time. A sense of guilt may be helpful if it drives us to prayer and repentance and leads us to a sincere desire to walk more consistently and joyfully in fellowship with the Lord. But guilt is destructive if it causes us to doubt our salvation or to question God’s promises. An inappropriate sense of guilt may also cause us to feel depressed, inferior, and hopeless and take away the joy and confidence we have when we remember that salvation is by grace alone.
- (4) By over-emphasizing man-made rules we may also give non-believers the impression that Christians are primarily defined by their adherence to those rules. Many non-Christians already believe that Christianity is primarily a religion of doing certain “good things” and staying away from certain “bad things.” When we place a heavy emphasis on laws and rules, we may confirm the false impressions that they already have. And when we do that, we not only give them a false understanding of the **Gospel of grace**, but we may also create an unnecessary obstacle for those who are sincerely interested in becoming followers of Jesus.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The Old Testament contains hundreds of laws which God gave to His

people. Jesus has perfectly fulfilled all God's laws in our behalf, so that Christians are now free from the bondage and condemnation of the law and live with a measure of freedom that Old Testament believers did not have.

However, even though believers are no longer living "under the law," they are not free to do anything they please. Rather, they have the freedom to live for Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit so that they increasingly do what pleases Him!

In order to help us live in a way that is pleasing to God, the Bible gives us many specific guidelines and teachings in the New Testament. It is our obligation, as well as our privilege, to study these guidelines so that we may live each day in a way that honors the Lord. Observing these guidelines is not a way to gain salvation but rather a way to **show our gratitude to the Lord for the salvation He has already given us by His grace**. Living according to these guidelines also increases our joy in the Lord and enables us to become a greater blessing to others.

Since the Bible does not give us rules or laws to cover every possible situation that may arise, Christians sometimes differ on how they should deal with moral concerns which are not specifically addressed in the Bible. Some believers choose to draw up a set of man-made laws and insist that all sincere believers should obey them. Others prayerfully seek to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit as they humbly seek to determine how they can best honor God and serve others without focusing overly much on making and obeying laws.

Believers obviously must be very careful not to pursue a way of life which clearly does not please the Lord. Mature Christians should also be very careful not to lead younger Christians into sin by their own exercise of their "freedom in Christ." At the same time, they should also be careful not to develop laws or rules that become unnecessarily burdensome or that destroy believers' joy and freedom in the Lord.

By His glorious grace, God has completely forgiven all our sins and has also granted us the gift of His Holy Spirit so that we increasingly become the kind of people He wants us to be. What a tremendous privilege and blessing it is for us to know and experience that! And when our earthly pilgrimage is over, we shall live forever with our gracious Lord to praise Him for His indescribable mercy and grace.

## LESSON 9 – TEST QUESTIONS

### TRUE OR FALSE

Circle T or F.

1. T F Since we have been saved by grace and live by grace, we no longer have to be concerned in any way about the laws God has given us in the Bible.
2. T F Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament teaches us that we can freely do what is right in our own eyes after we are saved.
3. T F Paul wrote in Ephesians 4 that we should not be conformed to this world but instead we should be transformed by the renewal of our minds.
4. T F If we focus on doing what is right and pleasing in God's sight, it will be easier for us to stay away from things that are not right in God's sight.
5. T F God does not really care what our "motives" are as long as we do not break any of His laws.
6. T F Matthew 7:1-3 teaches that we should be very careful about judging others.
7. T F Jesus judged the Pharisees because their observance of the law was only external and they did not serve God from their hearts.
8. T F We should be careful not to let our "freedom in Christ" lead a weaker believer into sin.
9. T F Paul wrote in Romans 15 that "we who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves."
10. T F Mature Christians may be able to do without sinning some things which would be sinful for "weaker" believers.



