



Grace for the weak

The adventures of the sailor Jim

A BIBLE STUDY CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Volker Lamaack

Instructions

Grace For The Weak

GRACE FOR THE WEAK Is a Bible Study Correspondence Course for people who have already accepted Jesus Christ. It is written for those who have received him as their personal Lord and Saviour, who know that they are God's children, but are not satisfied with their Christian life any more.

- Maybe you are disappointed with yourself because of your weakness to resist temptations and you doubt if God still forgives you.
- Maybe your faith is weak and could be compared to a wave on the ocean, driven by the wind.
- Maybe you can't understand why you have to face strong trials.
- Maybe joy and peace that you once experienced in your heart are almost gone. Instead you feel restless, guilty, sad, and without peace.

If you once made a good start with Jesus, but your spiritual life is down now because of sin, then you should go ahead and study this course. You will discover God's solution for your problems. But also when your spiritual life is all right, this book could help to get a deeper understanding about the nature of God's GRACE.

If you are not yet sure that Jesus is already in your heart that your sins are forgiven that you have eternal life, you might also continue with this study guide. But I suggest that you first take the Bible Correspondence Course "**THE BRIDGE**". You might get it from the person who gave you this book. Otherwise order it here: scfs.volker.lamaack@web.de

How to do this Bible Study Correspondence Course?

Please study the lessons carefully and take time to look up the Bible verses, which are given. Everything is based on the Scriptures. Try to memorise what you read. When you have finished the first lesson, answer test one. If you are not sure about some of the answers, don't guess. Turn back to the lesson and study again. After each lesson do the test and return it straight to me via E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger. Short answers are Okay. For example:

Test 1

1- c

2- a

3- d

...

Your tests will be marked and the results returned to you. Don't worry about mistakes. We all learn by them. You will get - along with your tests - an answer key, a certificate and if you like the next study guide. Order it at the end of the exams.

It is very helpful to memorize Bible verses. At the end of every lesson, I suggest one short passage to learn. Take 12 pieces of paper and copy the verses. Carry them during the day with you and look from time to time on them. Thus you will memorise God's word and it will drop from your head into your heart. The Holy Spirit will remind you in particular situations about what you have learned.

Begin straightaway! Study on the ship, at home and continue even when you join the next vessel. There are more books available for you. Take at least 20-30 minutes per day.

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THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®

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Jim, the sailor

Jim – 18 years old – was so glad. A few days ago something amazing happened: he became a true Christian. Well, Jim used to consider himself a Christian before. Though Jim showed a deeper interest in reading the Bible, prayer and keeping God's commandments than his brothers and sisters, his religion was rather traditional. He thought to be baptised, to be a good church member and to follow Christian values is sufficient.

But during the last months he struggled very hard to please the Lord. Jim stopped several bad habits and even avoided to have evil thoughts in his mind. But he was never sure if God would be satisfied with his life. Jim knew that he was still not as good as he should be. Would the Lord grant him eternal life? This question bothered him often.

Then he was invited to a Christian fellowship. The speaker in front seemed to talk only to him. Suddenly he realised that Jesus had already done everything for his salvation when he died on the cross 2000 years ago. He understood that salvation is by GRACE alone and not by good works. Jim went to the front with several other people and in a simple prayer he received Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour. He became born again.

Now the fear was gone and instead of it peace and joy entered his heart. Jim knew for sure that his sins were forgiven. He was convinced that he would spend eternity with Jesus.

Several years passed by. Jim – now married – became a sailor and was happy to have a good income to support his family. But the life on board was not easy. First of all he missed the Christian fellowship. More and more he felt spiritually dry. It was not always easy to have a daily devotion time, because of a tough working schedule. In the evening Jim felt tired. Instead of reading the Bible he often watched videos with the other crewmembers in the mess room. Some of the films were not so good, and afterwards he felt guilty. Then Jim tried harder during the next days to read the Bible and to spend more time in prayer. His hope was that God could accept him again when he would see his hard struggles.

Jim often felt lonely and homesick. His contract lasted a long time – about twelve months. Some of his superiors didn't treat him very well, particularly when he made a mistake. This happened once in a while because of tiredness and lack of concentration.

The other crewmembers did not care much about God's word. They were traditional Christians as Jim used to be years ago. Again and again they tried to get him along to the bars when they were free in the evening. In the beginning he was able to resist, but it was not very easy to suffer their mocking. Finally he went with them. His plan was to leave when something happened contradicting to the word of God. But they laughed even more – so he stayed.

The periods of following sinful ways and of trying hard to turn back to the Lord alternated. But Jim's Christian life was not satisfying any more. Sometimes he wasn't really sure if he was still a true Christian or not. This filled him with fear.

Again Jim's struggles to please God increased. Of course he prayed hundreds of times that Jesus might forgive his sins. But he was not convinced any more if Christ would do it over and over again. His desire was to be close to the Lord as he used to be years ago, when he became a child of God. The peace and joy in his heart were so real, when he realised that salvation is by GRACE alone and not by being a good person. One verse was always in his mind:

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy, without holiness no one will see the Lord.
Hebrews 12:14.

Jim knew that he did not live a holy life, but he got tired of fighting battles he always lost. Should this be real Christianity? He saw his friends on the ship – not caring much about God – but enjoying their lives more than he did. On the one hand, he was not able to follow fully their sinful habits because he knew that he was responsible to God. On the other hand his situation now was not satisfying at all. He could not experience the pleasures of the world but also not the peace and joy of God. He was somehow in-between both groups:

- the sinners and
- real Christians.

But Jim did not know at all how to change his situation.

How about you?

Have you had experiences similar to Jim's in the past or even in the present? At least you and I know what it means to become guilty, to feel spiritually dry without having the assurance whether prayers really reach God or not. Certainly you have already experienced how difficult it can be to have regular devotion time, because of loads of work, tiredness, and a heart not on fire for the Lord. Then the Christian life seems to be boring and not satisfying at all.

Please go ahead now and explore what answers the Bible gives us to those problems.

Grace - only for the salvation?

Turn now to *Galatians 1* and read the complete chapter.

Please study the entire Bible passages quoted in this correspondence course very carefully! This is necessary to understand everything and to answer the questions in the tests correctly.

The apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians. When we start to read it we are soon surprised. After a short introduction of himself (*verses 1+2*) and a benediction (*verses 3-5*), he continues with very hard words (*verses 6-9*). This seems strange. He seldom uses such strong expressions. What is the reason for that? What is the reason for writing the whole letter?

Paul wrote to fellowships of true born again Christians in the area of Galatia. They all once made a good start with Jesus and understood that salvation is a free gift of God. They realised that good works, fulfilling religious requirements or anything else could not give them peace with the Lord. Jesus came to pay the price for their sins. He died on the cross to save them. Finally they came to their Saviour and got everything free of charge: forgiveness of sins, the presence of the Holy Spirit and security regarding eternal life. They became “New Creations”. (Read *2. Corinthians 5:17*).

But during the years something went wrong. And if we consider the hard words of Paul (*Galatians 1,6-9*), it seems that the Galatians were fully on the wrong track. Paul blamed them for turning to a different gospel. Their fault was not that they misunderstood a few minor doctrines but that they left the foundation of salvation.

Jim – the young sailor in our story – made the same mistake as the Galatians. His basic problem was not that he sinned several times, that he had not have enough discipline to read his Bible regularly or that he was too weak to go on with the Lord. These things were results of turning away from the centre of the gospel, but not the reason. Later on in Lesson two you will discover what went wrong with the Galatians and with Jim. Maybe with you as well?

Following the are a few remarks about the contents of chapter one:

How Paul was called by God to preach the gospel of grace.

Verses 13-14: Before Paul converted to the Lord he followed with great eagerness the Jews traditional way of gaining salvation: by good works and not by GRACE alone.

Verses 15-16: God himself set Paul apart to be a missionary among the Gentiles – already before he was born. His calling was from the Lord, not from other Christian leaders.

Verses 11,12,16,17: Paul explains to the readers of his letter that he did not receive his gospel from men but by revelation from Jesus Christ. This underlines his authority.

Verses 18-24: Not until three years after he accepted the Lord, Paul went to Jerusalem to meet the other apostles. This means that he started to preach the good news about salvation by GRACE and not good works a long time before any of the other leaders were able to teach him. Paul knew with deep assurance that he received his calling from Jesus and not from men.

It is very helpful to memorize Bible verses. Please start with:

2. Corinthians 5:17

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Please answer Test 1 and return the results to me straight by E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

TEST 1

1. Who wrote the letter to the Christians in Galatia?

- A. Peter and Paul.
- B. John and Paul.
- C. Unknown.
- D. Paul.

2. By whom was Paul sent as an apostle?

- A. Peter.
- B. John.
- C. Jesus and God.
- D. The 12 Apostels.

3. If a born again Christian lives a worldly and sinful life, he:

- A. Should try to hide it, in order not to be a bad example to others.
- B. Has still the peace of God in his heart.
- C. Has still the joy of God in his heart.
- D. Does not have God's peace and joy in his heart.

4. Paul was astonished about the Galatians because they:

- A. Preached the gospel without fear.
- B. Lived more or less according to the gospel.
- C. Turned to a different gospel.
- D. Didn't care at all about the gospel.

5. Paul wrote that people who turn to a different gospel are:

- A. Condemned.
- B. Not wise.
- C. Sinful.
- D. Unholy.

6. Who can change the gospel?

- A. Peter.
- B. Angels.
- C. Paul.
- D. Nobody.

7. When could Paul no longer be a servant of God?

- A. If he would sin.
- B. If he would try to please men.
- C. If he would disappoint men.
- D. If the other apostles would not agree with him.

8. The Galatians:

- A. Once made a good start.
- B. Never became really born again.
- C. Tried their best.
- D. Should pray for revelations of angels.

9. That Christians are a “New Creation” Paul wrote to the:

- A. Corinthians.
- B. Galatians.
- C. Romans.
- D. Ephesians.

10. The BASIC problem of Jim was:

- A. Too little reading of the Bible.
- B. That he did several moral sins.
- C. Weakness to serve the Lord.
- D. None of the above.

Let us continue to think about the question what went wrong with the Galatians and with Jim as well (and maybe sometimes with you and me?). It has something to do with the misunderstanding about what “GRACE” really is. What is GRACE? **GRACE means to get something that you do not deserve, for which is not worked.** Two examples:

1. What is not grace?

As a sailor you have to work very hard. Maybe 12 hours per day, 7 days per week for about one year. At the end of each month you get a salary. You don't receive it by GRACE at all. You deserve it because you worked a lot. It is not voluntary or up to the company if they pay you or not. They have to give you the money according the contract you signed. **To get your salary is not by GRACE but by the hard work that you have done!** And this is certainly all right.

2. What is grace?

A few weeks ago Jim read an interesting story in a magazine, which he found in the mess room:

George – a young man – robbed 100.000 USD from a bank. But the police were able to catch him. After one month, the judge sentenced him to eight years in prison. Surprisingly, two days later the door of his cell was opened for him to leave. What happened? It was a national celebration day and according to the custom of this country, every year 10 prisoners were released. The President himself made the decision that George was among them. Why him and not somebody else? George did not know.

- Was George a good person? No!
- Did he deserve to be free so soon? Not at all!
- Where plenty of struggles to change his life the reason for his early liberation? By no means!

What happened to George was nothing else than GRACE. **GRACE means to get something that you do not deserve, for which is not worked.**

One of the key words of the New Testament is GRACE. The letter from Paul to the Galatians has one main subject – GRACE. You will discover more about it during the study of the next lessons.

A. The problem of people from other religions

Maybe you know that in all religions the people try to please their gods by many activities. A few examples: keeping many commandments, fasting, regular fixed prayers, visiting holy places, different ceremonial duties, sacrifices, giving of donations ... It is part of these religious doctrines that their gods seem to be angry

with them and need to be satisfied by human actions. It is easy to understand that they hope to gain a happy life here on earth and a ticket to heaven (or paradise, or however they call the place and condition they want to reach after death) by good works. And even if some of the religions teach about the subject of GRACE, the believers can get it only if their gods are content with them. But usually those people have no idea what real GRACE is.

B. The problem of most traditional Christians

The New Testament teaches clearly that salvation is by GRACE and not by works. Many people from a traditional Christian background don't know what it means. Because of this most of them need to be explained the gospel of salvation by GRACE and not by works. If you are spiritually born again, you are aware of it because your real Christian life started with GRACE.

C. The problem of many born again Christians

All born again Christians started with GRACE, but some of them forget about it after a while and continue with works. This was the case in the fellowships of the Galatians and also with Jim. Their start with God (salvation) was based on GRACE but then they fall back to trust in their ability to do good. Some people accept that salvation (the start) is something God gives us as a free present – but they think the way ahead is something we have to fulfil by human power. The fact is: Both – the salvation and the further Christian life – need to be based on GRACE of God alone. This is very important to realise!

