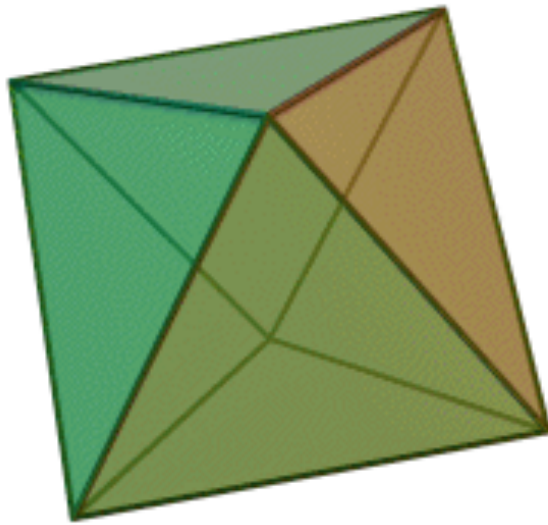


**What if I follow Jesus Christ?**  
**What are the benefits?**  
**What are the costs?**



**Weekly Discussion Topics:**

1. **God's Gift and Christ's Sacrifice**
2. **Legal Standing and Life-Changing**
3. **God's Grace: Faces and Hard Edges**
4. **Chosen by God**
5. **Forgiven by God**
6. **Accepted by God**
7. **Adopted by God**
8. **Made Alive by God**
9. **Delivered by God**
10. **Transformed by God**
11. **Restored by God**
12. **Following Christ is "Now, but not Yet"**

## Benefits and Costs



### Preview

The Bible teaches us that eternal life, an everlasting relationship with God, are the gifts of God's grace. You cannot earn God's favor. You cannot be good enough, or worthy enough for God's love. God offers eternal riches through his Son, the LORD Jesus Christ.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

The gospel is the message God's gift to the world in Jesus Christ. If you trust in Christ, you will receive life's most valuable treasure.

Any person who decides to follow Christ will receive the greatest gift of all!

### Grace = God's Gift of Love in Christ

The Bible teaches God's grace. God demonstrates goodness and love to us. Grace is God's unearned and undeserved love. The Bible says that God has made us to honor and reflect his honor and dignity. But we have all turned away from God. We serve ourselves and try to seek our own honor. But even though we dishonor God, the LORD turns his face toward us in love. God wants to bring us back. God sent his one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to save us from ourselves, to forgive all of our sins, and to rescue us from our enemies. That is the meaning of God's grace.

If salvation is God's GIFT of love, then we cannot earn God's favor by our own good works. We can only boast (praise) God for his grace, his gift.

### The Expense = the Sacrifice of Christ

Salvation is offered to all people as God's gift. But God's gift is expensive, not cheap. The Bible teaches that God sent his eternal Son in human form. Jesus lived the life that we should live. Jesus died the death that we deserve. One Bible scholar says, "... the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God ... salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man ... puts himself where only God deserves to be. God sacrifices himself ... and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims (privileges) which belong to God alone. God accepts penalties which belong to man alone." (John Stott) God's love for us is free. But eternal life was bought for us by the death of Christ on the cross. Jesus substitutes himself for us, his death for our death.

### Faith = the way we accept God's Gift

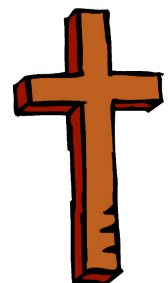
Salvation is by grace. You cannot earn God's gift of love by doing good. God's gift was purchased by Christ's work. You do not deserve God's gift. Salvation was bought by Christ, by his death on the cross. You are invited to accept eternal life as the gift of God's love. Faith is like your empty hands. You bring nothing to God. You receive salvation as God's gift of love.

## Notes:

The gospel: the "good news" tells what God has done to rescue us from sin and death. The bad news is what we do. The good news is what God has done in history—sending his Son to save our world.



God's grace: God's gift of love and kindness. Grace cannot be earned, or bought, by what we do. No one is worthy of God's love.



## Notes:

boast: to brag about yourself, or praise your own accomplishments. To speak with pride about who you are, about what you have, or about what you have done for yourself.

righteous: to do what is right, to be in a right relationship with God.

mercy: Grace and mercy both show God's love. God's grace is his love for us, even though we are guilty. God's mercy is his love for us, even though we are needy.

washing, rebirth, and renewal: The Holy Spirit cleanses, gives new birth, and spiritual life to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

justified: To be placed into a right relationship with God. To have no fault before God, who is the perfect Judge.

heirs: those who will inherit God's kingdom because Jesus shares the kingdom of heaven with all who believe in him.

atoning sacrifice: God's Son never did any wrong. But, on the cross, Jesus took our place and accepted punishment for our sins.

## Week 1: God's Gift and Christ's Sacrifice

### Benefits and Costs

#### Bible Passages



Here are some important parts of the Bible that teach about God's grace:

Ephesians 2:8-9: "By grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast."

Titus 3:4-5: "When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he (God) saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of (God's) mercy. (God) saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit..."

1 Peter 3:18: "Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."

1 John 4:10: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that (God) loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

#### Discuss



Ephesians 2:8-9:

1. What saves us? What are we saved "through"?
2. Which of these - grace and faith - is the source of salvation? Which of these is the way that you can receive the gift of God?
3. Do you work to receive a gift? What is different between God's gift (grace) and your works?
4. If you could save yourself, what might you do? If only God can save you, who will get all the honor?

Titus 3:4-5:

5. What does not save us? What does save us?
6. What works does the Holy Spirit do in our lives to save us?

1 Peter 3:18:

7. What did Christ do? What did Jesus die for? Who did Jesus die for?
8. What word describes Christ? How are we described?
9. How was Jesus a substitute? What was the purpose of Jesus' death?

1 John 4:10:

10. Whose love is the source of salvation and eternal life with God?
11. What did God send his Son to do for us?

#### Chapter Summary



All of the benefits of God's love are offered to us because of Jesus Christ. Salvation is God's gift. We can accept God's gift by faith, not by works.

This gift of God is expensive. Jesus Christ never sinned. Jesus was completely righteous. But we are not righteous. So God sent his Son to take our place and our sins. When Jesus died on the cross, he paid for our sins and our eternal life.

## Benefits and Costs

### Notes:



### Review

We have learned that: 1) All of God's benefits are God's gifts. We cannot earn or be worthy of a right and personal relationship with God. Salvation is by God's grace, not by what we accomplish. 2) God's benefits were purchased by Jesus Christ for us. Jesus lived and died in our place. 3) You receive God's gift when you open your empty hands of faith. With joyful thanks to God, you accept God's gift in Christ.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

The blessings of salvation come in two forms: legal benefits and life-changing benefits. This week, we want to learn about these.

What is the difference between legal and life-changing benefits?

Why are both kinds of God's benefits spiritually and eternally important?

### Legal Benefits

The law tells us whether we are right or wrong. The law guarantees the rights and privileges of citizens. The law also defines our responsibilities. When we break a law, we "trespass." We step over God's boundaries and limits. The law also tells us what penalties we must pay. We are "debtors." The legal benefits of salvation are related to God's Law, not to human laws. God's moral Law is contained in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 5:6-21). Jesus summarized God's Law: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; Love your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27)

All of us fall short of the standards of God's Law. We do not love God or love our neighbors as we should. We cannot have a right relationship with God based on what we do. Only God can make us right! Our relationship is based on Jesus' perfect righteousness, not our own imperfect obedience.

### Life-Transforming Benefits

God gives legal benefits to change where we stand (legally) before God. And God gives us life-changing benefits to change our life and character. When you accept Christ as Lord and Savior, you become "right with God." But there is much more! You also receive the Holy Spirit in your life.