## **MULTIPLE CHOICE**

**Choose which of the three statements is correct. Circle A or B or C.**

1. New Testament writers make it very clear that:
  - A. We are saved by grace through faith and not by works.
  - B. We are saved by grace plus works of gratitude and obedience.
  - C. We are saved by good works which are prompted by God's grace.
2. Where does it say in the Bible teach that Christians "are not under law but under grace"?
  - A. 1 Peter 2
  - B. Colossians 3
  - C. Romans 6
3. This Lesson teaches that:
  - A. We should put more emphasis on things God wants us to do rather than continually emphasizing what He does not want us to do.
  - B. Because we are inclined to sin by nature, it is more important to emphasize things we should not do than things God wants us to do.
  - C. Since most of the Ten Commandments are in a negative rather than a positive form, we should emphasize what is wrong in the sight of God.
4. Where do we read the following words in the Bible? "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances."
  - A. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6)
  - B. 1 Thessalonians 5
  - C. Romans 1
6.
  - A. God is more concerned about what we do than why we do it.
  - B. If our actions do not reflect a love for God and a love for others, God will not be pleased with us.
  - C. It's hard enough for us to do good things for others without having to be concerned about our motives for doing them.
6.
  - A. We should constantly seek the leading of the Holy Spirit to help us grow spiritually.
  - B. Our primary source of spiritual growth will be found by carefully and honestly evaluating every decision we make and every deed we do.
  - C. There is very little that we can do to promote our spiritual growth, since spiritual growth is a work of God and does not depend on anything we can do.

7. A. There are some things which we can do without sinning but some others cannot, so we should be very careful not to lead others into sin by what we do.
- B. We do not ever have to give up anything which is not sinful simply because some people could possibly be led astray by it.
- C. The Bible does not deal with this matter, so each one of us can do whatever we sincerely think is best without being overly concerned about it.
8. A. Man-made rules (rules which are not specifically given in the Bible) will never be helpful in our desire to live in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.
- B. Man-made rules can be helpful in certain situations but we must be careful not to depend on them as a primary source of our spiritual growth.
- C. Paul was never concerned about any rules or guidelines which were not clearly based on the written Scriptures.
9. Where in the New Testament do we read that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control”?
- A. Colossians 3
- B. Galatians 5
- C. Hebrews 10
10. A. God never promised that we will make much progress in spiritual growth as long as we live in this sinful world.
- B. We should not set our expectations for holiness too high, since that will usually lead to frustration and discouragement rather than to joy and thanksgiving.
- C. By His grace, God has not only forgiven our sins, but He has also given us the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we can increasingly become the kind of people He wants us to be.





## LESSON 9 – ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Write out two New Testament passages which teach that Christians are “free from the law.”  
A.  
  
B.
2. Why do Christians not have to obey the ceremonial laws in the Old Testament (for example, laws regarding worship, sacrifices, and personal “cleansing”)?
3. Complete this statement from 1 Peter 2:16: “Live as people who are free, \_\_\_\_\_.”
4. Write out two New Testament passages which teach that we should be careful not to misuse our “freedom from the law.”  
A.  
  
B.
5. Fill in the blanks in these sentences from Romans 12:1-2: “I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a \_\_\_\_\_, holy and \_\_\_\_\_ to God, which is your \_\_\_\_\_. Do not be conformed to \_\_\_\_\_, but be transformed by the renewal of your \_\_\_\_\_.”
6. The Bible mentions many things we should not do. It also teaches us many things we should do. List, with Scripture references, five specific things the Bible teaches us we should do.  
A.  
B.  
C.  
D.  
E.

7. Complete this sentence from Colossians 3:17: "Whatever you do, in word or deed, \_\_\_\_\_."
8. Why are our motives so important in doing what we do? Write out a passage in the New Testament which emphasizes the importance of our motives.
9. According to Romans 13:8-10, what is the "debt" we owe one another?
10. What does Jesus teach about judging one another in Matthew 7:3-5?
11. Does Matthew 7:5-3 teach that we should never warn or admonish someone who is clearly violating God's standards? Please explain your answer.
12. What are some possible dangers of focusing too much on man-made laws?
13. Complete this sentence from Romans 14:13: "Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather \_\_\_\_\_."
14. Why did Jesus condemn the Pharisees and teachers of the law so severely?
15. Summarize briefly what Paul teaches in Galatians 3:2-4.
16. What are some of the "desires of the flesh" mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21?
17. Since Christians are not "under the law," why do we have to be concerned about "sinful desires and temptations?"
18. According to Galatians 5:16, how can we win a personal victory over temptations to gratify the "desires of the flesh"?
19. What does 1 John 2:15-16 teach us?
20. What nine things are included in the "fruit of the Spirit" listed in Galatians 5:22-23?