Some remarks to Galatians, Chapter 2

Let me explain a few details about the background and situation: Peter, John, James, and some of the other Apostles were called from God to preach the gospel mainly among the Jews. Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, Titus ... were sent to work among the Gentiles. Some of the Christians with a Jewish background had the opinion that it is necessary to practise:

- Several ceremonial rules they picked up from the Old Testament.
- Regulations, which did not come from the Bible, but were part of the old Jewish traditions.

They were convinced that this is necessary to be a true Christian. A few examples:

- circumcision
- keeping the Sabbath day
- laws regarding food
- not to eat together with Gentiles. (Because they were considered to be unclean).

All apostles however agreed that this is not the case. To get the right to be a real Christian is by GRACE from God and not by fulfilling laws and rules.

Paul, however, shares an experience when even the apostle Peter fell back into the old pattern of thinking (*Galatians 2:11-21*). Even though Peter used to eat with Gentiles, he stopped it when he got some visitors from the Jewish background. He did it for fear of man. He knew that they would not approve of his fellowship with the Gentiles. Instead of going a straight way, he betrayed the gospel of GRACE by imposing rules again (not by his words, but through his behaviour). Getting to know this, Paul opposed Peter to his face. Then the apostle Paul wrote down the following famous words:

A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.
Galatians 2:16

Justification comes by faith in the GRACE of God and not by observing the law! If we want to understand the gospel we have to understand this important fact.

Please now study carefully the complete chapter of Galatians 2. This is necessary to answer Test 2 correctly.

After reading this you might ask: “What do the events in *Galatians 2* have in common with Jim?” Certainly Jim had no problem with circumcision or other Jewish regulations. But the point is that the Galatians and Jim didn’t simply trust in GRACE alone.

- The Galatians said: GRACE + several Jewish rules to win God’s favour.
- Jim thought: GRACE + a certain amount of Bible reading + prayer + holy life conduct + ability to win the battle against temptations is necessary to win God’s favour.

However the way, that Paul preached the message of GRACE is different:

For through the law (commandments of God) I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the GRACE of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law (keeping God’s commandments), Christ died for nothing!
Galatians 2:19-21

This is really important to consider! We should not set aside the GRACE of God. His GRACE is able to save us from our sins and to make us his children. And his GRACE will also be with us during our life ahead until we reach our destiny in heaven. It is wrong to receive the salvation by GRACE and to continue the Christian life by trusting in the law (doing good works). The start (conversion) is by GRACE and the way ahead – as long we live on earth – as well.

The Bible verse to study and to learn is:

Galatians 2:16

A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Please answer Test 2 and return the results to me straight by E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

1. GRACE is:

- A. To do our best with the help of God.
- B. To receive something that is not deserved.
- C. To receive salvation as a free gift and then struggle hard to make God happy.
- D. When God saves a good and religious person.

2. If your company pays you a salary, it is:

- A. GRACE.
- B. Deserved.
- C. Not necessary.
- D. Up to them.

3. If a bank robber is released after two days from prison, it is:

- A. GRACE.
- B. Deserved.
- C. Fair.
- D. Necessary.

4. The MAIN subject of Paul's letter to the Galatians is:

- A. GRACE.
- B. The sins of Peter.
- C. Eating with Gentiles.
- D. To preach the gospel.

5. The Non - Christian religions:

- A. Know what GRACE really is.
- B. Never speak about GRACE.
- C. Do not have a real understanding what GRACE is.
- D. Are approved by God.

6. People from a traditional Christian background are in danger of:

- A. Eating unclean food.
- B. Be against prayer.
- C. Try to win the favour of God by good works.
- D. Live by God's GRACE alone.

7. Born again Christians are in danger:

- A. To start with GRACE, but continue with trusting in good works.
- B. Never thinking about GRACE.
- C. To start to trust in good works and continue with GRACE.
- D. Thinking too often about the subject of GRACE.

8. Which is the correct list of disciples who were sent mainly to the Gentiles?

- A. Peter, John, James and Andrew.
- B. Peter, Paul, Titus and Timothy.
- C. Paul, Peter, John and Barnabas.
- D. Paul, Timothy, Barnabas and Titus.

9. Who among the Apostles fell back into the wrong pattern of thinking?

- A. Peter.
- B. Paul.
- C. Timothy.
- D. John.

10. It is important:

- A. To start the Christian life with GRACE and to continue to trust in GRACE.
- B. To start the Christian life with GRACE and to maintain it by good works.
- C. To start the Christian life with GRACE and think about it from time to time.
- D. To start the Christian life with GRACE and prove God to be worthy of it.

Let us again look at Jim – the sailor – and the believers of Galatia:

- Jim felt very weak in his Christian life and was frustrated. He realised that he was not able to do what he should do. He struggled and tried his best, but finally was in danger to give up.
- The Galatians were rather proud to be able to do so many things required by the old Jewish traditions. They thought to be first class Christians because they did something good to maintain righteousness based on their own efforts.

Even though the situation between Jim and the Galatians seems to be very different, they made exactly the same mistake. Both did not trust in GRACE alone. Jim and the Galatians depended on themselves – one without success, the others apparently with. But the result was not good in either case, because it was not approved by God. In the eyes of the Lord it does not matter, if you are a weak or a strong sinner. Sinner is sinner and a sinner needs GRACE – nothing else! Self-efforts and self-righteousness can't help!

If you consider yourself strong, you show that you don't need the GRACE of God. And if you feel weak, but still struggle by your own strength, you also are somebody who tries to do it without GRACE. The results are different (Jim – self-condemnation, Galatians – self-righteousness), **but the main** problem is the “BIG SELF”. Jim and the Galatians did not focus their attention on God and His GRACE alone. They believed certainly in GRACE, but it was not pure. It was mixed up with self-efforts.

Diesel to drink

Suppose you are very, very thirsty. You worked hard for many hours. The weather is hot and you are sweating a lot. Luckily the 12⁰⁰ o'clock lunch break comes. You go up to the mess room and take a glass with water. But suddenly you hear an announcement through the loudspeaker:

“Master is speaking: Attention to all crew members, attention! Because of a fault, some litres of diesel were filled unintentionally into the fresh water tank. Don't drink anything! I repeat: Don't drink anything!”

What should you do? You feel so thirsty. All the soft drinks are already gone.

In the next port provision is expected. For coffee or tea you also need fresh water. There is really nothing on board you could drink.

The ocean surrounds you – but it is only salt water. It should not be drunk. In the tank there are thousands of litres of fresh water, spoiled by only a few litres of diesel. Would you dare to take it to quench your thirst? There is 99,9% fresh water and only 0,1% diesel! I am sure you would not drink. A little poison can harm a lot.

Grace can not be mixed up

Let us go back to the subject of GRACE. If you trust in GRACE but try do add some of your own works to gain righteousness before God, it is not pure GRACE any more. This mixture can't help you in any way. When Jesus Christ died at the cross for your sins His sacrifice was perfect und sufficient! His work for us is like fresh water, which is able to clean us completely from our sins and quench our thirst for God's life. His work for you does not need your work for Him. On the contrary, you would spoil it.

- He did not die for 99% of your sins and you are responsible for the rest!
- He did not die only for the sins before you got saved (and for the sins after your conversion you have to do something yourself!)
He did not die for your salvation and left the job to maintain it to you!

His death for you counts 100%. And it includes your past, present and future sins. Remember what you learned in Lesson 2:

GRACE means to receive something you did not work for and you don't deserve!

The foolish Galatians

Please read now *Galatians, chapter 3:1-25*. Start with:

Galatians 3:1-5:

Jesus was crucified and did everything for your salvation. All born again Christians have the Holy Spirit. But it is impossible to get Him by observing the law, only by faith in His GRACE alone. A person who started by trusting in GRACE shall not try to reach his goal by means of good works.

The righteousness of Abraham

Please read now Galatians 3:6-14

Paul makes an interesting step back to the Old Testament. This was very wise because some Jewish Christians always pointed on it in order to defend their human efforts. The apostle gives Abraham as an example of faith in God's GRACE.

He had already lived a long time before Moses received the 10 commandments. The Lord chose Abraham, in order to make him and his children to a great nation – the Jews.

Please turn to *Genesis 15:6*. Here it is written:

Abraham believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.

The law of God is good and necessary. (During the following lessons you will study about it.) But righteousness does not come by the law at all, but by faith in His GRACE. This was already the case during the time of the Old Testament and certainly since Jesus died and was resurrected (New Testament).

In *Hebrew chapter 11*, you find a long list of people from the Old Testament, who were all praised because of their faith. They all did many things for God, but their doing was only an expression of their faith (in God's GRACE). The word "FAITH" is mentioned 25 times in this chapter alone. Their faith was a certain hope for something, which would come in the future. They were not able to see the fulfilment by themselves, because it happened later through the coming of Jesus. (Read *Hebrews 11:39-40* and *Hebrews 12:1-2*).

God provided only one way for our salvation and one way for the rest of the Christian's life. The way is Jesus and His GRACE for us. But if we don't accept this offer of the Lord, and seek our own righteousness (GRACE + keeping the laws + self-religiousness + good works + ...) then we refuse God's unique way.

- God said: "This is the way!", and pointed to Jesus and his work for us.
- But Jim and the Galatians responded: "No - this is the way", and pointed on their good works for God.
- Jesus says: "*I am the way and the truth and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through Me.*" *John 14:6*.
- Jim and the Galatians however responded: "Well – we believe in it, but to be sure we add our own efforts to maintain the salvation."

Does Jesus, and His sacrifice at the cross need our human support? Not at all! Jim became frustrated and the Galatians proud. Both were wrong! Because many more people prefer to choose their own human righteousness Paul wrote in:

Galatians 3:10-14:

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." 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." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

People who trust in observing the law are under a curse. Why? Nobody is able to do everything written in the law of God. But if we rely on something we can't fulfil for our righteousness, then we are lost.

The lake is too broad

You plan to cross a lake by swimming. The lake is two miles wide. If you trust in your strength to swim two miles, but after one mile – in the middle of it – you are exhausted and sink, then you will die. You trusted in your strength and lost everything.

If you trust in your ability to keep God's law to reach heaven, but you fail to fulfil it in a way God expects, then you will lose everything. God demands 100% fulfilment of his law. 99% will not satisfy him. (*Read James 2:10-11*). If you are able to keep God's commandments 100%, go ahead, because this would bring you to heaven. But because it is certainly not possible for you to reach 100%, you have to stop relying on it. To start with righteousness by GRACE and to continue with righteousness by works, means to reject the GRACE that you once received.

An early prophesy

Read *Galatians 3:15-25*

Abraham got a promise from God. Turn to *Genesis 12:2-3*:

The Lord said to Abraham: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

How is it possible that all peoples on earth will be blessed through Abraham and through the nation (Israel), which will come from him? The reason is that one of the offspring of Abraham was Jesus. It was an early prophecy about how the Lord planned to bless us through His son. This covenant between God and Abraham was already made before the law came through Moses. The law was important to reveal our sinful nature. It was necessary to show us who we are and that we don't reach God's perfect righteousness. But the law has no power to save us. The law only opens our eyes in regard to ourselves – that we are sinners – and that we need help from above.

The Bible verse to study and to learn is:

Galatians 3:10-11:

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith."

Please answer Test 3 and return the results to me straight by E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

1. God gives His approval to those who:

- A. Feel strong enough to maintain their Christian life.
- B. Try their best to maintain their Christian life, even though they feel weak.
- C. Start their Christian life with God's GRACE and remain in it.
- D. Never give up to do their best.

2. We can take as an example:

- A. Jim, because he was honest enough to realise that he was weak.
- B. The Galatians, because they were strong enough to keep God's laws.
- C. None of them, because both left the GRACE of God.
- D. Both of them, because God is happy if we just believe in him.

3. The result of:

- A. Jim's attitude was self-righteousness.
- B. Jim's attitude was self-condemnation.
- C. The Galatians' attitude was self-condemnation.
- D. The Galatians' attitude was success.

4. What has Jesus done regarding our salvation and the way ahead?

- A. Almost everything – and we have to care for the rest.
- B. Everything – and we have to put our faith in what He has done for us.
- C. Everything for our salvation. But we have to struggle hard to maintain it.
- D. Everything for our salvation, if we proof Him, that we are worthy of it.

5. Abraham:

- A. Was a good example that faith in God's GRACE was already in the Old Testament necessary for salvation.
- B. Was a good example that in the Old Testament God saved by good works.
- C. Lived after Moses, who got from God the 10 commandments.
- D. Has nothing to do with the subject of GRACE.

6. According to the letter to the Galatians a correct statement is:

- A. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.
- B. Christ does not care if we keep the law of God or not.
- C. We can be justified before God by keeping His law.
- D. The 10 commandments were given by Abraham.

7. According *James 2:10*:

- A. Those who stumble at just one point of the law are good Christians.
- B. Those who stumble at just one point of the law are guilty of breaking all of it.
- C. Those who stumble at just one point of the law almost reach their destiny.
- D. Those who stumble at just one point of the law don't need to improve.

8. The prophecy that all nations will be blessed through Abraham refers to:

- A. Moses.
- B. Jesus.
- C. Paul.
- D. The Galatians.