As a Christian hymn says, Jesus Christ provides the "double-cure" for sin. Jesus Christ's perfect life and sacrificial death saves us from sin's GUILT. Jesus' gift of the Holy Spirit saves us from sin's POWER in our daily lives.

Important: the legal benefits are what Jesus did FOR US once-for-all, by his life and death for us. The transforming benefits are what Jesus does IN US every day, by the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Legal Benefits: related to God's Law. What God did through Jesus Christ to make us right with God and righteous in God's sight.

Life-Changing Benefits: the blessings of salvation that we experience in our own lives.

## Notes:

**righteousness:** a right relationship with God, based on obeying God's Law. Since we cannot perfectly obey God's Law, God only accepts us because of Jesus' perfect righteousness.

**redemption:** a Redeemer is a 1) family member who 2) pays your debts to buy your freedom. So, God's Son became your Older Brother - to pay the price to free you from sin and death.

**justified:** for you to be declared and counted righteous and not-guilty in God's sight.

**just, justifier:** God is the perfectly just Judge of all the earth. God is not a corrupt Judge. God judges all people by the same perfect standard. Since only God can declare you "not guilty" - God is the justifier.

**sacrifice of atonement:** the death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the final sacrifice for sin. Christ's death is the atonement or the payment for sins. Christ pays for the sins of others. Christ suffered the punishment that we deserve.

## Benefits and Costs

### Bible Passages



Romans 3:21-26: "21 Now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by (God's) grace through the redemption that comes by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented (Christ) as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in (Jesus') blood. 26 (God) did this to demonstrate his justice ... to be just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus."

Ephesians 2:4-5: "4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved."

### Discuss



1. Are there any words or ideas that you do not understand?
2. Which of these two Bible passages describe legal benefits?
3. What "legal" words are used in Romans 3? (See Notes)
4. Romans 3:21: How can you have a righteousness that is "apart from law"?
5. Romans 3:22: How does the gift of righteousness come to us from God?
6. Romans 3:23: What is God's evaluation of all humans?
7. Use the Notes to review the meanings righteousness, redemption, justify, and atonement. In your own words: How do these terms describe Jesus' work?
8. Ephesians 2:4: What is God's character and attitude toward us?
9. Ephesians 2:5: How is God's life-changing work described in this verse?

Legal Benefits God's grace <i>for us</i>	Life-Changing Benefits God's grace <i>in us</i>
When you trust in Christ, God declares that you are, once and for all: 1) not guilty, 2) righteous in God's sight (with no more debts or obligations) and 3) adopted as God's son or daughter in Christ.	God gives to all who believe in Christ a new holy nature. You will begin to grow more Christ-like (through all of your life) by 1) dying to selfishness and sin, and 2) living for God's glory and for the good of others.

## Chapter Summary



God's grace in Jesus Christ includes both LEGAL and TRANSFORMING benefits. The legal benefits give us standing before God and secure our right relationship. All the legal benefits were purchased for us once-for-all by Christ's life and death. Christ's work for us in history is complete and perfect. We can never lose our legal standing with God.

The life-changing benefits make us more godly and Christ-like in our character. These benefits come into our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. But God's work in us by the Holy Spirit is never completed in this life - only in heaven.

## Benefits and Costs



### Review

We have learned that all of God's benefits are gifts to us. We are not worthy and cannot earn a relationship with God. Salvation comes to us by God's grace, bought by Jesus Christ's life and death for us. We receive God's gifts with empty hands of faith. We can bring nothing. But we accept everything. God's benefits include: 1) a new legal standing, and 2) a life-changing relationship with God.

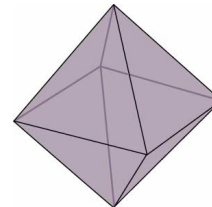


### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

Everyone who accepts Jesus Christ and follows him receives the most expensive treasure. The gift of eternal life is like a beautiful diamond. Christians are called Christ's bride. Christ's gift to us brings a new legal status and also a new living relationship with God.

### The "Facets" and "Edges" of God's Grace

When you find God's kingdom, you discover the greatest treasure. To accept God's love in Christ is not your way to get to a "higher goal." Grace is supremely attractive. There is nothing better in life than a relationship with God.



We will take a closer look at eight "faces" of God's "multi-faceted" grace - the dimensions of God's gift. You can turn and inspect a cut diamond. Each "facet" reflects beauty in a different way. When you discover God's gift of love, you will say, "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

A diamond is a treasure. But a diamond's sharp edges can cut hard things. Jesus was honest about what it will cost you to be a Christian. Jesus paid the price for this priceless gift. You cannot earn or pay for God's love. But you must "re-evaluate" everything in your life compared to God's kingdom.

### Notes:

Christ's bride: When a man commits his life to a woman, he sacrifices his independence. He does not just give her a ring. He gives his life for her. In the same way, God's Son sacrificed his life to give us a new legal status and a new living relationship with God.

indescribable: The value of God's gift in Christ, life in God's kingdom, cannot be described or calculated. Eternal life is beyond human value.

Our Problem	Christ's Promise	Your Cost
Ashamed, Alienated	Chosen by God	You do not make yourself special
Afraid, Condemned	Forgiven by God	You must admit you are wrong
Disapproved, Rejected	Accepted by God	You may be rejected by people
Alone, Lonely	Adopted by God	Your identity is in God's family
Weakness, Death	New Life from God	You must die to self to live for God
Bondage, Slavery	Delivered by God	You must let go of self-help
Impure, Polluted	Transformed by God	You must grow spiritually
Pain, Hopelessness	Restored by God	A perfect life is always "not yet"



## Benefits and Costs

### Notes:

kingdom of heaven: God's gift in Christ is eternal life in God's kingdom. As soon as you believe in Christ, you become a citizen of God's kingdom. And, one day, you will go to heaven. God's kingdom is wherever God is the supreme King - in your heart now, or in heaven forever.

follow: To become a follower of Jesus Christ is to become his disciple, to study his teaching and to learn his ways. In English, a follower is a disciple. In Chinese, a follower is a 门徒 mén tú

### Bible Passages



Matthew 13:44-46: "44 The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."

Mark 1:19-20: "19 When (Jesus) had gone a little farther, (Jesus) saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay (Jesus) called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him."

Mark 10:28-30: "28 Peter said to (Jesus), 'We have left everything to follow you!' 29 'I tell you the truth,' Jesus replied, 'no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.'"

### Discuss



1. Are there any words or ideas that you do not understand?
2. Matthew 13:44: What does Jesus say God's kingdom is like?
3. Why is the kingdom of heaven "hidden" from many people?
4. What did the man do when he "found" the hidden treasure? How did he feel?
5. Matthew 13:45-46: What does Jesus say that God's kingdom is like?
6. How is "looking for fine pearls" different than "discovering treasure"? Why are both of these pictures good illustrations of finding God's kingdom?
7. What did it "cost" the men who found the treasure and found the pearl?
8. Mark 1:19-20: What treasure did James and John find? What did it cost the two brothers who followed Jesus?
9. Mark 10:28: What did it "cost" Peter to follow Jesus?
10. Mark 10:29-30: What does Jesus promise to everyone who make sacrifices to become part of God's kingdom?

### Chapter Summary

Does Jesus mean that your possessions, business, or your family have no value? No! These things are some of God's gifts to you. But nothing can compare to your becoming part of God's kingdom and experiencing Jesus Christ's unfailing and everlasting love.



According to Jesus, when you discover God's kingdom, you find what is ultimate in life (treasure in a field). When you find life's greatest treasure, you can let go of other things (sold all he had). Salvation is more attractive and more valuable than anything else in life.