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. If sincere Christians cannot agree on what they believe God wants them to do, what should they do?
2. In Philippians 2:3 Paul teaches: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” What do you think it means to count others more significant than ourselves?
3. In general, do you think it is easier to do what we should do or to stay away from things we should not do. Please explain your answer.
4. Evaluate the following statement: “It would be much easier to live by strict laws that cover every situation than to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, because then we would know for sure that we are doing exactly what God wants us to do.”
5. How would you respond to the person who made the following statement? “When I read what God requires of us in the New Testament (for example, the Sermon on the Mount, Ephesians 4-6, Colossians 3, and other passages), I know in my heart that I can never live the way God wants me to live. Sometimes I just feel like giving up. ”



# THE WONDER AND POWER OF GRACE

## **Lesson Ten**

### BY GRACE ALONE

#### **Introduction**

People who read the Bible over and over again may take some of its stories of God's grace for granted. They may have read these stories so often that they are no longer awed by them, surprised by them, or inspired by them. Others, who read these stories for the first time, may find them wonderfully encouraging and inspiring, enabling them to carry on with confidence and joy even under the most difficult circumstances.

This final Lesson focuses on some of the wonderful stories of God's marvelous grace in the Bible and especially in the New Testament. Whether you already are familiar with these stories or whether you will be reading them for the first time, ask the Lord to open your mind and your heart to see the glorious wonder of His grace and enable you to respond to His grace with trust and gratitude and obedience.

#### **GOD OFTEN SURPRISES US WITH HIS GRACE**

Already in the very first chapter of the New Testament, we encounter several surprises of God's special grace. As we read about the ancestors of Jesus (from Abraham to Jesus), we notice that there are only four Old Testament women listed: Tamar (Matthew 1:3), Rahab (1:5), Ruth (1:5), and the wife of Uriah (1:6). What is so amazing about this is that none of these four women seemed to "belong" in the list of the ancestors of the holy and perfect Jesus. Tamar became the mother of a son by her father-in-law. Rahab was a resident of the pagan city of Jericho that God had condemned to destruction. Ruth was from the land of Moab, a country that

was an enemy of the people of God. And the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba) conceived a child with David while she was married to someone else.

The New Testament does not take lightly the sins and weaknesses of Jesus' ancestors, but it does demonstrate from the very beginning that God's work of redemption is **a work of grace**. We should never regard our sins as insignificant, but we should always remember that in spite of our sins, we are never beyond the reach of God's grace or beyond His ability to use us in His service.

## **GOD FORGIVES US OVER AND OVER AGAIN**

Most of us probably ask God over and over again to forgive us for our failures and sins. Some of us may even have gone beyond *asking* God for forgiveness and simply *assume* that He will continue to forgive us. But why should a holy and righteous God continue to forgive us when we often commit the same sins over and over again? Why should He forgive us when we break our promises to stay away from thinking or saying or doing things that we know are wrong?

The simple answer to that is: ***God forgives us because of His wonderful grace!***

In the Old Testament we read again and again of the terrible failures and repeated sins of the people of Israel. But we also read about God's wonderful grace for His sinful people as He repeatedly forgave their sins and renewed His promises to them.

## **NEW TESTAMENT STORIES OF GRACE**

In the New Testament we also read about the mercy and grace of Jesus for people who were totally undeserving of them. Two of those were women who experienced Jesus' grace in remarkable ways.