9. The 10 commandments are important to:

- A. Reveal our sinful nature.
- B. To help us to be good Christians.
- C. Show us the way to heaven.
- D. Correct others.

10. We become sons and daughter of God by:

- A. Natural birth.
- B. Keeping God's law.
- C. Faith.
- D. Abraham.

Longing to see my child again

The life of a sailor is not easy. I know that many of you consider the most difficult part of your job to be separated from your family such a long time. Usually the contracts last for about 8-12 months. Sometimes it is even necessary to extend it. The holidays are only short in comparison to the contracts – between 1-3 months. Somebody who works for 20 years as a seaman spends a maximum 40 month at home and 200 months on board. This makes family life difficult.

Maybe you are already married and have children. If not, you can certainly imagine what I am talking about. The children of a sailor grow up almost without a father. Particular during the important time of their development. Many seamen have no choice, because they need to support their families. Every sailor with children knows from his own experience what it means to be separated from them. And every child of a seaman knows what it means to grow up without a father who is present.

One of the most amazing facts in the Bible is that a truly born again Christian is a child of God. He is not only a servant of God (though he serves), not only a follower of Jesus (though he does follow), but also somebody who belongs to His family. One difference however between human fathers and the heavenly father is that God is always with us. We do not need to be without His presence for even one minute.

To be a child of a particular father means to have certain unique rights, which other children don't have. A good father will care, support, help, forgive, comfort, listen to and love his own children. He will not do so for all children of a city but surely to his own sons and daughters. It makes a big difference to be child of somebody. To be part of a family means to participate in all the goods and benefits of it. What is true for human fathers and their children is even more the case between God and His children.

When you sign off after 12 months on board for your vacation and your children expect you at the airport, it is an amazing moment when you are able to embrace them again. There is laughing and sometimes even tears of joy. For one entire year you were longing for this particular event. Can you imagine that God wants to embrace you as well?

The boy who ran away

Please turn to the story of the “Lost Son”, and read it (*Luke 15:11-31*). Jesus told this parable to the people to explain to them about God and what it means to come home again. Father and son were not separated because of a job but because of sin. Sin was also the problem of Sailor Jim and often is ours as well.

If we look therefore at the boy in the story, we should put ourselves in his place. All of us are like this lost son.

1st question: What did the lost son do when he realised that he had sinned? Easy answer: He went back to his father (*verse 20*).

2nd question: What do you have to do when you realise that you have sinned? Same answer: You have to return to God! There is nothing else you can do.

Whether you have committed one sin or many, there is only one solution for you: **Return to the father!**

Whether you have committed only “small” sins or big ones, there is again only one solution: **Return to the father!**

In the story, which Jesus told, it is interesting to notice that the boy didn’t expect to be welcomed back as a son. His hope was just to be accepted as a worker (*verses 19+21*). Therefore it is even more touching to read how the father reacted when he saw his dirty son.

But while the son 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. The son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

But 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.” So they began to celebrate. (Verses 20-24)

We have to consider that the son had not done only a few little sins. On the contrary, he became utterly sinful. He messed up everything:

- All expectations the father once had in him were complete destroyed.
- All the money and property were gone. Nothing could be returned.

It is obvious that his life style was very wild. He certainly committed plenty of moral sins. (Imagine for example: lies, sexual sins, misusing others, cheating, stealing ...).

What was the reason that the father accepted him again? Because the boy was his son! Even committing many sins could not mean that he lost his sonship. He was and remained to be the son of this amazing good father.

How did this young man become a son of this wonderful father? Was it because of many good works? No – it was only GRACE that he had been born into this wonderful family.

How did he maintain his position belonging to the father? Was there anything he could offer? No – nothing at all! He was a big sinner – maybe even bigger than you. It was also just GRACE!

What was the big fault of Jim, the sailor? He sinned a lot – similar to the son in the story Jesus told. The difference is that the boy simply returned and accepted his sonship by GRACE, but Jim took human efforts to gain the approval of God again. This, however, is not possible. Therefore Jim remained unsatisfied.

Galatians 3:26-4:31

Please now read *Galatians 3:26-29* and *4:1-31*

A few remarks to some of the verses you read:

Chapter 3:26: You are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Faith in His GRACE gives you the unique position to be a child of God. Rejoice – and don't doubt it if you have already accepted the Lord!

Dirty clothes

Chapter 3:27: All of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

When you have worked for 10 hours in the engine room or on deck, your clothes are usually very dirty. After your duty you like to change them and wear clean ones. You need to put on clean clothes and wash the dirty ones every day.

Your sins make you unclean as well. Therefore this dirt needs to be removed regularly. The Lord allows you to dress yourself with Christ. To have Jesus means to be washed from your sins and to get clean clothes again and again. This is nothing else than GRACE! Trust in it, and not in your own righteousness!

We are one

Chapter 3:28: There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ.

The Galatians said: “The believers from a Gentile (for example Greek) background are only 2nd class Christians, unless they follow Jewish rules.”

Paul's response to them was: “We are all one in Christ!” Jesus makes us true Christians through what He has done, and not because of what we fulfil.

A promise – given 3800 years ago – belongs to you

Chapter 3:29: If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed (descendant),

and heirs according to the promise.

Abraham lived about 3800 years ago. If you are a born again Christian, there is a line of God's promises and GRACE from Abraham up to you. The Lord's intention was to have one nation (the Jews) through whom he would send Jesus, the Saviour of the world. The Jewish nation started with Abraham – the father of faith. People with the same faith in God as Abraham share the same blessings and promises of Abraham.

In the Philippines

Chapter 4,4-7: When the time had fully come, God sent His son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

I spent three weeks in the Philippines to attend an international conference for Port Missionaries. Three weeks is not a long time compared with the months you are separated from your family, but at the end I felt already a little homesick. When I phoned home and my daughter Rebekka – three years of age – said to me: "Daddy, come home", it really touched my heart.

"Abba" means "Daddy". If we call God "Daddy" it touches his heart, because He loves you even more than I am able to love my daughter Rebekka.

Can you imagine that the Spirit of God wants to help you to have a personal approach to God that you are able to say: "Daddy, Father"?

Can you imagine that even though you are weak and sinful, you received the full rights of a son/ daughter? Can you imagine that you are no longer an ignorant slave, but a son/ daughter and because of that also an heir?

Because you often heard the message that you are a child of God, it could happen that you get used of it. You don't realise any more what it really means. But if God is your father, you don't need to win his favour. He loves you much more than you can ever imagine. If we love our children, though they make plenty of mistakes, God loves his sons and daughter even more, in spite of their sins.

Verses 8-20:

In this passage we read how the Christians in Galatia stepped back to all kinds of laws to try and gain their own righteousness.

The Slave and the Free

Verses 21-31:

Abraham was a man of faith. But he was not sinless. When the fulfilment of God's promise to get a child through his wife Sarah (free woman) seemed to be delayed, he took his own action. In agreement with his wife he took Hagar (a slave woman) to get a child from her to have descendants. This was a big mistake, because Abraham failed to trust in God's perfect timing! Hagar got pregnant and delivered Ishmael. But God's promise was not on this boy, but on Isaac, whom Sarah delivered years later. (You can read the whole story in *Genesis 16* and *21:8-21*).

Paul uses this as an example: Ishmael is the son of the slave woman (Hagar) and a symbol of slavery. Isaac is the son of the free woman (Sarah), the son of God's promises and his covenant with Abraham.

Being redeemed through Jesus we are free sons/daughters of God, as Isaac was. We belong to the covenant, which God made with Abraham in regards to Isaac. We are set free by the GRACE of God, as Isaac was a free man. If we step back by trying to build up our own righteousness through following rules it means to become a slave to the law, as Ishmael was a slave.

The Bible verse to study and to learn is:

Galatians 3:28:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ.

Please answer Test 4 and return the results to me straight by E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

- 1. A person who is a child of God:**
 - A. Will never be alone.
 - B. Will receive all he desires.
 - C. Will have a life without problems.
 - D. Will have success in business.

- 2. Which statement is NOT true? God:**
 - A. Loves His children.
 - B. Cares for His children.
 - C. Listen to His children.
 - D. Never disciplines His children.

- 3. What happened after the “Lost Son” realised that he was wrong?**
 - A. He returned to his father.
 - B. He tried to change his life.
 - C. He worked among the slaves of his father.
 - D. He never sinned again.

- 4. What do you have to do when you discover sins in your life? You should:**
 - A. Promise God to sin never again.
 - B. Try to change your life.
 - C. Do more good than you did before.
 - D. Return to God, your father.

- 5. When the “Lost Son” came home, his father:**
 - A. Was very disappointed.
 - B. Embraced his son.
 - C. Challenged him.
 - D. Refused to forgive.

- 6. In *Galatians 3:27* it says:**
 - A. We should be baptised as babies.
 - B. All of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
 - C. Baptism is necessary for salvation.
 - D. You become a son of God if you are baptised.

7. Regarding salvation there is:

- A. No difference between male and female.
- B. A little difference between male and female.
- C. A big difference between male and female.
- D. No assurance to be saved for male and female, because both are sinners.

8. The promise Abraham received:

- A. Is given only to him.
- B. Is given only to the believers of the Old Testament.
- C. Is given to the true believers of the Old and the New Testament.
- D. Is given only to the believers from the New Testament.

9. For sons and daughters of God:

- A. It is allowed to call Him “Daddy”.
- B. It is not allowed to call Him “Daddy”, because we have to respect the Lord.
- C. It is allowed to call Him “Daddy”, if their behaviour is good.
- D. It is allowed to call Him “Daddy”, when they feel close to him.

10. Which of the following statements is wrong?

- A. The Spirit of God wants to help us to have a personal approach to God.
- B. A born again Christian has the full right to be called a “son/ daughter of God”.
- C. A “son/ daughter of God” is not any more an ignorant slave but an heir.
- D. All human beings are sons and daughters of God.

Jim's confusion

One day our friend Jim read in his Bible that observing the laws of God couldn't justify him (*Galatians 2:16*). This confused him. On his table was a knife. Should he take it and cut the 10 commandments out of his Bible? After searching he found them written in the Old Testament - *Exodus 20,1-17*. (Please read the whole text).

- *You shall have no other God's (verse 3).*
- *You shall not make for yourself an idol (verse 4).*
- *You shall not misuse the name of God (verse 7).*
- *Keep the Sabbath (8).*
- *Honour father and mother (12).*
- *You shall not murder (13).*
- *You shall not commit adultery (14).*
- *You shall not steal (15).*
- *You shall not give false testimony (16)*
- *You shall not covet (17).*

Jim asked himself: "Why does the Bible give clear commandments, but keeping them is without value? Does the Bible contradict itself? Should he lie, steal, commit all kind of sexual sins and God would still forgive it because of His amazing GRACE.

Jim took the knife and thought:

"Maybe keeping God's commandments was important only for the people during the Old Testament. But since Jesus died for the sins of the world His forgiveness alone would count."

If this were really true, it would be the end of his inner troubles. He would not need to bother any more about rules. Instead, he would follow the sinful ways of his companions. The only difference would be that he would ask God for regular forgiveness.

Now the problem was solved. Jim felt relieved – but only for a moment. Was it right to cut out one page of God’s word? He took the Bible again, opened it up and was shocked. There was still written: “THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.” *Deuteronomy 5:6-21*. (Jim did not know that the 10 commandments are recorded two times in the Bible – *Exodus 20* and *Deuteronomy 5*.)

A few questions:

- Was Jim right to take out one page of the Bible? Of course not!
- Are the 10 Commandments just for the people during the time of the Old Testament? No!
- Did Jesus ever teach that the law of God is unimportant? Never!

Can you understand that Jim was so much puzzled? His questions were:

- Why did God give us laws, if we are not able to keep them, even if we try our best?
- Why did God give us laws, if we don’t gain eternal life by following them?
- If we are not able to keep God’s commandments and if we can’t gain eternal life by following them, why are they part of the Bible?

Jim didn’t find any answer to those questions.

Please notice four key sentences. Step by step you will discover the solution the Bible gives us:

- **The law of God is good and necessary. (Lesson 5)**
- The commandments brought death. (Lesson 6)
- Jesus is the end of the law. (Lesson 7)
- Jesus did not come to take away the law, but came to fulfil it. (Lesson 8)

1st Key Sentence: The law of God is good and necessary

Jim experienced the commandments of God negatively because in his eyes they were like a prison. His companions on board were allowed to do many exciting things, but not him. And all his honest efforts to do what is right ended up in frustration. But certainly the 1st Key Sentence is true: “The law of God is good and necessary”. Why?

A terrible imagination

Imagine God had never said: Don’t murder, don’t steal, don’t commit adultery, don’t lie... Without such rules it is impossible to live together in a society. As long as only I have the freedom to lie, steal, commit adultery, murder my enemies, I might be satisfied.

But when it happens that I am the victim (my property is stolen, people tell lies about me, my partner is unfaithful to me, my child is killed), I suddenly realise that all of God's rules are necessary to protect others and me as well.