So you can joyfully make sacrifices of lesser things for the gift of God's kingdom.

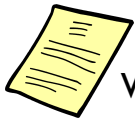
## Benefits and Costs



### Review

We've learned that all God's benefits come to us by God's grace. We are not worthy to earn or deserve God's blessings. The

"faces" or "facets" of God's grace in Jesus Christ are like a diamond. We discover that God's kingdom is the greatest treasure in our lives. But, like the hard edges of a diamond, there are costs if you follow Christ.



**Teaching** (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

What does it mean to be "chosen by God" - to belong to God?

### Christians were Loved before Time

Did you choose to be born? Did you receive your parents' love only after you served and honored them? No! Your life was not your choice. Your parents decided to give you life. Then, they loved and provided for you.

God's love in Christ began in eternity. Before time, God chose to love all who decide to follow Jesus Christ. Is that a contradiction? "God chose you - and you decide." Those two statements are a paradox. But both are true and only seem to cancel out. In a similar way, God's grace includes mystery. God the Father chose to love you before time began - because of Christ. Then, in your life time, you can choose to follow Christ, who first loved you!

### This Paradox is Practical

Why are you here? To get an advanced degree? God may have higher plans - to seek you! No one can argue with you and force you to follow Christ. No one can "sell" you faith in Christ. Faith is God's gift.

If you decide to follow Jesus Christ, you can never boast. We sometimes talk about "seeking God." But the LORD is actually the one who seeks us.

You may ask, "What is the reason that God chose me?" You will never find a reason in your own life. Grace is God's undeserved and unearned love. If you ask, "For what purpose did God choose me?" Then the answer is, "I must honor and love God, and serve others as Christ's ambassador."

### You Don't Make Yourself Special!

If God the Father chose you to believe in Christ, you belong to God's family. Your highest priority must be to honor your Father in heaven. We don't want to be ashamed or alienated. We want to "belong" and not lose face with other people. We worry about our reputations. As an international, you know it is hard to live some place, but not belong. How does it feel to live as a foreigner? You can make friends. But you are not "at home" here. God chooses people to live as foreigners and his ambassadors this world.

## Notes:

paradox: two statements that seem to contradict each other - but do not. For example, is light a particle or a wave?

Reason and purpose: The reason a person becomes a Christian is God's love in Christ. Nothing in your life can attract God to love you.

But the purpose of a Christian's life is to show God's love to other people. Every person who has been loved by God should love others.



## Notes:

holy: The traditional Chinese character for the word holy combines three characters.

Ear Mouth

聖

King

People who are loved by God and chosen in Jesus Christ are people who listen to God and speak as the ambassadors of God's kingdom.

appointed: assigned. Just as a government appoints ambassadors to a foreign country, Christ "puts you in the world" to show and tell about God's kingdom.

bear fruit: To produce evidence that shows you are alive in Jesus Christ. How do you know when a tree is alive? When it bears fruit! Spiritual fruit includes *your changed life*: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22) and also *changed lives* - people you influence.

brothers: People who are loved and chosen by God are adopted into God's family. In the Bible, they are called "brothers" or "brothers and sisters" in Christ.

gospel: the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ to save people from sin and death.

deep conviction: to have faith that is sure, certain, and convinced of the truth that you have been taught.

## Benefits and Costs

### Bible Passages



Deuteronomy 7:6-8: "6 You (the people of Israel) are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. 7 The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples 8 ... it was because the LORD loved you..."

John 15:16: (Jesus said) "16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last."

2 Timothy 1:9-10: "9 (God) has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus..."

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5: "4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction."

### Discuss



1. Deuteronomy 7:6: How did God make the people of Israel his own people?
2. Deuteronomy 7:6: How does God describe those who belong to him? (Look for two descriptions). What does this show about God's attitude to his people?
3. Deuteronomy 7:7-8: Why did God not choose Israel? Why did God choose Israel?
4. John 15:16: Jesus' followers decided to follow him. But what did Jesus tell them?
5. John 15:16: For what purpose did Jesus choose and appoint his followers?
6. 2 Timothy 1:9: What did God do? To what life does God call his people?
7. 2 Timothy 1:9: Are we God's people because of what we do?
8. 2 Timothy 1:9: When did God first give his people the grace of Christ?
9. 1 Thessalonians 1:4: What two words describe God's actions toward his people?
10. 1 Thessalonians 1:5: What evidence shows that these people were chosen and loved by God?

### Chapter Summary

Over 4,000 years ago, God appeared to a man named Abram. Abram was not a worshiper of the one true God. So why did God choose this man? There was no reason in Abram. But God had a purpose for Abram. God gave Abram a new name, Abraham. And God said to him, "All nations will be blessed through you."



Followers of Christ are God's chosen people, members of God's family and God's people. Christians become foreigners in this world. Heaven is their true home. They are "God's chosen people ... strangers in the world, scattered throughout (the world)." (1 Peter 1:1) God's people must also be Jesus Christ's ambassadors in this world. What is the benefit? You are a citizen of heaven. The cost? You become a foreigner - even in your own nation!

## Benefits and Costs



### Review

As if we were looking at a beautiful diamond, we are looking at the different “faces” or “facets” of God’s grace. God’s gift to us was purchased by Jesus Christ. This gift is the greatest of all treasures. But, like the hard edges of a diamond, there are costs if you follow Christ. For example, Christians are chosen out of all nations on the earth. This is a special honor! But we must live as ambassadors of God’s kingdom.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

Today we look at God’s forgiveness - if we admit that we are wrong.

### Our Problem: We Fear Judgment

What if someone “judges” you? It seems unfair when your friend, brother, or a co-worker judges you. You may say, “Why do you act as my judge?” When you judge another person, you claim authority over her or him.

A true judge is someone “over you.” Your employer judges your work. Your advisor judges your research. A court of law judges your guilt or innocence. Bible Scholar J. I. Packer describes a good and just judge: 1) A judge has authority. 2) A judge loves what is good and right, enforcing the law the same way for all. He does not accept bribes or give favors to some people. 3) A judge has the wisdom to separate the truth from false accusations. And 4) A judge has power to declare guilt or innocence, and enforce judgment. But we see great injustices in our world. Poor people are exploited. Evil people are not punished. The Bible says that only God is the perfect Judge.

### God’s Promise: Forgiveness without Shame

If God forgives us, we don’t need to be ashamed (lose face) before people. Example: Children with harsh, strict, and unforgiving parents may never feel their parents’ approval. The same thing can happen when you realize you cannot live up to God’s standards. You may always fear God’s disapproval. But the Bible promises God’s forgiveness. This is the second facet of grace. If Jesus Christ lived for you and died in your place, you can be forgiven. God sent his Son in human form - to live a perfectly righteous human life. Then, Jesus took the place of sinners. God accepts us only because his Son, on a cross, was judged for our sins. Jesus took our place and made himself the substitute for sinners.

### The Cost: We Must Confess that we are Wrong

Nothing can compare to the “price” that Jesus paid to offer us forgiveness. But what will it “cost” you, to accept God’s gift? You cannot claim you are “right” in the face of other people. Instead, you must confess that you are wrong in God’s sight - before God’s face. Only God is righteous and just.

## Notes:

bribe: to pay someone (usually a corrupt judge or bad police officer) to do you a favor, or to not punish you for what you have done.

accusation: to claim that someone has done wrong. To bring charges against another person.

forgiveness: in the Bible, this means you no longer owe the judge anything. There is no judgment, because the punishment for your wrong-doing has been paid.

confess: to “say with” - or to “agree with” God that you are wrong. And to agree with God that only Jesus is righteous, your Savior from sin.