One was a non-Jewish woman (referred to simply as "a Samaritan woman") who had a terrible reputation, was frequently married, and often rejected. She came alone to a well to get water for herself and her family, coming at a time when she probably thought that no one else would be there. **But Jesus was there!** He quietly talked to this "foreigner" even though she was a "despised" Samaritan woman and He was a Jewish man. Jesus showed her that He knew all the details about her sinful past, but He graciously offered her "living water" that would become a "spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman was so grateful for Jesus' demonstration of grace that she immediately shared her good news about Jesus with others in her town. Many of them went out to meet Jesus and urged Him to stay with them for two days. As a result of Jesus' visit and the radical change in the sinful woman's life, many came to believe in Jesus and said, "***We know that this is indeed the Savior of the world***" (John 4:1-42).

On another occasion, a woman who was caught in the act of adultery was taken to Jesus by some Jewish authorities. They boldly reminded Jesus of the Old Testament law that required that adulterers should be stoned to death. Then they challenged Jesus for His response.

Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. When the leaders continued to challenge Him, Jesus stood up and said, "*Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.*" He then again began to write on the ground. One by one the accusers left the scene without saying anything. When everyone left, Jesus stood up and said to her: "*Has no one condemned you?*" When she said, "No one, Lord," Jesus replied, "*Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more*" (John 8:1-11).

The religious leaders of Jesus' day knew a lot about the teachings of the law, but they seemed to know very little about grace—even though the Old Testament contained many wonderful stories of God's forgiving grace. Jesus certainly did not approve of the things these two women had done, but neither did He condemn them. Rather, He clearly demonstrated to them (and to others) **the wonder and power of God's grace**.

## **GOD FORGIVES AND FORGETS**

God's grace goes even farther than simply forgiving. God also "forgets" what we have done or what we have failed to do! In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father did not even mention any of the sinful things his son had done. Later he may have found a good time to discuss those things, but not when his son first came back home! The son was truly sorry for what he had done, and the father was genuinely grateful for his son's repentance and return. So he didn't even mention where his son had been or what he had done.

God obviously cannot forget our sins and failures in the sense that he does not "remember" them. But He does forget them in the sense that He will not continue to hold our sins against us or continue to remind

us of them or continue to punish us for them. Only when we are not truly sorry for our sins or when we no longer trust in Jesus as our Savior do we go beyond the reach of God's grace.

In Hebrews 8:12 we read these wonderful words of God: *"I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more"* (Hebrews 8:12). And, in Hebrews 10:17, we read God's promise: *"I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."*

This **wonderful message of grace** was already proclaimed in one of the Old Testament Psalms where we read: *"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. . . . As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us"* (Psalm 103:8, 12).

And in Micah 7:19 we read: *"You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."* And then, as one writer commented, God puts up a sign that says: *"No fishing here!"*

In most religions, people have to earn salvation by obeying laws, making prescribed confessions, providing offerings and gifts, or afflicting their own bodies in some way. The God of the Bible grants **forgiveness as a gift of grace**. *And then He forgets what we have done!*

Someone might respond to this wonder-ful truth by asking, "But doesn't the Bible teach that on the Day of Judgment we will have to give an account of everything we have ever said or done? And doesn't the Bible teach that on that day "books" will be opened and we will be judged according to what is written in those books? (See, for example, Matthew 12:36-37; Romans 2:6; Romans 14:12; 1 Corinthians 3:10-14; 1 Peter 4:5; 1 John 2:12; Revelation 20:12.)

The answer to those questions is a definite *Yes*. The Bible does teach that there will be a final judgment and that our words and deeds will be judged by God. It also teaches that there will be rewards or punishment according to how we have lived.

How, then, can the Bible teach that "God forgets" our sins and **remembers them no more?**

God DOES graciously forgive our sins and, when they are forgiven, we may be absolutely sure that our place in heaven is secure. However, our sins may at times have very negative consequences on this earth.

Just as loving parents may “forgive” their children for wrong things they have done, but still punish them in one way or another, so God may also punish us for some sinful things we have done, even though He has forgiven us.