Better societies

Some societies did originally base their laws more or less on the 10 commandments. (Though all countries have already departed from parts of God's rules). We can observe that those societies, which are mainly based on God's laws, are often developing better than others. This should not surprise us. God, who created us, of course knows very well what will benefit His creations. The same fact that goes for entire societies, goes also for smaller relationships (for example in the family, between friends, between employer and worker ...).

The commandments of the Lord are great!

God has all wisdom, and his commandments are not a prison but necessary and good! They are the condition for every peaceful and successful relationship. When His rules are not observed, pain, fear and destructions are the results.

Because of this, God is praised in the Bible again and again for His wonderful laws. Please study as examples from the Old Testament a few verses from *Psalms 119* (verses: 18; 103-105; 130).

Also in the New Testament it is written:

Romans 7:12: The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

7:14: We know that the law is spiritual.

1 Timothy 1:8: We know that the law is good.

God's rules - a prison?

God's rules are not to be compared with a prison, which takes away freedom and joy. They are rather lamps at the sides of a street, helping us to remain on track and to reach our destiny successfully. God's rules protect life, relationships, prosperity, honour of people and much more.

The life as a sailor without God's rules?

Imagine you – as a sailor – being without the protection of God's rules. A few examples:

- Your company would not pay you any single cent. Why should they observe the contract, if there is no law (which is originally based on the Bible) that employers have to pay the wages?
- Your superiors could beat you for nothing, if God's word is not considered.
- Your companions would steal your property, if the Bible would not forbid it.

- Everyone would deceive, tell lies and harm you, if there are no rules, based on the Scriptures.
- Your wife or girlfriend would be never faithful in your absence. Maybe every night another man would sleep in your bed.
- ...

Without any doubts we have to conclude: God’s commandments are good and protect us from evil!

No slave any more

Look at *Exodus 20:1*:

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”

Before God gave us any commandment, He introduced Himself to us as our God, as the one who brought us out of the land of slavery. We were all slaves to sin and in bondage to the devil and in danger to end up in destruction. But our wonderful Lord redeemed us and set us free. This is the foundation for our relationship to God.

God first did something for us, before he expects anything from us.

He is the great giver and what He expects from us is for our best.

Imagine He had never given us His first commandment: *“You shall have no other god’s before me”* (*Exodus 20:2*). We would run after thousands of other god’s which could do nothing for us. Our whole life would be built on illusions, on god’s, which do not exist at all. A terrible thought, isn’t it?

The Bible verse to study and to learn is:

Psalm 119:105:

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Please answer Test 5 and return the results to me straight by E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

1. The 10 commandments are:

- A. Written in *Psalms 119*.
- B. Recorded two times in the Bible.
- C. Written only in *Exodus 20:1-17*.
- D. A part of the New Testament.

2. The law of God is:

- A. Important in the eyes of Paul.
- B. Not important in the eyes of Jesus.
- C. Sometimes important to keep.
- D. Only important for the Jews.

3. The 1st Key Sentence is: “The law of God ...”

- A. ...gives eternal life.
- B. ... is good and necessary.
- C. ...can help a little.
- D. ... is wrong.

4. Without the law of God:

- A. Life would be easier in societies.
- B. Living together would be impossible.
- C. Everybody could enjoy his life.
- D. We would have more freedom.

5. The commandments of God:

- A. Are a proof of his wisdom.
- B. Are like a prison.
- C. Can be ignored by us.
- D. Are only necessary for bad people.

6. In *Romans 7:12* it is written:

- A. The law is holy, righteous and good.
- B. I am the Lord your God.
- C. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
- D. You shall not commit adultery.

7. The commandments of God protect:

- A. Life.
- B. Relationships.
- C. Property.
- D. All of them (A, B, C).

8. Before God gave the 10 commandments, He:

- A. Introduced Himself to us as our God, who set us free from slavery.
- B. Asked Moses, if Israel would be willing to accept them.
- C. Told the people that they would have the freedom to keep them or not.
- D. Told the people that it would be hard to keep them.

9. God:

- A. Will set those free who keep His laws.
- B. Did something for us first before He expects anything from us.
- C. Gave us His commandments to suppress us.
- D. Will reward the blameless people.

10. The word of God is compared in the Bible with a:

- A. Bird.
- B. Colourful picture.
- C. Light.
- D. Poison.

God is good, and the law He gave us is good as well! Without His commandments, life in any kind of society would not be possible. It was a mistake of Jim to cut out the 10 commandments from his Bible. He prayed eagerly to get a new one at the next port. What a joy when a Port Missionary in Sydney came on board, and provided another copy. Jim opened it immediately at Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 to make sure that everything was complete.

Let us turn again to the 4 Key Sentences and continue with the 2nd one:

- The law of God is good and necessary. (Lesson 5)
- **The commandments brought death. (Lesson 6)**
- Jesus is the end of the law. (Lesson 7)
- Jesus did not come to take away the law, but to fulfil it. (Lesson 8)

2nd Key Sentence: The commandments brought death

There are some frustrating statements of Paul in the Bible:

- *“The letter (the written law of God) kills” – 2 Corinthians 3:6.*
- *“The power of sin is the law” – 1 Corinthians 15:56.*
- *“All who rely on observing the law are under a curse” – Galatians 3:10.*
- Paul speaks about: *“...the curse of the law” – Galatians 3:13*

Is the law of God both – good and bad? Did the Lord have a weak moment when He gave us something what is not 100% perfect? The apostle Paul asked this kind of questions and I am sure you would like to know His answers. Please turn to *Romans 7* and read the verses 7-25 carefully.

- *Paul asks: “Is the law sin?” (Verse 7)*
- *Paul answers: “Certainly not!” (Verse 7)*
- *We ask: “Why did God give us the law?”*
- *Paul replies: “I would not have known what sin was, except by the law.” (Verse 7)*

This is easy to understand. Without having the law, we would not know what is good or bad. Because of this, it was necessary that God gave us His commandments. And the deeds we do can only be considered as good or bad, if we have a measure to evaluate them. This measure is God’s law. If we compare our life with it, we realise, who we really are.

- *Paul asks again: "Did that which is good, then, become death to me?" (Verse 13)*
- *Paul answers: "By no means!" (Verse 13)*
- *We ask again: "Why did God give the law?"*
- *Paul replies: "In order that sin might be recognised as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful." (Verse 13)*

Usually it is clear to us when somebody else does wrong. Regarding our own sins, however, we can be almost blind. And if we realise that our behaviour was not correct, we are in danger of excusing ourselves. The faults of others seem to be to be big and ours only small. Sin in us must be recognized as sin and not only as little weaknesses. Otherwise we think that we are good, though we are not. Our life would be a complete self-deception. But God is holy and pure. If we consider ourselves as good with only a few spots, the Lord has a different opinion. In His eyes we are: *"utterly sinful" (Romans 7,13)*. One reason why we have the commandments is to make us realise this fact.

How Bob – Jim’s friend – learned to lie

Jim remembered a story, which his friend Bob once told him:

Bob – at that time 10 years old – grew up in a family where it was not unusual to lie. He often observed that his parents were not truthful with each other. One example:

When Bob and his mother came home from shopping, his father was angry because they were very late. His mother said that there was a lot of traffic in the city. Besides, an accident had blocked the street for more than 30 minutes. Bob knew that this was not true. The roads were quite free. The reason for their delay was that his mother met a friend, and they sat together for one hour in a restaurant to drink coffee and eat cake. But the boy kept silent. Why should he betray his mother? At the restaurant he got ice cream from her.

Bob knew that his father was not honest either. A few days before, his Dad told Mum that he lost his wallet somewhere with all the money inside. But the uncle of Bob’s friend, James – who is the owner of a casino – told him that his Daddy lost the money through gambling.

Growing up in these circumstances, it is not surprising that Bob also lied when it seemed to be an advantage to him. He knew that this was not a very good habit, but it never crossed his mind to consider himself to be a big sinner.

Usually we don’t have a realistic idea regarding who we are. We easily deceive ourselves and consider us better than God does. Bob thought that his permanent lies would be no more than minor faults. But not so the Lord!

Therefore Paul wrote in *Romans 7:13*: *Through the commandment (for example: "You shall not give false testimony...") sin might become utterly sinful.*

We need the commandments of God, in order to realise what sin is, and what sin does in us.

The last judgement

Here is another reason why God gave us the law: At the day of judgement, God will judge the sin of the people (who didn't repent) according His law which He gave us in advance. How could God blame people without telling them beforehand what his rules are?

Death instead of life

God gave Adam and Eve spiritual life. By breaking His commandment, they lost it. They lost their spiritual life immediately when they sinned and they also became mortal in their physical life.

In *Romans 7:10* Paul wrote: *I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.*

Our sin brought death to us in three different ways:

- Spiritual death – to have no relationship with God.
- Physical death – that we are mortal physically.
- Eternal death – which is in the biblical expression for condemnation in Hell.

Paul used to be proud

Before the apostle Paul became a Christian, he was a very religious person. He was proud to keep God's commandments better than most of his companions. He struggled hard and was convinced that he was a righteous person. After he met Christ, his eyes were opened who he really was. And with this new, realistic point of view he wrote to the fellowship in Rome:

I know that nothing good lives in me that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do: no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. So I find this law at work: when I want to do good, evil is right there with me.
(*Romans 7:18+19+21*)

It is interesting to read that Jim the sailor had the same problem as the Apostle Paul. Both experienced the desire to do good, but not to be able to carry it out. Paul, Jim, you and I are in the same situation.

There are five reasons why God gave us the law (a summery).

- Without the law of God, we don't know what is good and what is bad.
- We need the law of God to live orderly together in a society.
- Through the law of God, we realise who we really are. Sin becomes sinful to us.
- God will once judge the people who didn't repent, according to His law, which He gave us in advance.
- God is holy and can't ignore evil.

Conclusion:

We have to conclude: The law of God is not both – good and bad. The law is good, but we are bad! We are the problem and not the instructions of the Lord. Should God cancel His law, only so we have nothing to bother about? No – this is not the way!

The Bible verse to study and learn is:

Romans 7:18: I know that nothing good lives in me that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

Please answer Test 6 and return the results to me straight by E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

- 1. The Apostle Paul wrote in *1 Corinthians 15:56*:**
 - A. That the power of sin is the law.
 - B. That the power of the law is the sin.
 - C. That sinning is something bad.
 - D. That the law of God is difficult to keep.

- 2. The Law of God:**
 - A. Has a good and a bad side.
 - B. Is good.
 - C. Has no value.
 - D. Was changed through Jesus.

- 3. If we compare our lives with the law of God:**
 - A. We realise, who we really are.
 - B. We realise that God expects too much.
 - C. We get confused.
 - D. We should not bother too much.

- 4. In *Romans 7:13* the Apostle Paul wrote: “*Through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.*” This means that we must realise:**
 - A. Everybody is a sinner.
 - B. Nobody is perfect.
 - C. How sinful we really are.
 - D. Sin is not our fault.

- 5. At the last judgement:**
 - A. God will judge the sinners who did not receive forgiveness according to His law.
 - B. God will judge according to a law different from that in the Bible.
 - C. God will judge only those who are very bad.
 - D. God will judge the sinners. But we don't know what the measure will be.

- 6. God gave Adam and Eve:**
 - A. Only spiritual life.
 - B. Only physical life.
 - C. Spiritual and physical life.
 - D. Nothing at all.

7. Before Paul became a Christian:

- A. He was almost perfect.
- B. He thought he was a good person.
- C. He loved Jesus.
- D. He had a true point of view regarding his sin.

8. When Paul became a Christian:

- A. He realised that nothing good lived in him.
- B. He was a good man.
- C. He never studied the law again.
- D. He was sinless.

9. Jim the sailor and the apostle Paul had the same problem, because:

- A. Both experienced the desire to do good, but not to be able to carry it out.
- B. Both disagreed with God's law.
- C. Both were not sure, if they could win the favour of God by keeping the law.
- D. Both were never really eager to keep God's law.

10. One reason, why God gave us His commandments, is:

- A. God had nothing better to do.
- B. God is angry with us.
- C. God is holy and can't ignore evil.
- D. All above (A., B., C.) is true.

Our friend, Jim the sailor, laid in his bed unable to sleep. The ship just passed the Biscay area and, as usual, the wind was rough. He looked at his watch – 2¹⁵ in the morning. Soon his duty would start again, and he could not find the rest his body and mind needed. Homesickness, loneliness, fear and a guilty conscience bothered him. Beside all this, Jim could not find a clear answer for the question what God would expect from him. Could he ever satisfy the Lord? He knew the answer: “NO!”

Jim switched the light on, took his Bible and opened it somewhere and began to read:

“The time is coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”
Jeremiah 31:31-34

God made a covenant once with Abraham – and confirmed it through Moses. He gave the people of Israel His law to keep and they became His nation. The visible sign was the circumcision of the males. This covenant lasted until Jesus. But already many hundred years before Christ came on earth, the Lord spoke through different prophets about a new covenant to come. Our text in *Jeremiah 31:31-34* is one of these prophetic words.