## Notes:

righteous: to be right or honorable before the face of God and man.  
wicked: not righteous. Someone who does wrong against God and man.

laid bare: to be exposed - naked or uncovered.

condemn, condemned, condemnation: to be "guilty as charged" - to deserve punishment, because you did what was wrong.

verdict: After hearing all the evidence, a judge declares the verdict: you are either "Guilty" or "Not Guilty."

redeemed: Christ is our Redeemer, because he 1) became our Brother, 2) paid our debts to God's law - to give us freedom, forgiveness.

curse, cursed: To be put under God's (not man's) punishment.

confess: to "say with" - To agree with God that you are wrong. And to agree with God that only Jesus is righteous, your Savior from sin.

faithful: to keep all of your promises.

just: to only make right judgments. To not apply the law in different ways to different people. To be incorruptible in judgment.

## Week 5: Forgiven by God Benefits and Costs

### Bible Passages



Matthew 7:1-2: (Jesus said) <sup>1</sup> "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged..."

Genesis 18:23,25: <sup>23</sup> Abraham approached (God) and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ... <sup>25</sup> Far be it from you to do such a thing ... treating the righteous and the wicked alike ... Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Hebrews 4:13: <sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of (God) to whom we must give account.

John 3:17-18: <sup>17</sup> God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

Galatians 3:13: <sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

1 John 1:8-10: <sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, (God) is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we make (God) out to be a liar and (God's) word has no place in our lives.

### Discuss



1. Matthew 7:1-2: Why does Jesus say, "Don't judge other people?" If you make yourself the judge over others, who will judge you?
2. Genesis 18:23,25: God is prepared to judge and punish a wicked city (Sodom). What does Abraham pray? How does Abraham describe God?
3. Hebrews 4:13: Why is God the only perfect Judge of all the world?
4. John 3:17-18: Why did God send his Son Jesus Christ into the world?
5. John 3:18: What does God promise to all who believe in Jesus Christ?
6. If God did not send his Son to condemn the world, then what condemns people? What is the verdict that is declared by the world's Judge?
7. Galatians 3:13: How did Christ redeem us? How did Jesus take our place?
8. 1 John 1:8-10: What does it mean to confess in a court, in front of a judge? What does it mean to confess to God?
9. Why is God both faithful and just to forgive those who confess their sins?

### Chapter Summary



God, who is the Judge of all the world, promises to give forgiveness to all who confess that: 1) Jesus lived for me. He lived the perfectly honorable life that I cannot live. 2) Jesus died for me. On the cross, Jesus suffered God's curse - the punishment and shame that my sins deserve. Jesus paid for God's gift of forgiveness. But I must be willing to accept the social "cost" - to confess that I am wrong, that only Jesus is righteous, and that I need God's forgiveness.

## Benefits and Costs

### Notes:



### Review

We are viewing the “faces” or “facets” of God’s grace. God’s gift to you, purchased by Jesus Christ, is the greatest treasure.

Each facet of God’s grace fulfills one of your deepest needs in life. Last week, we learned that God will forgive you because of Jesus Christ. But God also offers acceptance and favor - though others may reject you.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

We want more than forgiveness. We want to be approved and accepted.

### Our Problem: Disapproval and Rejection

It is good to not offend others. If you have no charge against you, you are blameless. But if you do wrong, you need forgiveness. But you want more. You want approval and favor. A criminal can be pardoned and forgiven. But do you want him to be your friend? Christ gives more than forgiveness. Jesus will also include you in his kingdom, and accept you as God’s friend. Westerners think of “guilt and duty.” Asians may feel “honor and shame.” When you dishonor or disgrace parents, teachers, and rulers, you lose face. When you turn your face away from God, you are not only guilty. You are also covered with shame. You lose your face-to-face relationship with God. And you lose friendship with other people. We run from disapproving faces. We don’t want to feel ashamed. Instead, we want to “look good” to others.

### God’s Promise: You can be Accepted through Christ

The Bible makes this promise to all who believe, trust, and follow Jesus: “I sought the LORD ... he answered me ... he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to [the LORD] are radiant [their faces shine with joy]. Their faces are never covered with shame.” (Psalm 34:4-5)

radiant: to shine, to reflect God’s glory, to overflow with joy.

Most religions say, “If you live a moral life or practice religious ceremonies, God will accept you.” Christianity is different. You cannot earn acceptance. Only Jesus lived with perfect honor. God’s face and favor shined on Jesus. Jesus offers you his perfect record as a gift. This is the good news: because Jesus was rejected, sinful people like us can be accepted. Jesus did not just die for our guilt. Jesus also lived a perfectly honorable, obedient life for us.

### The Cost: You may be Rejected by Others

Because Jesus was rejected, you can be accepted by God. Jesus suffered the shame that we deserve. But now you can receive the honor God’s Son deserves. Did Jesus take the shameful place for you? Then you can sit in Jesus Christ’s place - the place of God’s favor! But acceptance from God can lead to rejection from people - even from your own family. “Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.” (Psalm 27:10)

## Notes:

### A voice from heaven:

From before time began, Christ was God's much loved Son. When Jesus began his career, God (like a proud Father) spoke to honor his Son. Later, three of Jesus' followers saw Christ's future glory. God the Father again spoke proudly of Jesus Christ. God's Son always lived to honor, obey, glorify, and please God, his Father in heaven.

forsaken: To abandon, leave alone. There came a terrible day when God the Father hid his face from his Son. Instead of light, darkness covered Jesus as he hung on a cross. God turned away from Jesus. This was the only time Jesus did not call God his "Father." God's perfectly obedient Son took our shame and our sin. God's Son was rejected so that we can be accepted. Jesus put on our ugly sin in God's sight, so that we can be clothed with his honor.

Luke 15: This is the most famous story that Jesus told. Jesus illustrates how God the Father will restore you to a place of favor and honor - if you return to God and admit that you have turned away from God's love.

squandered, squander: to waste, lose, to spend wastefully or foolishly.

## Week 6: Accepted by God Benefits and Costs

### Bible Passages



Genesis 2:25: (Before people turned from God): The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Genesis 3:7-10: (After people turned from God) <sup>7</sup> The eyes of (the man and his wife) were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. <sup>8</sup> Then the man and his wife ... hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup> (The man) answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Matthew 3:17: A voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Mark 15:33-34: <sup>33</sup> At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. <sup>34</sup> And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice ... "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Luke 15:11-13,18-24: <sup>11</sup> There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate." So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living ...

(After the young man made his life a mess): <sup>17</sup> When (the son) came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'" ... <sup>20</sup> But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him ... <sup>22</sup> the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

### Discuss

1. Genesis 2:25: Describe life before people turned from God.
2. Genesis 3:7-10: What happens to people when they turn away from God's face and favor?
3. Matthew 3:17, Mark 15:33-34: Describe God's relationship to Jesus Christ - at the beginning of his career and on the cross.
4. In your culture, what would you communicate to your father if you asked for your inheritance before your father died?
5. If you lost your family's property, what would happen to your family's honor?
6. Why is it significant that the father ran to this son to embrace and kiss him?
7. The rebellious son asks for forgiveness and offers to become his father's slave. But how does his Father treat him?



### Chapter Summary

God's Son came to earth to bring us back to God. Through Jesus, you can be restored to the Father's favor, honor, and acceptance. But, if you return to God, you may face criticism from other people.





## Benefits and Costs



### Review

We are looking at the many “faces” or “facets” of God’s grace. God’s grace offers you both legal and life-changing benefits.