*One clear example of that is found in the life of King David. When David sinned grievously against God and later repented, God forgave him. But God also punished him! God sent the prophet Nathan to David who said: “God has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed [adultery and murder] you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die” (2 Samuel 12:13). Many other negative things would also take place in David’s family because of his sin. (See 2 Samuel 12:7-14.)*

God’s forgiveness of our sins is wonderful and gracious, but His forgiveness does not minimize the significance of our sins or remove all the possible consequences of those sins. However, when our sins are humbly confessed and truly forgiven by God’s wonderful grace, they will not separate us from the precious and glorious gift of living forever with great joy in the presence of our Savior Jesus Christ—no matter how serious our sins may have been. In that sense God forgives AND forgets and will remember our sins no more.

## **IN HIS GRACE GOD OFTEN USES UNWORTHY PERSONS IN HIS SERVICE**

Because of our weaknesses and failures and sins, we may sometimes feel that we can never be used by God in any significant way. But in His grace, God frequently chooses “unworthy” people to serve Him in a very special way. That was true already in Bible times and has continued to be true throughout history.

In Old Testament times God chose Moses, a murderer, to lead the people of Israel out of slavery and to write the first five books of the Old Testament. God chose David, a man of many failures, to be a key leader of His people and the recipient of many of His special promises and blessings. God chose Aaron, a man who made some golden calves to “help” the Israelites in their worship of God, to be the first High Priest among the people of Israel.

In New Testament times Jesus chose some unlikely people to be among His twelve disciples. The Holy Spirit also chose some “surprising” people



to write some of the books of the New Testament or to receive a special commission from the Lord.

**Matthew**, who wrote the first of the Gospel accounts in the New Testament, was chosen to be one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. However, before he became a disciple and a Gospel writer, Matthew was a tax collector for the Romans, pursuing a profession despised by the Jews (Matthew 9:9 and 10:3).

**Mark**, who wrote the second Gospel account in the New Testament, had deserted Paul when they were serving together on their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25 and 15:36-39).

**Luke**, the writer of the third Gospel account and also the book of Acts, was a Gentile and not a member of God's covenant people, the Israelites.

**John**, the author of five books in the New Testament, is sometimes referred to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 19:26; 21:17, 20). However, John and his brother James are at one point referred to as "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). They also deeply offended the other disciples when they asked Jesus for special positions of honor in His kingdom (Mark 10:35-44).

**Peter**, the writer of two New Testament epistles, boasted to the other disciples that he was willing to die for Jesus even if all the other disciples would desert Him. However, within a few hours after his boasting, Peter publicly denied Jesus and loudly proclaimed that he didn't even know who Jesus was (Mark 14:29-31; 66-72).

**Paul** wrote more "books" of the New Testament than anyone else. However, before he became a believer, he was a self-righteous Pharisee who boasted of his obedience to the Old Testament laws. He was proud of his heritage, proud of his obedience to the law, and proud of his Pharisaic lifestyle. He hated Jesus and persecuted Jesus' followers (Philippians 3:4-8; Acts 7:57-8:1).

However, *by the grace of God*, Paul became a strong and powerful believer who was used by God to bring many people, both Jews and Gentiles, to saving faith in Jesus. (Read the story of Paul's conversion in Acts 9:1-28.) After his conversion, he never forgot **the wonder and power of God's grace**. In his New Testament writings, he referred to "grace" two times as frequently as all other New Testament writers combined! He wrote:

*“Formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy . . . and **the grace of our Lord overflowed for me** . . . I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost [of sinners], Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.”*

1 Timothy 1:13-16

**Mary Magdalene**, the first person to see Jesus after His resurrection, was a woman with a very unusual background. At one time she was possessed by seven demons (Luke 8:2) and may also have been a prostitute (though there is no definite proof of that). Mary, along with a group of other women, helped to meet the needs of Jesus and His disciples as they went about during their ministry (Luke 8:3). After Jesus arose from the grave, He commissioned Mary to go to His disciples and tell them what she had seen and heard.