The first covenant:

Most of the people in Israel in the Old Testament did not have the Spirit of God. Only some chosen persons – for example prophets, kings, judges and priests were filled with the Holy Ghost for particular ministries. This means, the majority of the Jews had to keep God’s rules by their own human strength and ability. God was not dwelling in them. The result was that they failed.

The new covenant:

Since Jesus died and was resurrected, and since the day of Pentecost (*Acts 2:1-4*), all true believers do have the Holy Spirit. (Even though the text in *Jeremiah 31:31-34* speaks about the house of Israel and the house of Judah, it points to all members of the new covenant – this means to all Christians, who receive Jesus into their hearts).

The law didn't change, the 10 commandments are still binding. But the ability to keep them has changed. God, who gave the law, is also the one in us, who helps to keep it. Christians are not yet sinless, because they are still human with the tendency to do wrong. But true Christians have a different power in them. The force to do wrong is gone. (*Read Romans 6:11-14*).

Some people who have the Spirit of God struggle as if they were without him

It is possible for believers – though they have the Spirit of God – to live as if they were without Him? This is what Jim experienced. He was born again and had the Holy Ghost, but his struggles were only in the flesh (with human strength).

In *Romans 7*, Paul describes himself as a person fighting with human efforts to do the right. Even the apostle failed. But Paul did not stop with *Romans 7*. He continued with *Romans 8*, where we learn what it means to live in the strength of the Holy Spirit. (Please read the amazing passage from *Romans 8:1-17*).

Let us turn again to the 4 Key Sentences and continue with the 3rd one:

- The law of God is good and necessary. (Lesson 5)
- The commandments brought death. (Lesson 6)
- **JESUS IS THE END OF THE LAW. (Lesson 7)**
- Jesus did not come to take away the law, but to fulfil it. (Lesson 8)

The 3rd Key Sentence: Jesus is the end of the law.

Romans 10:4:

Christ is the end of the law, so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Christ is the end of the law: not in a sense that the commandments are not binding any more for us. But rather in a sense that He did what we are not able to do.

- The law says: “Love God!” But we rather love ourselves.
- The law says: “Fear God!” But we rather fear men.
- The law says: “Trust God!” But we have a big lack of faith.
- The law says: “Keep the commandments and you will live (*Leviticus 18:5*)!” But we failed and died spiritually.

“It is finished!”

Not the law is wrong, but we are. When Jesus hung at the cross and said: “*It is finished*”, He had done everything to gain righteousness for us.

The law requires: “The punishment for the sin is death!”

Jesus says: “I died for your sin and suffered already death in your place 2000

years ago. I took away the curse of the law from you (*Galatians 3:13*).” Because of this, the law is not the way to our salvation.

- We no longer have to build our own road of self-efforts to reach heaven. In the contrary: God came down to lift us up. The road is already available. ***Jesus is the way*** (*John 14:6*)!
- We no longer have to seek the truth because ***Jesus is the truth*** (*John 14:6*)!
- We no longer have to struggle in order to gain life. ***Jesus is the life*** (*John 14:6*) and gives life alone!

Those who say that keeping the law is necessary to gain eternal life, claim: “The sacrifice of Jesus was useless.”

Those who claim that keeping the law + good works are necessary to gain salvation, claim: “The sacrifice of Jesus was not complete. It was not perfect. It needs support.”

The last two statements are wrong. That is why Paul was so keen to reject those who tried again to lift up the law as the way to salvation. (*Galatians 1:8-9* and *3:10-11*).

Distinguish between the moral and the ceremonial law in the Old Testament

There are commandments in the Old Testament, which we should observe (though we are not saved by doing it) and others we don't have to. We have to distinguish between the moral and the ceremonial law.

Belonging to the moral law, for example, are the 10 Commandments. We have to observe them (though observing them can't give us eternal life)!

Examples for the ceremonial law are:

- Laws regarding priests.
- Laws regarding the temple service.
- Laws regarding animal sacrifices.
- The circumcision, as the visible sign of the first covenant.

Why don't we have to observe them any more? Because they are now fulfilled through Jesus and the new covenant:

- We no longer need priests as mediators between God and us, because Jesus is our High Priest (*Hebrews 4:14-16*), and mediator (*1 Timothy 2:5*).

- We no longer need a temple as a dwelling place of God. His children are now the Temple of the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians 3:16*).
- We don't need any more animal sacrifices, because Jesus is the "*Lamb of God, who took away the sin of the world*". (*John 1:29*).
- Circumcision was the sign of the first covenant. But the "Blood of Jesus Christ" is the sign of the new covenant. (*Luke 22:20*).

The new covenant, which Jeremiah prophesied (*Jeremiah 31:1-34*) is established now. Why turn back to the old one that was impossible for us to fulfil?

Jesus, the end of the law

Jesus is the end of the law – not in a way that we are allowed to lie, to steal to murder, to be unfaithful in our marriage... Jesus is the end of law in a way:

- That He suffered the punishment for our breaking of the **moral** law, because the law says that sin must be punished. Those who received forgiveness of sins are considered in the eyes of God as people, who never sinned. This counts for our past sins, but also for the present and future ones.
- That His Spirit in us does with us and through us, what we were never able to do and keep. We don't need to win the favour of God by doing good. Because His favour already rests on us. We learn step by step to follow the voice of the Holy Spirit. And in those cases when we fail, the forgiveness of Jesus is again valid.
- That the **ceremonial** law of the Old Testament ceased because it came to fulfilment through Jesus.
- That Jesus fulfilled it perfectly by living a sinless life.

The Bible verse to study and learn is:

Romans 10:4:

Christ is the end of the law, so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Please answer Test 7 and return the results to me straight by E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

1. The text in *Jeremiah 31:31-34* speaks about:

- A. The situation of Adam and Eve.
- B. The situation from Adam to Jesus.
- C. The situation of the Christians since Jesus resurrected and the Holy Spirit came.
- D. The situation of the Christians after the second coming of Jesus.

2. The text in *Jeremiah 31:31-34* points to the fact:

- A. That all men will get the Holy Spirit.
- B. That some chosen people will get the Holy Spirit.
- C. That all full time ministers will get the power of the Holy Spirit.
- D. That all true believers in Christ will have the Holy Spirit.

3. The visible sign of the FIRST covenant was:

- A. The circumcision of the males.
- B. The blood of Jesus Christ.
- C. The 10 commandments.
- D. The Bible.

4. During the time of the Old Testament:

- A. Everybody had the Holy Spirit.
- B. Only Moses had the Holy Spirit.
- C. Some elected people had the Holy Spirit.
- D. Nobody had the Holy Spirit.

5. Truly born again Christians:

- A. Seldom commit a sin.
- B. Are able to sin but have a new ability to keep God's law.
- C. Need to struggle hard by their human efforts against sin.
- D. Don't need to care much about sin, because the law of God is not binding.

6. It is possible for believers:

- A. Though they have the Holy Spirit to live as if they would be without Him.
- B. To live a sinless life.
- C. To win the favour of God by reducing their sins.
- D. To keep **the 10 commandments better than Moses.**

7. The apostle Paul:

- A. Was sinless.
- B. Expected from the Romans to be sinless.
- C. Seldom sinned.
- D. Knew what it means to loose the battle against sin.

8. The 3rd Key Sentence is:

- A. The law of God is good.
- B. It is finished.
- C. Jesus is the end of the law.
- D. Love God with all your heart.

9. In the book of Galatians it is said:

- A. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.
- B. Moses was wrong.
- C. Christ redeemed us from the requirements of the law.
- D. Moses redeemed us from the curse of the law.

10. What belongs to the ceremonial law of the Old Testament?

- A. Not to murder.
- B. Not to commit adultery.
- C. Laws regarding animal sacrifices.
- D. Not to have other Gods beside the Lord.

Jim's night watch at the gangway was from 6⁰⁰ p.m. – 6⁰⁰ a.m. The ship had been in a port in Sweden for three days. Some repairs in the engine room needed to be done. It was February and very, very cold. Until 11³⁰ p.m. one of his companions stayed with him and they talked for a while. But now almost everybody was sleeping and several more boring hours were ahead. Jim lowered the gangway because of the tide and checked the ropes. Then he had another 30 minutes without anything to do.

He looked up to the sky. It was cloudless and the air clear. Again – as so often before – Jim was overwhelmed when he saw the stars. Somehow he felt like Abraham who had a very special experience with God one night. The Lord told Abraham to look up to the sky and count the stars. Then He gave him a particular promise. Abraham reaction, recorded in *Genesis 15:6*, was:

Abraham believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.

Jim had read this passage this morning during his devotion time. Since that moment a little flame of hope was in him. He knew that the Lord kept His promises, which He gave to Abraham. God is trustworthy and the best way to react is to believe as Abraham believed. Then he would also experience that God is with him.

The 4th Key Sentence

Several years of spiritual dryness lay behind Jim. But he started slowly to understand that Jesus is the answer to all his problems. By the GRACE of God he realised that:

- The law of God is good and necessary.
- The commandments brought death.
- Jesus is the end of the law.
- **JESUS DID NOT COME TO TAKE AWAY THE LAW, BUT TO FULFIL IT.**

Matthew 5:17-18.

Do not think that I have come to abolish (do away) the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

How did Jesus fulfil it?

- He fulfilled the **moral** law by living a sinless life.
- He fulfilled it by dying for those who broke the **moral** law. Thus He offers us His righteousness, which we were not able to achieve by human strength.
- He fulfilled the complete **ceremonial** law. We no longer have to observe those duties.

However, the Bible gives us an other reason why the 10 commandments (moral law) are not only valid for the believers during the Old Testament, but also for us.

The greatest commandment

Please turn to *Matthew 22:34-40*, and read those important verses carefully. Behind the complete law are in fact only two commandments (*Verse 40*).

- Love God (*Verse 37*).
- Love your neighbour as yourself (*Verse 39*).

The law and the prophets hinge on (or sum up) these two commandments. (Verse 40).

Why? How? Paul gives us the answer in *Romans 13:8-10*:

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments: "do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet (desire)", and what ever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

If somebody claims that the 10 commandments (moral law of the Old Testament) are not binding any more, only the 2 commandments of the New Testament (to love God and his neighbour), he is wrong. Why?

Because both – the 10 commandments and the 2 commandments – mean exactly the same.

God is love, and he wants us to love

- God is love in nature and God loves us.
- God wants us to love Him and to love our fellowmen.
- To keep the 10 commandments means to love God and our fellowman.

If the nature of God is love (Read *1 John 4:16*), there can be no difference between the main values of the Old and the New Testament. The heart of the complete Scripture is love, because this is the centre of God's nature. The Bible is God's love letter to us.

Our big advantage

In *Romans 5:5* it is written:

God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.

You studied before that only a few chosen believers in the Old Testament received the Holy Spirit. Since the day of Pentecost, all true Christians do have the Holy Ghost. This brought a lot of advantages. One of them is that we have a new ability to love. The reason is that we don't need to produce this love by our own human strength. We are filled with His love, because His Spirit dwells in us.

- Why should we produce something that we can't produce?
- Why should we produce something that is already in us?

A strange idea

Suppose somebody has the strange idea to produce a heart, which beats in his breast. What a stupid thought!

- He is not able to produce a heart! It does not make sense to try it!
- Why should he produce something that is already in him?
- What should be suggested to such a person? "Stop it, and enjoy the fact that you already have a heart, which maintains your life. Live with it!"
- What should be suggested to a true Christian, who struggles hard to keep God's commandments, who tries his best to love? "Stop fighting for something that is already in you. You have the Holy Spirit – therefore the love of God is already poured out into your heart. Live with it!"

Abraham had faith that God would keep the promises given to him. To live by faith, as Abraham did, means that we have to do the same. True Christians have the Spirit of Christ. God's love is poured out in us. We should believe that this promise is reality. We should trust that the Lord will fulfil and do what we can never achieve by our limited human strength.

The Bible verse to study and learn is:

Romans 5:5

God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.

Please answer Test 8 and return the results to me straight by E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

1. In *Genesis 15:6* it is written:

- A. Abraham believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.
- B. Abraham kept God's commandments, and became an example to us.
- C. Abraham became righteousness, when he received the Holy Spirit.
- D. Abraham kept God's commandments and received from God a son.

2. Which statement is NOT correct:

- A. God keeps His promises.
- B. God is trustworthy.
- C. The best way to react to God's faithfulness is to believe Him.
- D. God does not care, if we doubt His faithfulness because He is not dependant on our faith.

3. The 4th Key Sentence is:

- A. The law of God is good and necessary.
- B. The law of God is written only in the Old Testament.
- C. Jesus did not come to take away the law, but to fulfil it.
- D. Love your neighbour as yourself.

4. In *Matthew 5:17-18* we learn that:

- A. Jesus came to abolish the law and the prophets.
- B. Jesus is one of God's prophets.
- C. Jesus did not come to abolish the law and the prophets.
- D. Jesus gave 2 additional laws.