These are gifts bought for you by Christ. Each facet of God’s grace fulfills a deep need in your life. If you become a Christian, you are chosen, forgiven, and accepted. This week we learn that you are also adopted.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

It is good to be accepted as God’s friend. You are not only forgiven. But it is even better to be legally adopted as a child of God the Father.

### Our Problem: We are Orphans in the World

Christ solves our guilt and shame problems. God forgives our sins, when we admit that we are wrong. God accepts us, even if we are rejected by people. It is good to be forgiven, not condemned, and to be accepted, not rejected. Jesus does even more for us. Jesus said: “I will not leave you as orphans.”

An orphan’s life is tragic. If your parents die, or abandon you, where do you find support, supervision, and care? An orphan is alone in the world! Without a parent’s love, an orphan worries about food and clothing. Who can the orphan trust? The fear is, “I am all alone. No one cares about me!” An orphan thinks, “I must do this by myself!” Without a parent to guide or provide, an orphan may act self-confident (“I am a hero!”), or defeated (“I am a victim.”) The orphan may worry, “Who am I? I have no family!”

### God’s Promise: Adopted by God the Father through Christ

If God adopts you, you receive a secure place in Christ’s “forever family.” The one true Son becomes your older Brother. Christ pays all your debts (“redeems” you from your sins). God becomes your Father. You receive “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you.” By God’s choice and unearned favor, you call God “Abba, 爸爸, Bà ba.” God the Father will love you with the same love he has for his true Son.

Remember: adoption is one of the legal benefits of God’s grace. Because of Jesus Christ, you become part of God’s family. You receive both benefits and responsibilities. You become an heir of God’s kingdom in heaven. Adopted children share an inheritance in God’s kingdom. Jesus Christ has paid for all your legal guarantees. Your inheritance is secured by Christ.

### The Cost: You identify with God’s family

Grace brings obligations! Children adopted into an important family will want to honor their new family. This is true of Christians. Though I was not a natural child, I will want to honor God the Father’s goals and values. And I will treat my fellow Christians as my “brothers and sisters” in Christ.

## Notes:

adopted: In most world cultures, parents who cannot have natural children, or who have lost a child, can adopt an orphan into their family.

Old Testament Hebrews did not “adopt.” God gave laws to make sure there were no orphans and no loss of family name or property. When a parent died, a close relative acted as a “redeemer.” An uncle or aunt paid the family’s debts and took the job to care for the children.

The first Christians wanted to explain their message to people who did not know the Jewish customs. It sounded strange to call Jesus their “older brother-redeemer.” (who pays our debts and secures our future inheritance).

Roman adoption laws were a better way to illustrate God’s love. Rome was ruled by powerful families who wanted sons to inherit the family property and family name. But large families were expensive. Daughters had to be provided wedding gifts. So Romans restricted the number of children. If a family did not produce a male heir, or if a natural son was not worthy, adoption was a solution.

Adopted children were in a privileged position. Natural born sons could be disowned. But if a father chose to legally adopt a son, that son’s family status was secure forever. Legal adoption could not be reversed.



## Notes:

receive: to accept or to welcome someone into your life as a friend.

gave the right: to be given the legal status of a true child of God.

lavish: to give graciously and with generosity.

testifies: to give evidence by testimony, to confirm. The Holy Spirit confirms to our human spirit that we have become God's children. This is spiritual assurance in our hearts that we belong to Christ and God's family.

heirs, co-heirs: An heir inherits the Father's property. Since Jesus Christ is the true and eternal Son of God, he is the true Heir and King of God's Kingdom. But, because Christ makes us God's adopted children, we become co-heirs or "joint heirs" with Christ. By God's grace, Christ will share with us the kingdom of heaven.

## Week 7: Adopted by God Benefits and Costs

### Bible Passages



John 1:10-12: <sup>10</sup> [Christ] was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> [Christ] came to that which was his own, but his own (people) did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who received [Christ], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...

1 John 3:1-2: <sup>1</sup> How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know [Christ]. <sup>2</sup> Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when [Christ] appears, we shall be like [Christ], for we shall see [Christ] as he is.

Romans 8:15-17: <sup>15</sup> You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship [adoption as a son or daughter]. And by [the Holy Spirit] we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in [Christ's] sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

### Discuss

1. John 1:10: What three things does this Bible verse say about Jesus Christ's relationship to the world?
2. John 1:11: What happened to Jesus Christ when he came to his own people, the first century Jewish nation?
3. John 1:12: If you receive and believe in Christ, what does God's Son give you?
4. 1 John 3:1: What privilege does God's love give to us?
5. 1 John 3:2: NOW, at the present time, what do Christians become?
6. 1 John 3:2: About the FUTURE, what can we say? What can't we say?
7. Romans 8:15: What emotion in this verse describes the feeling of an orphan - who has no parent or family? In what ways is an orphan "a slave to fear?"
8. Romans 8:15: What can a Christian say to God?
9. Romans 8:16: How does the Holy Spirit give assurance that we are adopted?
10. Romans 8:17: What future benefit may adopted children expect to receive? What current experience must they also expect?



### Chapter Summary



Adoption gives you a new legal status, not a new nature. That is another benefit if you believe in Jesus Christ (more next week).

Can you "adopt yourself"? No! Just as a parent chooses to adopt a child, God the Father chooses to love us. We do not earn God's love. God adopts us because of Jesus Christ.

According to the Bible, God gives us certain "rights and privileges" through adoption. We receive a new family relationship with God. God becomes our heavenly Father. God's true Son becomes our older Brother. "Christian" is like a new family name. And Jesus Christ shares God's kingdom of heaven with us. We inherit eternal life with God.

## Benefits and Costs



### Review

We continue to look at the “faces” or “facets” of God’s grace.

There are legal benefits: forgiveness, acceptance, and adoption.

Today, we look at a life-giving benefit. You can receive new spiritual life by the power of Jesus Christ’s resurrection. Jesus was raised from the dead. Christians are raised to a new spiritual and eternal life with God.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

All humans have turned away from God. Both humans and the earth experience weakness, disease, decay, and death. But Christ gives new life.

### Our Problem: Weakness and Death

God is the Lord and Giver of all forms of life - physical, spiritual, and eternal. When we turn away from God, we cut ourselves off from the source of life and health. The Bible says that this happened when humans first disobeyed and dishonored God. As a result, our lives are infected by sinful desires and are disabled by weaknesses. We experience both physical and moral decay. Sin produces a kind of entropy: we fall apart and break down. And we die. When you turn away from God, you are cut off from the source of all life.

### God’s Promise: New Life from Christ, by the Holy Spirit

Jesus taught that we all need to receive new life. This new life is God’s gift. We receive new life by God’s renewing power. God the Father gives the gift of new life. God the Son purchased the gift of new life. And God the Holy Spirit breathes new life into you. By God’s work, you will personally experience and receive a new spiritual life from God.

People often say that they were “born” into a religion - or into no religion. They claim to be Jews, Moslems, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, or Atheists from birth. But no one is automatically or “naturally” related to God. All people must be “born again” - spiritually - to enter into God’s kingdom.

### The Cost: you must die to a self-centered life and live for God

We do not have the natural ability to give ourselves new spiritual life. But God gives new life from the dead. God the Father raised Jesus from death. God also gives new life in Christ. All who believe in Jesus will receive a new spiritual life now. The Holy Spirit comes into your life. One day, Christians will be resurrected - both physically and spiritually - to ever-lasting life in God’s eternal kingdom.

Christians must look at life from a different perspective than other people. Believers in Christ do not only live for this life or to make themselves famous. Christians are commanded to die to selfish motives and goals. Followers of Jesus must honor God’s glory and live for the good of other people.

## Notes:

legal benefits: God’s gifts that make you “right” with God and that change the legal status of your relationship with God.

life-changing benefits: God’s gifts that bring changes in your life experience with God.