All of these “unworthy” and “unlikely” persons, along with many others, were not only **saved by grace** but were also **chosen by grace** to serve their Lord in some very special way.

## **THE WONDER OF GOD’S GRACE**

God’s words of grace and His demonstrations of grace during Bible times went far beyond everything that people deserved and often far beyond anything they could have expected. Read and meditate on the following passages to help you understand the unfathomable **wonder** of His grace.

God said to Abraham: *“For the sake of ten [righteous people] I will not destroy [the city of Sodom].”* Genesis 18:32 32

God said to Moses concerning Himself: *“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”* Exodus 34:6-7

God said to Hosea: *“Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods.”* Hosea 3:1

God said to Isaiah concerning the people of Israel: *“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”* Isaiah 1:18

God said to Jeremiah, “*Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem . . . to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth, that I may pardon her (Jerusalem).*” Jeremiah 5:1

Paul wrote: “*Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.*” Romans 5:20

These passages demonstrate God’s willingness to bless and forgive people even when there seemed to be only a small beginning in turning to God in faith, repentance and humility.

## **JESUS’ GRACE OF COMPASSION**

Jesus was well aware of people’s need for forgiveness and salvation, but He was also fully aware of their physical and material needs. Throughout the years of His public ministry, He demonstrated His grace by comforting, healing, restoring and helping many who were in special need. Among the many persons who were blessed by Jesus’ compassionate grace were the following:

**Bartimaeus** was a blind man who survived by begging. When Jesus saw him sitting by the side of the road, He recognized a need which no one else was able to meet, and He graciously healed him (Mark 10:46-52).

**An unnamed man with leprosy**, ostracized by everyone, came to Jesus and begged Him on his knees for healing. “*Moved with pity,*” Jesus, reached out His hand and touched him—something no one else would ever do—and healed him (Mark 1:40-42).

**A widow who had lost her only son** was on her way to bury him when she met Jesus. Jesus stopped the funeral procession, spoke kindly to the woman, and, in His grace, raised her son back to life (Luke 7:11-17).

**An unnamed woman** who had wrestled for years with a difficult and challenging illness silently came up to Jesus while He was surrounded by a crowd of people. She thought: “*If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.*” In faith, she touched His cloak and she was immediately healed . . . and Jesus sent her on her way in peace (Mark 5:25-34).

These and many other stories of healing, restoration, kindness, and love remind us that Jesus is not only a Savior from sin, but **in His grace** He often

saves people from weaknesses, infirmities, hardships and other challenges as well. As we read these stories of what Jesus did in the past, we are reminded that, **in His grace**, He continues to heal, strengthen, comfort, guide and restore people today.

*By reading all these stories and many other stories in the Bible, it is very obvious that all the blessings we receive from the Lord are blessings of grace and are not earned. Even if we receive a special gift from God because of our obedience or service, that, too, is a gift of grace, since every good thing we do is not only imperfect, but is made possible only because of God's grace in our lives.*  
(See Ephesians 2:10.)

## **OUR RESPONSE TO THE GRACE OF GOD**

Although God is wonderfully gracious, He obviously does not take away all our weaknesses in this life or prevent all our failures or heal all our diseases. Many times we are perplexed and uncertain as to why our prayers are not answered in the way we would choose or why our problems are not resolved in a way that we desire. However, when we meditate on God's incredible grace in loving us and forgiving us and preparing an eternal home of glory for us, we may continue to put our confidence and trust in God's grace as we look forward to the glorious time when we will be with Him forever. And as we await that blessed time, we may continue to meditate on and sing about the incredible and wonder-full grace of our loving heavenly Father.