5. Love God and love your neighbour:

- A. Is never commanded by God.
- B. Is never commanded in the Old Testament.
- C. Sums up the 10 commandments.
- D. Was a law given by Abraham.

6. To keep the 10 commandments means:

- A. To love God and to love the fellow men.
- B. To love God.
- C. To love the fellow men.
- D. To fulfil only God's rules of the Old Testament.

7. In *1 John 4:16* it is written:

- A. That God is love.
- B. That God loves.
- C. That Christians shall love.
- D. That everybody shall love.

- 8. Between the main values of the Old and the New Testament, there are:**
- A. Only a few differences.
 - B. Plenty differences.
 - C. Contradictions.
 - D. No differences.
- 9. One of the big advantages we have compared to the believers of the Old Testament is:**
- A. That we have fewer rules.
 - B. That we have the Holy Spirit.
 - C. That faith is more important.
 - D. That God loves us much more.
- 10. Which answer is wrong? How did Jesus fulfil the law?**
- A. By living a sinless life.
 - B. By dying for our inability to keep the law.
 - C. By giving us the 10 commandments.
 - D. Through the Spirit of Christ which fulfils the law in us.

LESSON 9

The angry kick at the door

Jim had now been almost ten months on board. His contract had already finished, but the company granted his request for extension. Jim needed money and therefore he stayed another three more months. At the moment he felt quite exhausted. Particular the long night watches made him tired.

It was 10⁰⁰ a.m. and Jim was asleep. At 6⁰⁰ p.m. his duty would start again. Suddenly he woke up. Close to him was the cabin of his friend Peter. Very loud music came from next door. His anger grew. How often had he asked Peter not to turn his player too loud? Hundreds of times. Jim jumped out of his bed, opened his door and kicked as hard as possible at Peter's cabin. Immediately his friend came out – angry as well – and both of them shouted at each other five minutes.

Finally Jim went back into his bed and tried to go back to sleep. But this was no any longer possible.

- First of all, he was still angry.
- Second, the music from the next cabin was as loud as before.
- Third, a low voice deep in his heart told him that his hot-tempered reaction was no good.

Jesus: “Jim – something went wrong.”

Jim: “I have told Peter many times not to be so loud.”

Jesus: “But it is still not good to burn with anger.”

Jim: “I need my sleep. Otherwise I cannot work.”

Jesus: “This is correct. But it is necessary to remind your friend in a calm way.”

Jim: “I have no patience to do it over and over again.”

Jesus: “True. But don't you know that I will give you the patience?”

Jim: “If you are willing to give it to me, why you didn't do it in this case?”

Jesus: “Because you didn't ask me. Instead of coming to me with your weakness, you became active and messed everything up.”

Jim: “Maybe you are right.”

Jesus: “Certainly!”

Jim: “Jesus, please forgive me.”

Jesus: “It is already forgiven! But you had better get up again, and reconcile yourself with Peter.”

Jim: “Is this really necessary?”
 Jesus: “Yes!”
 Jim: “Why? Peter was wrong first! He should come to me!”
 Jesus: “Yes, he was wrong first. But your reaction was also sinful. I want you to do the first step.”
 Jim: “And what is with Peter?”
 Jesus: “This is not your problem. You are not the one to change him. The only one you can change is you!”
 Jim: “You are right. I will go.”
 Jesus: “Great, and I will return the peace and joy in your heart again.”
 Jim: “Thank you, dear Jesus!”

What does Jesus expects from us?

This is an important question. Please open your Bible to *John 15* and read the verses *1-17*, because here we find the answer. It is one of the key passages in the New Testament.

Jesus spoke these words to his disciples a short time before He was crucified. They give us important details on how we can live as Christians. Our friend Jim also learned a lesson when he became angry with Peter.

Let us have a look at the parable Jesus uses:

- God the Father is the gardener (*verse 1*)
- Jesus is the vine (*verse 1*)
- The true disciples of Jesus are the branches (*verse 5*)
- The fruits (of the Holy Spirit) are for instance: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (*Galatians 5,22-23*)

Does Jesus expect from us that we produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit? The answer is: “NO!”

- *Verse 4: “No branch can bear fruit by itself.”*
- *Verse 4: “Neither can you bear fruit.”*
- *Verse 5: “Apart from me you can do nothing.”*

Jesus wants to see fruit in our lives, but He clearly says that we cannot produce it. There is only one responsibility we have: **to remain in Him!** He wants to do in us and with us and through us what we can’t do. But the condition is: **remain in Him!**

Jesus speaks about branches, which bear fruit (*verse 5*) and others, which don't (*verse 6*).

The branch which was broken off

Imagine a strong healthy vine, which is planted in good soil. It has several branches. All of them – except for one – are connected closely to the vine. Those connected to the vine bear plenty of fruit. This is just natural. They don't have to struggle for that. But the branch, which was broken off dies though it belongs to the same healthy vine. It will not bear fruit at all. Because there is no support, the branch will not do what it was created for. It is useless and will be picked up and thrown into the fire.

If there is not much fruit in your life

If you discover that there is not much fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life, then you should not struggle to produce it.

- Rather seek the presence of the Lord.
- Come close to Him, as a child asks its Daddy for help.
- Allow Him to clean you again and again from your sins.
- When you talk to Him, be honest and tell him how the situation really is. It does not help if you deceive yourself or try to deceive Jesus.
- When you pray, don't consider it as a requirement you have to fulfil in order to please God. Rather allow Him to have a look into the inner corners of your heart. Bring Him your fear, your disappointments, your sin, your hopeless struggles.
- When you read the Bible, don't consider it as a burden, which needs to be taken up. Rather study it with great expectations. The Lord desires to touch your heart through His word. He wants to give you answers to your questions.
- Approach God with honesty, sincerity and humility.
- Trust that Jesus loves you. He gave His life for you. Come with confidence – again and again.
- Don't think that He is disappointed with you because you didn't bear fruit. Remember that He never expected it. His only disappointment is, if you don't remain in Him. But if you seek His presence, the fruit will come.

What can we learn from Jim?

His fault was to jump up, and let his anger burst out when his sleep was disturbed. But then he allowed Jesus to touch his heart. He became willing to listen and though he was arguing for a while, he finally gave up and allowed the Lord to step in. What was the result?

- Jim's sin was forgiven.
- He learned a good lesson about acknowledging his sin, instead of pointing to the sin of his friend.

- He also learned that it is much better to first listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, instead of acting too fast.
- The relationship with his friend was restored when he made the first step and asked for forgiveness.
- The joy and peace of the Lord returned into his heart.

It becomes obvious how the Lord is able and willing to turn our defeats into his victories. This gives real hope. Jesus can change everything, if we allow Him to step into our situation. To him be the glory!

John 15:1-17 shows us even more results if we remain in Him:

A. Jesus will answer our prayers

- *7: If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.*
- *16: The Father will give you whatever you ask in My name.*

B. Jesus will make us clean

- *3: You are already clean because of the words I have spoken to you.*

C. The Father will be glorified

- *8: This is to My Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.*

D. We are loved by Jesus

- *9: As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love.*

Jesus loves us of course always, even if we sin. But we only remain in His love, if we remain in Him. The lost son – for example – was still loved by his Father when he ran away. But during that time his Father's love could not reach him and change his situation.

E. Obedience to Jesus is not a hard thing anymore, but the way to remain in the love of HIM.

- *10: If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love.*

F. Our joy will be complete

- *11: I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

G. We are no longer ignorant servants but friends of Jesus

- *I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his Master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you.*

H. Our fruit will last

- *16: You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. (Everything what people do without God has no value in eternity. But the fruit which we bear through remaining in Jesus will last).*

The Bible verse to study and learn is:

John 15,4-5:

Remain in Me and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.

Please answer Test 9 and return the results to me straight by E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

- 1. The words from *John 15:1-17* were given:**
 - A. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry on earth.
 - B. At the beginning of Paul's ministry in Jerusalem.
 - C. Shortly before Jesus was crucified.
 - D. In the letter Peter wrote to the Christians in Rome..

- 2. In the parable written in *John 15:1-15*, Jesus is the:**
 - A. Gardener.
 - B. Vine.
 - C. Branch.
 - D. Fruit.

- 3. In *Galatians 5:22-23* we learn:**
 - A. What the fruit of the Holy Spirit is.
 - B. How to share the gospel.
 - C. How to keep God's law.
 - D. Not to drink too much wine.

- 4. What does Jesus expect from Christians according *John 15*:**
 - A. To remain in him.
 - B. To bear fruit.
 - C. To be good people.
 - D. Nothing at all.

- 5. Jesus said that:**
 - A. We can produce fruit if we just want to.
 - B. We can produce fruit if we just try.
 - C. We cannot produce fruit by our own human efforts.
 - D. No Christian will ever bear fruit, which lasts, because we are just human.

- 6. Branches, which are broken off:**
 - A. Will still produce fruit, but not so much.
 - B. Will still produce plenty of fruit, because God can do everything.
 - C. Will wither, be thrown into the fire, and burn.
 - D. Nothing at all (not A., B. or C.).

- 7. Which answer is wrong? If a person discovers that there is no much fruit any more in his life, he should:**
 - A. Seek the presence of God.
 - B. Be honest to God.
 - C. Consider regular prayers as a hard requirement.
 - D. Return with confidence to Jesus.

8. Which answer is wrong? The result of Jim's experience was:

- A. His sin was forgiven.
- B. He learned a lesson about acknowledging his sin instead of pointing to the sin of others.
- C. He learned to listen the voice of Jesus first instead of acting too fast.
- D. He learned that a defeat will always end up in total frustration.

9. Which answer is wrong? If we remain in Jesus:

- A. He will answer our prayers.
- B. God will be glorified.
- C. We will never sin again.
- D. We will remain in His love.

10. Which answer is wrong? If we remain in Jesus:

- A. Our joy will be complete.
- B. It depends on whether we bear fruit or not.
- C. Our fruit will last.
- D. We are called friends of Jesus.

The ship was heading to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. In two hours they would be there. It was a wonderful sunny day. Not too hot, and not too cold – just fine. The sea was calm, a few birds circulating above Jim in the air. Usually he didn't like his job as a sailor very much. But sometimes – in moments like now – he enjoyed life at sea.

Yesterday the Captain came and told him that he would be promoted in a few weeks from an AB to a Bosun. This would mean more responsibilities, but also a better salary. In a short silent prayer he gave thanks to the Lord, who made it possible. He could not expect this promotion, because he was still quite young. Anyway – God was good to him!

His plan was to make a phone call to his wife in Rio as soon as possible, to tell her the wonderful news.

His thoughts went back. After years of frustration about his spiritual condition, it seemed to him that things became clearer. He learned a lot about the law of God, what it means to live by His GRACE through remaining in Jesus. During the last weeks he even had enough discipline to have his daily devotion time. And indeed, these hours were not boring. The Lord spoke often – right into his situation. Jim felt spiritually strong.

At 8⁰⁰ p.m., the ship was tied up in the port of Rio. One hour later Jim called his wife. After a walk he returned to the ship about 10³⁰ p.m.

In the mess room, a few of his companions were sitting together with several girls from the docks. The music was loud and many bottles of beer on the table. Jim hesitated for a moment, thinking if he should remain here or leave. Finally he went and opened his cabin. It was not locked, because he forgot to do so before he left. When Jim switched the light on, he was utterly surprised. A girl – maybe the age of 17 – was sitting smiling on his bed, only dressed in her underwear.

Next morning Jim woke up with intense headache. He looked around, but nobody else was in his cabin any longer. Why did this happen to him? Why, why? He felt so strong and so close to the Lord. During the phone call he had promised his wife again that he would be faithful to her. Jim knew in advance that Brazil would be a place full of temptations. But he was so convinced that he would be able to resist.

Jim was sure that neither God nor his wife would be ever be willing to forgive him. Maybe he had committed the “Sin against the Holy Spirit” because the fruit of his life was bad and not good (Read Matthew 12:31-33). How can a good tree bear bad fruit? Obviously he was to be compared with a bad tree – not any more

acceptable to God. Jim read Hebrews 6:4-8, convinced that this applied to him. Jim felt utterly guilty.

The guilty king

Around 3000 years ago a king lived in Israel. His name was David. In *Acts 13:22* – looking back – it was written about him:

“I found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart.”

King David, a man after God’s heart – a great, a wonderful statement. Did David live an almost perfect life that God was satisfied with him?

Please turn to *2 Samuel 11:1-27* and read this chapter. David became an adulterer – as Jim was, and in addition to that a murderer. He took someone else’s wife. In order to hide it, he thought up a tricky plan to kill the husband. David succeeded:

- The man died in a battle.
- He was able to take Bathsheba as his wife
- She bore him a boy

Everything seemed to be all right. David was even able to suppress his conscience. But in *2 Samuel 11:26* it is written: *“The thing David had done displeased the Lord.”* God sent Nathan to David to open the eyes of the king about himself (*2 Samuel 12*).

Have mercy on me, o God!

Please turn to *Psalms 51* and read it completely. David wrote this Psalm after he realised his sin. These are amazing words of deep repentance. Many people have a wrong idea about what “repentance” is.