Notice how adoption and new life are related: Adoption will give you a legal relationship to God as your Father. But new birth gives you God’s “DNA” - a new nature that will seek to love and honor God.

entropy: the disorder or randomness in a system.

born again: you may hear people say that they are “born again.” On the next page, we look at a Bible passage with these words. These words “born again” can also be translated “born from above.” Jesus gives you a new spiritual life by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

Because Jesus Christ was raised (resurrected) from the dead, we can be regenerated (receive a new life from spiritual death.)

## Notes:

The pronouns you and your in these verses refer to God.

vast and spacious: to be big in range or in scope. Plenty of room, large.

teeming: full, abundant, productive.

Sovereign: the King. God the LORD is the King above all kings.

Prophecy: When a man like Ezekiel - who is a prophet or a messenger of God - speaks God's Word. This does not always mean to predict the future.

born again: this can also be translated born from above, to receive a new life from God in heaven.

regard, regarded: to look at.

worldly: to have your field of vision restricted to what you can see with your physical eyes in this world.

## Week 8: New Life from God Benefits and Costs

### Bible Passages



Psalms 104:24-30: <sup>24</sup> How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. <sup>25</sup> There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number — living things both large and small ...

<sup>27</sup> These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. <sup>28</sup> When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. <sup>29</sup> When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. <sup>30</sup> When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

From Ezekiel 37: <sup>1</sup> The Lord ... set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones ...

<sup>2</sup> I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry ...

<sup>3</sup> [God] asked me, "Can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know." <sup>4</sup> Then [God] said to me, "Prophecy to these bones ... 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!' ... [And God said] <sup>5</sup> 'I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life ... <sup>13</sup> Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.

John 3:1-10: <sup>1</sup> "Now there was a man ... named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus at night and said, "... we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." <sup>3</sup> In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

<sup>4</sup> "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"

2 Corinthians 5:16-17: So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

### Discuss



1. Psalm 104:24-25: In what ways are all living things described? Verses 25-28: Who is the one who maintains all forms of life?
2. Psalm 104:29,30: What causes death? What brings life?
3. Ezekiel 37:1-2: What did God show to this man (who was named Ezekiel)? Verse 3: What did God ask Ezekiel about the bones he saw?
4. Ezekiel 37:4: When Ezekiel spoke God's word to the bones, what did God do?
5. John 3:1-2: Who was the man Nicodemus? What did he think about Jesus?
6. John 3:3: What do you need to see (or, to understand) God's kingdom?
7. John 3:6: How are the origins of "flesh" and "spirit" different?
8. 2 Corinthians 5:16-17: How do Christians look at life? Why?

### Chapter Summary

God is the Author of life. Jesus Christ gives a new life with God. Your new spiritual life begins when the Holy Spirit comes to live inside you. Those who are "born again" have a new perspective on life.



## Benefits and Costs

### Notes:



### Review

Our purpose is to look at the "faces" or "facets" of God's grace.

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A summary term for all of these benefits is "salvation." Let's examine what it means to be "saved," to be "delivered" by Jesus Christ.



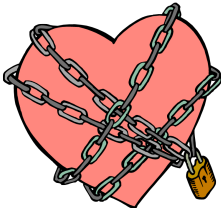
### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

The Bible describes Jesus Christ as the "Savior." God saves because he is motivated by grace, mercy, and love. God's gift is called "salvation."

God's Savior was named Jesus. God's Son came into the world to save.

### Our Problem: Sin Makes us Slaves

To "save" is to rescue from harm, protect from danger, or to preserve from loss. If you are "saved," you are kept safe. For example, a lifeguard rescues you when you are over your head. You are drowning in the sea. You do not have the personal strength to swim to safety. You cannot save yourself. You need to be rescued. You need a savior!



The Bible teaches that our lives are in a dangerous condition. Our hearts are trapped in self-centered behavior. We want to stay in control. Sin deceives us into thinking that we can be our own god. The Bible teaches that only God can rescue us from sin, evil, and death. We have become slaves to sin. We need someone to rescue us from our sin, our selfishness, and from death.

### God's Promise: Delivered by Christ

As Savior, the LORD comes from outside of our lives to set us free. The LORD saved the people of Israel from their slavery in Egypt. The Israelites could not save themselves. And we do not have enough ability to save ourselves. The Bible teaches that, "Salvation comes from the LORD." (Jonah 2:9) Only God can save us from sin, evil, and death. Only Jesus can break the chains on our hearts. God reaches down to us from heaven. The Bible has many stories of God's salvation. But all of the Bible's "rescue missions" point to God's greatest rescue: salvation through Jesus Christ.

### The Cost: you must not believe in "Self-Help"

God does not "help us" to save ourselves. The Bible teaches that we cannot save ourselves. We must stop trusting in our own resources or ability to save ourselves. Instead of being a slave to sin, we can become servants of God! "You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Jesus: God told Joseph and Mary: "You are to give him the name *Jesus*, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21). God's eternal Son became the man *Jesus* - to save us from sin and death.

## Notes:

misery: pain, suffering, and hardships.

Sovereign: royal king.

dominion: a domain or a place of rule. Here: the rule of sin, the kingdom of darkness.

redemption: to be set free from your debt or your slavery by the payment of a price.

descendants: children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, etc. born into your family.

enslaved: conquered or forced into captivity or slavery.

malice: a desire to harm someone or a desire to see someone suffer.

appeared: to shine on us, to be revealed to us.

rebirth and renewal: the life-changing benefits of salvation. When you are "born again," you will have God's transforming power - the Holy Spirit - in your life.

## Week 9: Delivered by God Benefits and Costs

### Bible Passages



Exodus 3:7-8: <sup>7</sup> The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave [masters], and I am concerned about their suffering. <sup>8</sup> So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land ..."

Psalms 68:19-20: <sup>19</sup> Praise be to the LORD, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens. <sup>20</sup> Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death.

Colossians 1:13-14: <sup>13</sup> [God] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

John 8:33-36: The religious leaders of Israel did not believe in Jesus. So they said, <sup>33</sup> "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup> Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. <sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

#### How is human nature described?

Titus 3:3-6: <sup>3</sup> At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. <sup>4</sup> But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> [God] saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of [God's] mercy. [God] saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom [God] poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior..."

#### How is God's nature described?

### Discuss



1. Exodus 3:7: What did the LORD see? What did God hear?
2. Exodus 3:8: From what bad place did God save them? What did the LORD promise to give to them?
3. Psalm 68:19-20: How is God described? From what things does God save?
4. Colossians 1:13-14: Out of what bad place (like "Egypt") does God rescue us? Into what good place (like a "good and spacious land") does God bring us?
5. John 8:33: Why did the religious leaders think that they were "free"?
6. John 8:34: How does Jesus define slavery?
7. John 8:35-36: Who can receive a permanent place in a family? Who can give you the freedom to be in God's family and kingdom?
8. Titus 3:3: What things can control your life and make you a slave?
9. Titus 3:4: How did God "appear"?
10. Titus 3:5-6: Who saves us? Can you do good things for your own salvation? What does the Holy Spirit do to save someone?

### Chapter Summary

We do not have enough resources or abilities to rescue ourselves. God must come down to save us from sin and death. Jesus Christ is our Savior.





## Benefits and Costs



### Review

We have looked at many "faces" or the "facets" of God's grace.

We have examined Christ's gift of salvation from different angles.

All of Christ's benefits may be described as "salvation by grace."

We receive God's gift by faith. But salvation is not just one moment in time.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

By God's grace, we can receive a new legal standing and a new nature.