Over the years, Christian song writers have celebrated the **magnificent and matchless grace of God**. Some of these writers experienced God's special grace personally while living deeply in sin or during times of special need, while others celebrated the special grace of God that He showed to others. Among the many familiar songs that magnify **God's amazing grace** are the following:

*"Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt. . .  
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within,  
Grace that is greater than all our sin!"*

Julia Johnston

*“I know not why God’s wondrous grace  
to me He has made known,  
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love  
redeemed me for His own.”*

Daniel Whittle

*“Amazing grace—how sweet the sound  
that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found,  
was blind but now I see.*

*‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
and grace my fears relieved.  
How precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed!”*

John Newton

*“Wonderful grace of Jesus,  
Greater than all my sin!  
How shall my tongue describe it?  
Where shall its praise begin?  
Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free,  
For the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.”*

Haldor Lillenas

## **CONCLUSION**

In His matchless mercy God does not give us the punishment we do deserve, and in His infinite grace He continues to show us kindness, love, forgiveness, and so much more that we do not deserve.

As John 1:14-16 teaches us: *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . . For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”*

Grace does not require perfect obedience or perfect understanding in order for us to receive or enjoy God’s gracious blessings. He knows our weaknesses and our failures . . . and He loves us still!

*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.” 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17*



## LESSON 10 – TEST QUESTIONS

### TRUE OR FALSE

Circle T or F.

1. T F All the women who are listed in Matthew 1 as ancestors of Jesus were known for their piety and holiness.
2. T F In Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son, both the father and the older brother showed love and forgiveness to the sinful son even though he did not deserve to be forgiven.
3. T F Moses once murdered someone and had to flee because of what he had done.
4. T F Before Paul was converted he was very careful to obey all the laws of God as he understood them.
5. T F King David was considered to be “a man after God's own heart,” even though he was guilty of some very serious sins.
6. T F God will graciously forgive our sins but He will not forgive us if we continue to commit the same sin over and over.
7. T F God is willing to forgive all our sins, but He cannot and will not use anyone in His service who has ever had a bad reputation.
8. T F God said to Abraham, “If there are only five righteous people in the wicked city of Sodom, I will not destroy it.”
9. T F In the New Testament, the apostle John referred to “grace” in his writings more often than any other writer.
10. T F Paul wrote in the New Testament, “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

## **MULTIPLE CHOICE**

**Choose which of the three statements is correct. Circle A or B or C.**

1. A. If God forgives our sins, we will never be punished for them in any way.  
B. God may sometimes punish us for our sins, even though He forgives them.  
C. If God forgives our sins, He will also make sure that our sins will never have any negative consequences in our lives.
2. A. The "Samaritan woman" who met Jesus was very grateful for what He did for her and she joyfully shared her joy and enthusiasm with others in her town.  
B. The Samaritan woman who met Jesus was happy for what happened to her, but because of her background, she did not want others to know about it.  
C. The Samaritan woman was not accepted by the people in her home town because she had such a sinful background that the people doubted that she had really been changed.
3. A. By being kind to the Samaritan woman and the woman accused of adultery, Jesus teaches us that these sins are really not as significant as some people think they are.  
B. Jesus' treatment of the Samaritan woman and the woman accused of adultery teaches us that God is very gracious and willing to forgive and use people with "sinful" backgrounds.  
C. Jesus' treatment of these two women are exceptional situations and teach us nothing about God's dealings with other sinners.
4. A. The Bible teaches that people whose sins have been forgiven will not have to face God on the final "Judgment"  
B. The Bible teaches that there will be "appropriate" rewards and punishments for all people on the final Judgment Day.  
C. No one will know for sure whether he/she is saved or lost until the Judgment Day.
5. A. Each of the four Gospel writers were chosen by God for their ministry because of their very positive reputation among the "common people" in Israel.  
B. All four of the Gospel writers were Jews who knew and understood the Old Testament and the Jewish way of life so they could tell the story of Jesus more accurately.  
C. God's choice of the four Gospel writers did not depend on their reputations or professions.