Real repentance is not, when:

- you confess once in a while your sins because it is part of your religious tradition.
- you feel a little pity about what you have done.
- you confess, because it is commanded in the Bible, but you still defend yourself.
- you confess but consider yourself better than the other person who also had done wrong (or had done wrong first).

In *Psalms 51* David said: “I have sinned. I did wrong. I am guilty!” David did not blame:

- the circumstance that he was on the roof at that very moment.
- his nature he could not control.
- Bathsheba (She should have taken the bath in a way that the king could not watch her).
- God who allowed the temptation.

David acknowledged his sin fully. He completely agreed with God who said: “You are the sinner!”

Did God forgive him? David gives the answer in *Psalms 32:1-5*. Please read the verses.

God forgives the sin, if we repent with an honest, sincere and humble heart.

Was the apostle Peter almost sinless?

Peter denied Jesus with an oath. (*Matthew 26:74*). This is certainly a big sin. However he was able to repent and return to Jesus. How?

If we read the gospel we can observe that Peter really loved his Lord. There is much evidence, which proves this. Peter made plenty mistakes and even committed big sins. He had a lot of problems and his motives were not always pure. But Peter loved his Lord. He sinned because of human weakness (for instance: fear of being persecuted), but afterwards felt deeply sorry about it. If this is the case, the Lord will certainly forgive!

Conclusion

The real problem is not the sin – not even plenty of sins or big sins. For sin there is a solution in the Bible. Jesus died for our sins and is able and willing to forgive and make us completely clean again (1 John 1:9 and 2:1-2). The question rather is: How is the condition of the heart?

Those who love the Lord and are devoted to Him, will be forgiven. Because of human weakness, they sin again and again. However their regret is genuine, and so is their repentance. They don't take sin lightly. Such a person never needs to be afraid that he has committed the “sin against the Holy Spirit” (*Matthew 12:31-33*) or that *Hebrews 6:4-6* applies to him.

The “sin against the Holy Spirit”

The “sin against the Holy Spirit” is, if a person knows the truth about Jesus, but wilfully and permanently refuses to listen and respond. Some of the Pharisees were in danger to commit this sin, when they accused Jesus because of jealousy to be connected with the devil – *Matthew 12:24*. Those people are often not at all willing to realise their sins. And because they are not willing to accept them, they are not able to repent.

King David loved God and was devoted to Him. This is the reason why he was – in spite of his big sins – still called “*a man after the heart of God*”. His repentance was real.

God said to Samuel (when David was appointed to become king of Israel): *The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*
1 Samuel 16:7

The Bible verse to study and learn is:

Psalm 51:12-14:

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Please answer Test 10 and return the results to me straight by E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

1. **“A man after God’s heart.” This statement is made in the Bible about:**
 - A. David.
 - B. Samuel.
 - C. Peter.
 - D. Paul.

2. **“Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” God said this to:**
 - A. David.
 - B. Samuel.
 - C. Peter.
 - D. Judas.

3. **Did King David commit sins?**
 - A. No sins.
 - B. A few sins.
 - C. Big sins.
 - D. Not known if he sinned.

4. **King David wrote *Psalm 51*, after:**
 - A. He became an adulterer / murderer.
 - B. He won a battle.
 - C. He got married for the first time.
 - D. He became king of Israel.

5. **“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven” is part of:**
 - A. *Psalm 51*.
 - B. *Psalm 32*.
 - C. *Gospel of John*.
 - D. *Gospel of Matthew*.

6. **Real repentance is when:**
 - A. You confess your sins once in a while because it is part of your religious tradition.
 - B. You feel a little pity about what you have done.
 - C. You confess, because it is commanded in the Bible, but you still defend yourself.
 - D. Nothing of the above.

- 7. The “Sin against the Holy Spirit” is:**
- A. To kill somebody.
 - B. To commit adultery.
 - C. To kill somebody and to commit adultery.
 - D. To resist Jesus wilfully and permanent.
- 8. A person’s sin will be forgiven, if he:**
- A. Prays traditionally for forgiveness every day.
 - B. Repents with a sincere, honest and humble heart.
 - C. Asks God with the correct words for forgiveness.
 - D. Stops to sin in future.
- 9. God will not forgive:**
- A. If the sins are too many.
 - B. If the sins are too big.
 - C. If the sins are committed too long ago.
 - D. If the condition of the heart is not all right.
- 10. Which statement is correct:**
- A. Peter was better than Paul.
 - B. Samuel was better than David.
 - C. Jim was better than David.
 - D. Peter, Judas, Samuel, David and Jim were sinful men.

After Jim committed the ugly sin of being unfaithful to his wife, he prayed many times that God might forgive him. He read *1 John 1:9*; *1 John 2:1-2*; *Psalms 32:1-5* and *Psalms 51* over and over again. But he was not sure if his sin would be ever forgiven. One day he was able to believe it, but the next day the memory of what had happened robbed him of his assurance. Jim realised that King David sinned even more than he did (adultery and murder). He also noticed that David received forgiveness and concluded that God would also forgive him, but his feeling spoke against it. His emotions went up and down permanently. Why was this? It was the devil who deceived Jim.

The devil – a deceiver

It is important for us to understand how the devil acts. Please read *John 8:44*. Jesus says about the devil:

- *“He is not holding to the truth.”*
- *“There is no truth in him.”*
- *“When he lies, he speaks his native language.”*
- *“He is a liar and the father of lies.”*

The devil always lies! We need to realise it! Otherwise we are in danger to step into his trap.

How the devil deceived Adam and Eve

The devil is a liar and tries to tempt people with tricky lies. Temptations always approach in an enticing (or tricky) way. Sin seems so easy and desirable. Jim experienced it when the girl was sitting on his bed.

We can notice this pattern already right at the beginning of the Bible:

God said to Adam and Eve:

“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (Genesis 2:16)

The devil said to Eve:

“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” (Genesis 3:1)

Do you realise how the devil changes the truth? God said that Adam and Eve were allowed to eat from all trees but one.

God said: *“If you eat, you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:17)*

But the devil called this also into question and added another lie:

“You will not surely die. When you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:4-5)

Thus the desire of Eve and Adam arose (*Genesis 3:6*), they sinned and lost everything. The devil had reached his destiny.

Since Adam and Eve, the devil has not changed his strategy. He lies, he twists the truth, and he arises the desire of people. Jim made this experience and certainly you as well.

Changing his strategy

First the devil lies and says:

- “Doing this little sin does not matter much.”
- “God never really said: ...”
- “It is so desirable to ...”
- “Just do it!”

Once the sin is done the devil changes his strategy. Now he starts to accuse:

- “You are unworthy!”
- “You are a bad Christian!”
- “God cannot forgive you any more!”
- “You have done it already too often!”

This is exactly what Jim experienced after he sinned. His thoughts were influenced by Satan.

Revelation 12:10 tells us that the devil is the accuser: “*The accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night ...*”

First he deceives us. Once he is successful, he starts to accuse. Because he is able to influence even our thoughts and feelings he is able to hinder our belief that God has already forgiven us.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit does exactly the opposite:

- He teaches us the truth and guides us the right way. (*John 16:13*)
- If we have sinned, He convicts us about it. He usually does it by giving us a guilty conscience. (*John 16:8*)
- Once we have repented, He assures us again that we are sons/ daughters of God. (*Romans 8:15-17*)

A simple rule

- If we have sinned, and have not yet repented, the guilty conscience is from the Holy Spirit. **He wants us to confess our sins, in order to give us His peace and joy again.**

- If we have sinned and already confessed it honestly, but still feel shame, it is from the devil. He is the accuser and does not want us to trust in the forgiveness, which counts for us. Don't believe him! He is a liar and tries again to influence your feelings and your faith.

We have to learn to distinguish between those two voices! Sometimes you might think that your negative thoughts are your own product. You try to stop them and are not able to do so. But it might be the case that it is the devil who influences you. Jim, you and I need to learn to turn him and his negative thoughts away. (Read: *James 4:7-8*).

Who is the strongest?

We are weak but we know that God is strong. Sometimes however it seems that the devil has almost the same power as God. Don't believe it! This is another lie of the devil!

In John 16:11 it is written: The prince of this world (the devil) now stands condemned.

Even though the devil stands already condemned, he has still a lot of influence and power with human beings.

- *Revelation 12:12: The devil is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.*
- Because of that he behaves as if we would have no chance against him. But we are not alone. In *1 John 4:4*: it is written: "*The one who is in you (the Holy Spirit) is greater than the one who is in the world (the devil).*"

In us is little strength, but Jesus, who lives in His children, has already won the victory over the devil. **The devil is a defeated enemy!**

The armour of God

Please read the following Bible verses carefully. If you have to suffer a lot from temptations and trials, read them regularly. God did not leave us without knowledge, weapons and protection:

- You know the strategy of the devil. He lies and deceives (*John 8:44*) and accuses us (*Revelations 12:10*).
- You have the complete armour of God for protection (*Eph. 6:10-17*). (Study particular this passage very carefully).
- You have somebody in you who is stronger than the devil (*1 John 4:4*).
- You know how and when the devil will flee from you (*James 4:7-8*).

- If you are defeated and fall into sin, you can receive forgiveness immediately through repentance (*1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:1-2; Psalm 32:1-5; Psalm 51*).
- You know that the eternal destruction of the devil is already decided (*Revelation 20:10*).
- You know that the salvation of those who belong to Jesus is sure – even though they are a sinner (*John 5:24; Romans 5:8-12; Romans 8:1; Romans 8:38-39; 1 John 5:11-13*).

The Bible gives you more knowledge about the past, present and future than anybody else has or could give you. The word of God is your spiritual sword (*Ephesians 6:17*) and gives you victory over the devil. Praise be to the Lord!

The Bible verse to study and learn is:

Ephesians 6:17:

Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Please answer Test 11 and return the results to me straight by E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

- 1. The devil: (Which answer is wrong?).**
 - A. Is a liar.
 - B. Is a deceiver.
 - C. Is an accuser.
 - D. Is a helper.

- 2. God said to Adam and Eve:**
 - A. "You are not allowed to eat from any tree in the garden."
 - B. "You are allowed to eat from any tree of the garden."
 - C. "You are allowed to eat from any tree, but not from one."
 - D. "You are not allowed to eat from the apple tree."

- 3. The devil said to Adam and Eve: (which answer is wrong?).**
 - A. "Did God really say?"
 - B. "You will not surely die!"
 - C. "If you eat, your eyes will be opened!"
 - D. "If you eat, you will get everything you like!"

- 4. Once the devil is successful in tempting a Christian to sin, he:**
 - A. Leaves the person alone.
 - B. Starts to accuse the person.
 - C. Gets afraid to be punished by God.
 - D. Feels sorry that he did wrong.

- 5. What does the devil tell a Christian who sinned? (Mark the only wrong one).**
 - A. "You are unworthy."
 - B. "God can't forgive you any more."
 - C. "You are a bad Christian."
 - D. "Return to Jesus. He will forgive."

- 6. The Holy Spirit (Mark the only wrong answer)**
 - A. Teaches us the truth.
 - B. Convicts people regarding to their sin.
 - C. Always gives us a bad conscience to keep us humble.
 - D. Assures us our salvation once we repented.

7. Which statement is NOT from the Bible?

- A. The prince of the world now stands condemned.
- B. The devil is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.
- C. The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.
- D. You have enough strength in yourself to defeat the devil.

8. What is NOT part of God's armour?

- A. Belt of truth.
- B. Breastplate of righteousness.
- C. Umbrella of protection.
- D. Shield of faith.

9. Our spiritual sword is:

- A. The word of God.
- B. The blessing of the Pastor.
- C. Obedience to God.
- D. Our boldness in times of trials.

10. Which answer is wrong? All born again Christians have eternal life for sure. This is written in:

- A. *1 John 5:11-13.*
- B. *John 5:24.*
- C. *Romans 8:1.*
- D. *Ephesians 6:17.*

It was Jim’s last night on board. Tomorrow – early at 6³⁰ a.m. – somebody would bring him to the airport. What a wonderful feeling to come home after 13 months of absence.

He was full of gratitude to God and his wife. Both forgave him his big sin of unfaithfulness. The past time was not easy for him, but he knew that he had learned a lot. Somehow he felt like a little child at the hand of its father. When he kept the hand, he was able to step forward. When his grasp was not firm, he was more likely to stumble and fall. This happened several times during the past months. But his wonderful Father always lifted him up again.

His thoughts went many years back to when he was a child. Jim was born in utterly poor circumstances. His family didn’t live in a house or a flat. It was not even a shelter, just a few pieces of wood, metal, and plastic – tied together. The small river nearby was dirty, stinking and full of rubbish. Thousands of people lived here together with hundred thousands of rats.

His father was a drunkard. Usually he came home late in the night, totally drunk. In his anger he beat the children often. When Jim was nine years old, the father left his family and never returned. Nobody knows whether he is still alive.

His mother as well was neither able nor willing to take care of her children. She left them alone in the evening and returned early in the morning to sleep until noon.