God forgives and adopts believers in Christ. God also gives a new birth by the Holy Spirit. God's legal benefits (adoption, forgiveness) are final and once-for-all. When Jesus makes God your Father, you cannot be disowned, rejected, or condemned. You are accepted as you are - because of Jesus. But "God loves you too much to let you stay the way you are." After Christ gives you a new life, you will begin a life-long process of spiritual growth.

### Our Problem: Polluted Human Nature

From the moment we are conceived, our human nature has some impurities and moral defects. From birth, we are "free" to follow our personal desires. But we do not naturally follow God. We are "free" to do what we want. But are we really free? We do not have the ability to do things we should do. We do not naturally desire to honor or serve God. We love and honor ourselves. Like a river that is polluted by human waste, our hearts are not pure.



### God's Promise: Transformed by Christ



Christ promises a "heart transplant" to everyone who believes in him. Every Christian is connected to the power of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. God's gift of new life begins a process

of spiritual growth. Our sinful nature distorts the image and reflection God's glory in our lives. But, as we grow spiritually, we become more like Christ. Even with your new nature, you will struggle against the old influence of sin. But throughout your life, God's Word and the Holy Spirit will work in you.

### The Cost: To leave sinful ways, and grow in Christ-likeness

Are you God the Father's child? Did Christ die for you? Is the Holy Spirit working in you? If you are truly God's child, you will grow in God's family likeness. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God the Father will help you to become more Christ-like. Spiritual growth is never complete in your life time. But, if you are not growing spiritually, are you really a believer in Christ?

## Notes:

disowned: break a family relationship. If a father puts a dishonorable son out of the family, the father has "disowned" the rebellious son.

condemned: to not only be charged with wrong, but actually judged as guilty and as a person who deserves to be punished.

conceived: formed in the womb of our mother.

want and should: What we want or desire to do may not be the right thing to do. And what we should do, we may not want to do.

distort: sin will twist our good desires and plans. We can even do right things for wrong reasons or wrong motives. For example, we may work hard to honor our own reputation. Sin can twist and deform even our best behaviors.



## Notes:

inclination: tendency.  
Think of a ball on an "inclined plan" (ramp). The ball "tends" to roll down hill. So our hearts and minds are "inclined" to go down into sinful things.

conceived: formed in the womb of our mother.

strives to lay hold: to exert yourself or to spend your energy to search for God.

according to, in accord, in accordance with: to be in sync with, to act in good agreement with, to coincide.

gratify: to fulfill your own desires for something that attracts you.

keeps on sinning: No one can live without sin. Our lives are never free from sin in this life. But, a person who is really a Christian should see God begin to change his or her habits. This verse says that those who live in Christ should not sin habitually, as a regular pattern of life.

## Week 10: Transformed by God Benefits and Costs

### Bible Passages



These Bible passages describe the **PROBLEM** about our human nature:

Genesis 6:5: The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil all the time.

Psalms 51:5: Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Isaiah 64:5-6: <sup>5</sup> All of us have become ... unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags ... <sup>6</sup> No one calls on your [God's] name or strives to lay hold of you [God]; for you [God] have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins.

Matthew 15:19-20: <sup>19</sup> Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. <sup>20</sup> These are what make a man "unclean" ... but eating with unwashed hands does not make him "unclean."

These Bible passages describe how **GOD PROMISES** to change our polluted nature:

Ezekiel 36:26: [The LORD says] "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove ... your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

Romans 8:5: Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the [Holy] Spirit have their minds set on what the [Holy] Spirit desires.

Galatians 5:16: Live by the [Holy] Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

These Bible passages describe what **WE MUST DO** if we become a Christian:

1 John 3:5-6: <sup>5</sup> You know that [Jesus Christ] appeared so that [Jesus Christ] might take away our sins. And in [Christ] is no sin. <sup>6</sup> No one who lives in [Christ] keeps on sinning [as a regular habit and continued lifestyle].

1 John 3:16: This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

### Discuss



1. Genesis 6:5: What did God see about human nature?
2. Psalm 51:5: What does King David say about his own nature?
3. Isaiah 64:5: What does this say about our "good acts"?
4. Isaiah 64:6: What does God do if we do not call on God's Name [seek God]?
5. Matthew 15:19-20: Where does sin come from? Is sin only bad behavior?
6. Ezekiel 36:26: What does God promise to do? What does God remove? What does God give?
7. Romans 8:5: How does our nature influence what we think about? If we want to please God, what should we think about?
8. Galatians 5:16: If we live by the Holy Spirit, what will we NOT do?
9. 1 John 3:5-6: Why did Christ come? How should we respond to Christ's love?
10. 1 John 3:16: What kind of life will reflect Jesus Christ?

### Chapter Summary

Children do not need to be taught how to be selfish. All of us are born with an infection of sin. But God promises to change our hearts. If we have become Christians, we must grow in Christ-like love and holiness.



## Benefits and Costs



### Review

We have looked at the “faces” or “facets” of God’s grace from different angles. Christ gives both legal and life-changing benefits.

You receive some benefits immediately (like acceptance and adoption). Other benefits are a life-long process of spiritual growth (the transforming of your character). This week, we learn that Christians do not receive all of the “full benefits” of God’s grace until they go home to heaven.



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

We face difficulties in our work and problems in our lives. We have many painful experiences. Friends, family, and fellow workers can disappoint us. We can disappoint ourselves. We dream of a better life. We hope for a better world. Should we expect life to get better? Should we hope for a better world?

### Our Problem: Are you idealistic or realistic about life?

An idealist can look past a bad situation, and hope for a better future. Idealists dream of “what life should be.” But an idealist has a problem. An idealist can be disappointed and crushed by hard realities in life.

A pessimist is honest about painful problems in the world today. A pessimist does not dream about a better world. But a pessimist can have a problem. A pessimist may decide that “nothing ever changes.” A pessimistic person may not work for positive changes in society. Pessimists do not hope for real improvements in the world.

An idealist can be simple, child-like, and not have critical judgement. An idealist assumes that people are good and will treat you well. But, after many painful life experiences, idealists can become cynics. Cynics think life is cruel. Cynics think other people will control you, or abuse you, if they can. What about you? Are you more of an idealist, or a realist? Do hope for the best, or expect the worst? Do you look at life like an idealist, or a pessimist?

### God’s Promise: the Gospel of the Kingdom

Jesus Christ announced that he had brought God’s kingdom into the world. Most Jews expected Christ to give Israel victory over other nations. But Jesus did the unexpected. Jesus did not come to destroy, but to heal and to save. Jesus told everyone to repent (turn from) sin. Even the Jews must be washed! Only God makes people clean. And anyone with faith in Jesus Christ can be made clean and forgiven. All the nations can enter God’s kingdom!

### The Cost: give up your false hopes.

Christians are not idealists. People can never make a perfect, healthy world. Christians are not pessimists, because their hope is not in human ability. Christians hope in Jesus Christ, who will restore all things.

## Notes:

idealist: a person who is over-optimistic, a dreamer, a person who is not realistic or practical.

pessimist: a person who always thinks negative things, and expects the worst to happen.

cynic: a person who is a complainer, someone who always criticizes, and who always expects the worst from people.

the Gospel: the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ to save the world.

Israel: the descendants of Jacob, the ancient nations of the Jewish people.

## Notes:

The Coming One: the "One who was to come."  
The Jews knew that God promised to send them the Christ to save them. So, the question, "Are you the Coming One?" is asking "Are you God's promised Savior?"

leprosy: a disease that causes abnormalities of the skin and deforms the body. It was one of the most dreaded diseases in ancient times. Lepers were put outside of the community.

drive out demons: to expel or get rid of evil spirits - the powers of darkness. Jesus turned back the forces of evil and darkness.

prostitutes: women who are "hookers," who sell their bodies to those who want to buy sex.