6. Who recorded these beautiful words in the Bible? “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”
- A. Paul
  - B. Peter
  - C. Moses
7. Which of the following Bible verses was not written by the Apostle Paul?
- A. “The Lord does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.”
  - B. “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.”
  - C. “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.”
8. Which of the following statements is not found in the Old Testament.
- A. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”
  - B. “Where sin increased grace abounded all the more.”
  - C. “So far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us.”
9. Where in the Bible do we read these words: “You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea”?
- A. Micah 7
  - B. Psalm 103
  - C. Hebrews 8
10. Who said, “We know that this is indeed the Savior of the world”?
- A. The eleven disciples of Jesus—after Jesus arose from the grave.
  - B. The people in Jesus’ home town of Nazareth—after Jesus preached there.
  - C. The people in Samaria—after the Samaritan woman was saved.





## LESSON 10 – ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. A. How many women are included in the list of Jesus' ancestors in Matthew 1?  
B. Why is it surprising that these women are included in the list?
2. In Jesus' parable of The Prodigal Son, how did the father treat his wayward son when he returned home?
3. A. How did the older son in the parable treat his brother when he came back home?  
B. Why did he treat his brother this way?
4. Write out two Bible passages that teach that God will not "remember" our sins.  
A.  
  
B.
5. Complete this sentence from Psalm 103:12:  
". . . as far as the east is from the west \_\_\_\_\_"  
\_\_\_\_\_.
6. What does Micah 7:19 teach about our sins?
7. Choose which one of the following statements is correct.  
A. If God truly forgives our sins, we will never be punished for them in any way.  
B. God will sometimes punish us for our sins, even if He forgives them.  
C. God makes sure that our sins will never have any negative consequences.
8. Is the following statement true or false? Because King David was a very special servant of God, he was never punished in any way for any of his sins.
9. A. What special "work" did God call Moses to do?  
B. Why might Moses be considered "unworthy" for this special task?
10. A. What special "work" did Peter do?  
B. Why might Peter be considered "unworthy" for this work?
11. A. What special ministry did the Lord entrust to Paul?  
B. Why might Paul be considered "unworthy" for this ministry?

12. A. Who was (most likely) the first person to see Jesus after His resurrection?  
B. What was special about her background?  
C. What “ministry” did Jesus entrust to her?
13. Give two examples of Jesus’ compassion for people with a special need.  
A.  
  
B.
14. How did Jesus deal with the woman who was caught in the act of adultery (John 8)?
15. Why didn’t Jesus agree to punish the woman taken in adultery? Select A or B or C.  
A. Jesus did not think adultery was worthy of the death penalty, so He didn’t want people to punish the woman who was brought to Him.  
B. Jesus regarded adultery as a sin, but in His grace He was willing to forgive the guilty woman.  
C. Jesus probably felt that the Jewish authorities did not have sufficient proof that the woman was really guilty.
16. Would you agree or disagree with the statement that “Every good thing we do is made possible only because of God’s grace”? Please give the reason for your answer.
17. Fill in the blanks in these two statements:  
A. God said to Abraham: “If I find \_\_\_\_\_ righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will not destroy it.”  
B. God said to Jeremiah: “If you can find \_\_\_\_\_ who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city.”
18. Is the following statement true or false?  
“God loves us in spite of our weaknesses sins and failures.”
19. Most Christians know John 3:16 very well. Another passage that Christians should know is John 1:16. Write out (and then memorize) this verse.
20. Fill in the blanks in this quotation from 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17:  
“May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through \_\_\_\_\_, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.”

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. A. Out of all the Bible passages which are quoted in this Lesson, write out three of them which are most special to you personally.  
B. Indicate why these passages are special to you.
2. This Lesson emphasizes the wonder and power of God's grace. When you realize how gracious God is, does this cause you to take sin more lightly, or does it help you stay away from sin because you want to live a life of gratitude for all He has done for you? Please explain your answer.
3. A. In this Lesson we have read about God's grace given to many different individuals in Bible times. Which three persons stand out in your own mind as special recipients of God's grace?  
B. Why did you choose these three people?
4. What would you say to someone who says, "I am not concerned about my sins and failures since Paul wrote that grace increases when sin increases"? (See Romans 5:20.)
5. The Bible teaches us very clearly that God "forgives and forgets" our sins, but it also teaches us that there will be a Judgment Day for all of us. How would you explain this?