Jim, his two brothers, and three sisters had to earn their own money in order to buy food for themselves. They picked up items from the garbage and sold them for a few cents to buy a hand-full of rice. During that time the people usually called him “Garbage – Jim”. This hurt him often.

One morning his mother didn’t return home. Jim never got to know what happened to her. Two days later a person in official capacity came and brought all 6 brothers and sisters to a home for orphans. Four months later a couple came to see him, and after another seven months they adopted him. Ever since that moment, Jim’s situation changed completely. He lived in a big house. They sent him to school and gave him sufficient food regularly. And most important: they really expressed their love to Jim. They were patient with him when he made a mistake. If he had a problem, he could come to them any time and ask for help. After many years in the dirt and rubbish everything changed. Nobody called him “Garbage – Jim” anymore. He lived a new life!

Jim switched the light on in his cabin. He still could not sleep. Too many thoughts were in his mind. He took his Bible and turned to *Ephesians 1* and started to read. When he reached *verse 5* he stopped:

God predestined (or chose, selected) us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will.

“This is true”, Jim thought. “In the same way, as my new parents loved and adopted me, they gave me a new identity, and a new life, God did it with me. I belong now to His family – am His son. (*John 1:12; Galatians 4:5-6; 2 Corinthians 6,18*). He removed the dirty sin from me and took me by His hand.”

Supporting GRACE or transforming GRACE?

What is GRACE?

When Jim joined the ship, his idea about GRACE was: **“I HAVE TO DO IT AND GOD HELPS ME.”**

We can call this attitude **“SUPPORTING GRACE”**. Here we are still the active ones and just expect some SUPPORT from God. But this is not the kind of GRACE God offers us.

The Biblical concept of GRACE is different. A good expression for it is: **“TRANSFORMING GRACE”**.

It means: **“I GIVE UP, I SURRENDER AND GOD TAKES OVER.”**

Do you understand the big difference?

“SUPPORTING GRACE” means: I have to do – for example – 80% and God does the rest (20%). I have to struggle, I need to become worthy of God's help. My own big “Ego” is still in the centre.

“TRANSFORMING GRACE” means: God does it! I am simply a tool in his hand. The Lord does it in me and with me and through me. My own big “Ego” steps back and becomes smaller. I leave the space in the centre to the Lord. Now He takes over with His unlimited power.

Discover the treasures

Have you ever realised who you are and what you have? The New Testament has amazing statements and promises. Now take time to discover some of the treasures, which belong to you. Be astonished about a new foundation, a new position and a new identity you have in Jesus. Being aware of it will change your point of view regarding your Christian life totally.

Who am I?

Matthew

- *I am salt and light of the world (5:13+14).*

John

- *I am a child of God (1:12).*
- *I am a branch of the true vine (15:5).*
- *I am a friend of Jesus (15:14).*
- *I am chosen to bear fruit (15:16).*

Romans

- *I am justified (5:1).*
- *I am a slave to righteousness (6:18).*
- *I am heir of God (8:17).*

1 Corinthians

- *I am God's temple (3:16).*
- *I am united with the Lord (6:17).*
- *I am part of the body of Christ (12:27).*

2 Corinthians

- *I am a new creation (5:17).*
- *I am reconciled with God and now I have the ministry of reconciliation (5:18).*

Galatians

I am clothed with Christ (3:27).

Ephesians

- *I am a saint (1:1).*
- *I am God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works (2:10).*
- *I am a citizen of God's people and member of God's household (2:19).*
- *I am created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (4:24).*

Philippians

- *I am citizen of heaven (3:20).*

Colossians

- *I died already and my life is now hidden with Christ in God (3:3).*
- *I am chosen by God, holy and dearly loved (3:12).*

1 Thessalonians

- *I am a son/ daughter of the light (5:5).*

Hebrews

- *I am participant in the heavenly calling (3:1).*

1 Peter

- *I am a living stone (2:5).*
- *I am part of a royal priesthood, a holy nation (2:9).*
- *I am an enemy of the devil (5:8).*

1 John

- *I am born of God and kept safe. The evil one cannot harm me (5:18).*

Because I am in Christ, through the grace of God, it MEANS that ...

Romans

- *I am justified and have peace with God (5:1).*
- *I died with Christ to sin and rose with Him (6:1-6).*
- *I don't need to fear any more condemnation (8:1).*

1 Corinthians

- *I have the Spirit of God (2:12).*
- *I have the mind of Christ (2:16).*
- *I am bought at a high price and am not my own (6:19+20).*

2 Corinthians

- *I stand firm in Christ. I am anointed. I have His seal of ownership (1:21-22).*
- *I died with Christ and live for Him (5:14-15).*
- *I am righteous through Christ (5:21).*

Ephesians

- *I am blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ (1:3).*
- *I am chosen to be holy and blameless (1:4).*
- *I am adopted as a son/ daughter (1:5).*
- *I am redeemed. My sins are forgiven. I received the riches of His grace (1:7- 8).*
- *I am alive with Christ (2:5).*
- *I have access to the Father (2:18).*
- *I am allowed to approach God with freedom and confidence (3:12).*

Colossians

- *I am rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of Jesus (1:13).*
- *I am rooted and build up in Christ, strengthened in the faith and overflowing with thankfulness (2:7).*
- *I participate in the fullness of Christ (2:10).*

2 Timothy

- *I received the spirit of power, love and self-discipline (1:7).*

Hebrews

- *I have the permission to approach the throne of God with confidence to receive mercy, GRACE and help (4:16).*

2 Peter

- *I received great and precious promises and participate in the divine nature (1:4).*

Grace for the weak

Everything that you and I received is given to us only through Jesus Christ.

*Romans 8:32: God did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all – how will He not also, **along with Him**, graciously give us **all things**?*

All things are given to us along with Jesus! Beside Jesus we can expect nothing else from God!

We are weak and remain weak. Every trial to accomplish something without Christ, will fail. God said once to the apostle Paul:

My GRACE is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9.

This was the big lesson, which even the apostle Paul had to learn. Jim, you and I have to do the same.

The Bible verse to study and learn is:

2 Corinthians 12:9.

My GRACE is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Please answer Test 12 and return the results to me straight by E-Mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

- 1. God adopts a person as His son/daughter when he/she:**
 - A. Is born.
 - B. Is baptised.
 - C. Is born again.
 - D. Enters heaven.

- 2. When a person is in Christ, he has a new:**
 - A. Identity.
 - B. Position.
 - C. Foundation.
 - D. All (A., B., C.).

- 3. If a person is in Christ, he is a:**
 - A. Friend of Jesus.
 - B. Child of God.
 - C. A branch at the vine (Jesus).
 - D. All (A., B., C).

- 4. If a person is a child of God, he is a: (Which answer is wrong?).**
 - A. Heir of God.
 - B. Temple of the Holy Spirit.
 - C. Beggar.
 - D. Part of the body of Christ.

- 5. Who is a saint? Somebody...**
 - A. In whom Jesus lives.
 - B. Who can do miracles.
 - C. Who lives a good life.
 - D. Who is a good example as a Christian.

- 6. A person is a citizen of heaven:**
 - A. Right away when he becomes born again.
 - B. Once he dies as a born again Christian.
 - C. Once he is baptised.
 - D. Once he has some kind of faith in God.

- 7. Who belongs to the priesthood of God?**
 - A. Every church member.
 - B. All true Christians.
 - C. An ordained priest.
 - D. A blameless person.

8. A person has access to God, the Father:

- A. When he is strong enough to resist evil.
- B. When he is a full-time Minister of the Lord.
- C. If he is a child of God.
- D. No access possible because God is too holy.

9. Which answer is wrong? In 2 Timothy it is written that we have received the Spirit of:

- A. Power.
- B. Love.
- C. Self-Discipline.
- D. Self-Confidence.

10. Which answer is wrong? “My GRACE is sufficient for you”, goes for ...

- A. The apostle Paul.
- B. Jim.
- C. You.
- D. Jesus.

A P P E N D I X “Key sentences of this Bible Course”

Understand grace

- GRACE means to get something, what is not deserved. (Lesson 2).
- Both, the salvation and the further Christian live, need to be based on GRACE alone. It is wrong to start with GRACE and to try to maintain the Christian live by good works. (Lesson 2)
- The basic problem of self-righteousness and self-condemnation is in both cases the “BIG EGO”. Both don’t trust in GRACE alone. (Les. 3)
- God first did something for us, before He expects anything from us. (Lesson 5)

The law of God

- The law of God is good and necessary. (Lesson 5)
- The commandments brought death. (Lesson 6)
- Jesus is the end of the law. (Lesson 7)
Jesus did not come to take away the law, but to fulfil it. (Lesson 8)

Reasons, why God gave us the law

- Without the law of God, we don’t know what is good and what is bad. (Lesson 6)
- We need the law of God to live successfully together in a society. (Lesson 6)
- Through the law of God, we realise who we really are. Sin becomes sinful to us. (Lesson 6)
- God will once judge the people (who didn’t repent) according to His law, which He gave us in advance. (Lesson 6)
- God is holy and can’t ignore evil. (Lesson 6)

Keeping the law means to love

- The 10 commandments of the Old Testament and the 2 commandments of the New Testament mean exactly the same – to express love. (Lesson 8)
- God’s nature is love. He loves and He wants us to love. (Lesson 8)

No spiritual fruit by human strength

- Jesus does not expect us to bear fruit by our own human strength, but just to remain in him. The fruit will come as a result. (Lesson 9)
- Some people who have the Spirit of God struggle, as if they were without Him. (Lesson 7)
- The real problem is not the sin (many sins, or big sins). For sin God has a solution – Jesus and his sacrifice for us. Important is the condition of our hearts – if we love Him and are devoted to Him. (Lesson 10)

Who speaks?

- The devil tries first to deceive us through lies to commit a sin. Once he is successful, he changes his strategy and starts to accuse us. (Lesson 11)
- The Holy Spirit speaks through our conscience when we have sinned. We need to learn to distinguish the voice of the devil from the voice of the Holy Spirit. (Lesson 11)

Don't be afraid!

- We don't need to fear the devil. He is a defeated enemy. Jesus, who is in us, is much stronger. (Lesson 11)

Everything is new

- Born again Christians are adopted children of God. They have a new foundation, a new position and a new identity in Christ. Beside Jesus they can expect nothing else from God. (Lesson 12)

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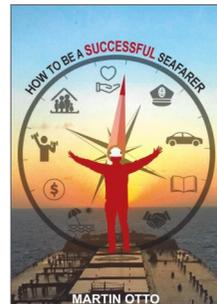
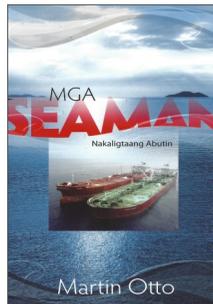
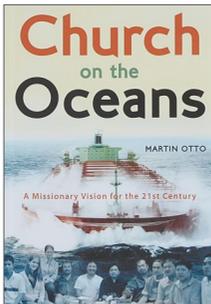
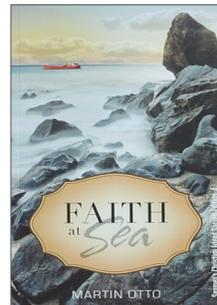
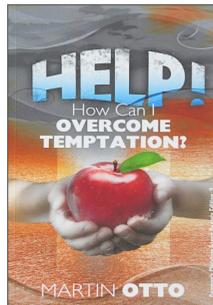
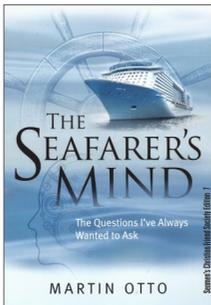
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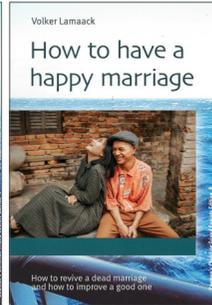
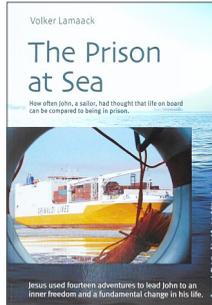
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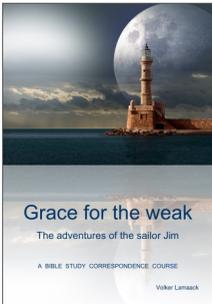
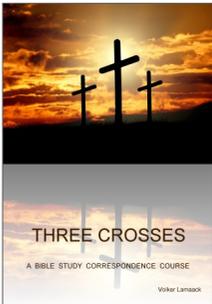
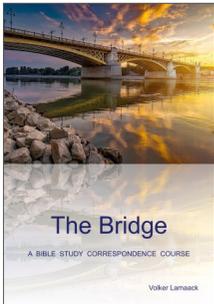
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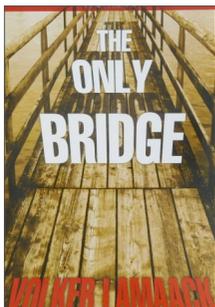
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