John the baptizer came to point the Jews to Jesus as their Savior. But most of the people did not believe in John's message. And they did not believe in Jesus as the right way into God's Kingdom.

way of righteousness: The way to have a right relationship with God.

good news: the gospel. The message of what God has done to rescue and save us through Jesus Christ.

repent: when a person turns away from sinful attitudes and actions that dishonor God, and to turn to the LORD for life.

feast: a great banquet, a large party, with a rich meal with many good things to eat.

## Week 11: Restored by God Benefits and Costs

"The hands of a king are the hands of a healer." J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*

### Bible Passages



How does Jesus Christ bring God's kingdom? What can you learn about the kingdom of God from Jesus Christ's actions in these Bible passages?

Matthew 11:3-5: <sup>3</sup> "Are you the [Coming One], or should we expect someone else?" <sup>4</sup> Jesus replied, "Go back and report ... what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor."

Matthew 12:28: (Jesus said to them) "... If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

Matthew 21:31-32: <sup>31</sup> Jesus said (to his countrymen, the Jews) "The tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup> For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did..."

Mark 1:14-15: <sup>14</sup> Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come ... <sup>15</sup> The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Luke 9:11: The crowds ... followed [Jesus]. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

Luke 13:29: <sup>29</sup> People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.

John 18:36: Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest ... But now my kingdom is from another place."

### Discuss



1. Matthew 11:3: What question was Jesus asked?
2. Matthew 11:4-5: What things show that Jesus is God's King?
3. Matthew 12:28: What shows that Jesus brings God's kingdom?
4. Matthew 21:31: What kind of people may enter God's kingdom ahead of a moral and religious person?
5. Matthew 21:32: How can "sinful people" like prostitutes enter God's kingdom?
6. Mark 1:14-15: What does Jesus ask us to do when we hear the good news?
7. Luke 9:11: How did Jesus bring good news in both words and in actions?
8. Luke 13:29: How is God's kingdom described? Who is invited to God's feast?
9. John 18:36: How is God's kingdom different than other kingdoms?
10. John 18:36: How does God's kingdom spread through the world in a way that is different than other kingdoms?

### Chapter Summary



Jesus Christ was God's King. Jesus announced good news about the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ taught God's Word - God's promise of forgiveness, peace, and restored life. Jesus Christ also showed God's mercy and goodness through loving and powerful acts of compassion and healing.

## Benefits and Costs



### Review

For twelve weeks, we have looked at the "faces" or "facets" of God's grace. Jesus Christ gives legal and life-changing benefits.

Some spiritual benefits are immediate, like adoption and new birth. Other benefits come to you through a life-long process of spiritual growth. The "full benefits" of God's grace are not received until a Christian goes home to heaven. So following Jesus Christ on earth is "now, but not yet."



### Teaching (Take turns. Read out loud, to practice your English.)

The Bible teaches that God's kingdom comes to earth in "two stages." First, Jesus Christ came to bring the grace, mercy, power, and good news (gospel) of God's kingdom. Jesus did many signs that show God's healing, forgiving, and life-restoring power. Any person who turns from sin (repents) and believes in Christ (faith), will receive a new life and forgiveness from God. Christ first came to earth to seek, save, and restore our lives to God's kingdom. But we must still live in a world that is broken, painful, disease-filled, and sinful. The world we experience today is not yet what God has planned for the future. The Bible also teaches that Christ will come again in the glory of God's kingdom. So we live between two comings of God's King. First, Jesus Christ comes with grace and mercy. One day, Christ will come with God's glory and judgment. This present time is our "window of opportunity" to repent and believe in Jesus. When Jesus Christ comes again in glory, God's kingdom will be fulfilled and made complete on earth. There will be "a new heaven and a new earth."

### The Challenge: we must wait

We do not like to wait. We want to be perfect, peaceful, and always happy. We want to enjoy every good gift right now, immediately. But followers of Jesus Christ still experience pain and suffering in this life. Christians continue to fail and to sin. Christians still face sickness, suffering, rejection, and death. While Christians wait, they are filled with hope in the promise of God.

### God's Promise: the Hope of Glory

God promises shalom. This word is difficult to translate into any language. English Bibles translate "peace." The Chinese idea of "peace and harmony" is similar. Shalom is the sum total of God's many benefits and blessings.

Two Bible scholars describe God's promise like this. Shalom is "universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight ... the way things ought to be." And, "Shalom is the human being dwelling at peace in all his or her relationships: with God, with self, with fellows, with nature."<sup>1</sup> God's King brings shalom.

## Notes:

grace: God's goodness for guilty people - to forgive their sins.

mercy: God's goodness for suffering people - to show compassion to the weak and powerless.

signs: miracles that point to God's supernatural power to heal, to bring peace, and to restore life. Christ healed the sick, raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, and brought peace in a violent storm.

repent: to realize the wickedness and shame of your sin, and to turn away from it, and to turn back to God's love for new life and forgiveness.

Shalom: a Hebrew word from the Old Testament that sums up God's blessings and benefits. It includes peace with God and harmony with other people and all of nature. It also includes safety, spiritual peace, social harmony, health, and prosperity. When all nations bow to Jesus Christ as God's King, there will be peace on earth and good relations between people.

Those who teach that you can have peace, health, and prosperity NOW, before Jesus returns in glory, are twisting God's promise. Christians are already "new creatures," but the "new creation" is not yet complete until the Day when Jesus Christ comes again in the glory of God's kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Cornelius Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff

## Notes:

lowly: humble, modest, and plain. Not glorious.

upright: right and just.

godly: committed and dedicated to God.

to bear: to carry our sins to the cross as a sin-offering. This was the purpose of Christ's first coming.

bondage: enslaved, to be in slavery.

## Week 12: Following Christ is "Now, but not Yet"

### Benefits and Costs

#### Bible Passages



What blessings do Christians receive NOW? What blessings are NOT YET?

Philippians 3:20-21: <sup>20</sup> Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who, by the power that enables [Christ] to bring everything under [Christ's] control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like [Christ's] glorious body.

Titus 2:11-13: <sup>11</sup> ... the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

<sup>12</sup> [God's grace] teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, <sup>13</sup> while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ...

Hebrews 9:28: <sup>28</sup> ... Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and [Christ] will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Romans 8:18-25: <sup>18</sup> I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God ... <sup>21</sup> the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now ... <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

2 Peter 3:13: According to [God's] promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

#### Discuss



1. Philippians 3:20: What blessing do Christians already possess? What must Christians wait for?
2. Philippians 3:21: What will happen when Jesus Christ returns?
3. Titus 2:11: What has already appeared?
4. Titus 2:12: How does God's grace teach us to live at this time?
5. Titus 2:13: What do Christians wait for?
6. Hebrews 9:28: For what purpose did Christ come the first time? What will Jesus Christ do when he appears a second time?
7. Romans 8:18-22: In these verses, what words describe life in this present time? Describe how the creation (the natural world) waits for the glory to come.
8. Romans 8:24-25: From these verses, what do you learn about hope?
9. 2 Peter 3:13: What do we wait for? What kind of future does God promise?

#### Chapter Summary



Christians live "now, but not yet." Christians are now citizens of God's kingdom. But Christians do not yet live in heaven. All who follow Jesus Christ will grow spiritually. But Christians continue to groan and struggle with sin. Christians are not yet in glory with Christ. Christians have the hope of eternal life. But Christians have not yet arrived at home. God's shalom - God's perfect peace, safety, health, prosperity, and harmony - are still to come, when Christ returns.