

QUESTION: What happens when a Christian sins? Some people say we believe in "cheap grace" if we say that God will forgive us no matter what we do, so what is our incentive for living a holy life?

ANSWER: This is actually a three-part question, so we will answer each part separately.

1. What happens when a Christian sins? -- First of all, **you do NOT lose your salvation.** Since you were not SAVED by your GOOD behavior, you do not LOSE your salvation by your BAD behavior.

- **Ephesians 2:8-9** "For by GRACE you have been saved through FAITH, and that **NOT of YOURSELVES**, it is the **GIFT of God; NOT of WORKS**, lest anyone should boast."

Definition: "GRACE" -- Unmerited or UNEARNED favor. **Being accepted and loved by God** when we have done NOTHING and CAN DO NOTHING to EARN or DESERVE it. Because **it is ALL God's work**, and not our own, NO ONE can "boast" of how their good behavior got them saved in the first place, and **no one is too bad a sinner** for God to save!

- **Titus 3:5-7** "**NOT by works of righteousness** which **WE have DONE**, but **according to His MERCY** He saved us; by the washing of regeneration (being born again), and the renewing of the **Holy Spirit**, whom He poured out on us abundantly through **Jesus Christ our Savior**. That having been **JUSTIFIED by His GRACE** we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life"

Definition: "JUSTIFIED" -- God by His GRACE **declares RIGHTEOUS** the sinner who believes on Jesus Christ. It is **NOT a process of becoming** righteous, **it is a ONE-TIME ACT of GRACE** -- we are MADE RIGHTEOUS the moment we accept Jesus as our Savior! It is NOT merely FORGIVENESS, although forgiveness is INCLUDED -- God does indeed FORGIVE and FORGET OUR SINS. However, **JUSTIFICATION means God even FORGETS THAT WE WERE EVER SINNERS!** There is NO MORE RECORD of our sins.

What IS LOST, then, by our sin and disobedience? We **LOSE our FELLOWSHIP and close COMMUNION with God**. Just as a human parent would have a **strained relationship** with a son or daughter who was living in disobedience to that parent's wishes, so our RELATIONSHIP with God is not what it should be when we are disobedient to Him (read Genesis 3:1-13 - remember when Adam and Eve tried to HIDE from God after they sinned?). You don't stop being His child, though, any more than the human child stops being the child of his parents - you don't get UN-BORN.

- **I John 1:6-7** "If we say that we **have FELLOWSHIP with Him**, and walk in DARKNESS (sin), we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we WALK in the LIGHT as He is in the light, we have FELLOWSHIP with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."
- **Isaiah 59:1-2** "Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear, but **your iniquities (sins) have made a SEPARATION between you and your God**, and **your SINS have hid His face from you, so that He does NOT HEAR.**"

The way to be restored to fellowship with God is found in **I John 1:9**, "**If we CONFESS our sins, He is faithful and just to FORGIVE us our sins, and to cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness.**" Confession means to admit that we have done wrong, and REPENTANCE means a change of mind (actually, turning around and going the opposite direction).

One evidence of a person's being saved is the fact that they are DEEPLY CONVICTED of their sin even while committing it. If you see a person HABITUALLY committing sin **WITHOUT feeling miserable about it**, that person most likely is NOT SAVED! What about the Christian who sins, confesses that sin, repents, and yet does it again and again? As long as that person is **feeling the conviction of the Holy Spirit**, it is just that they are still a baby Christian, and they are allowing their FLESH to be in CONTROL of their life most of the time. God never intended for us to stay babies forever. **His will is for us to grow to maturity in Christ**, and as we grow into the likeness of Jesus, our lives will demonstrate His HOLINESS, and sin will have less of a hold on us - we will live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **Ephesians 5:17-18** "Therefore do not be **unwise**, but **understand** what **the will of the Lord** is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but **BE FILLED with (controlled by) the Spirit.**"
- **Romans 6:1-2** "What shall we say then? Shall we **CONTINUE in sin** that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who **DIED** to sin **live any longer** in it?"
- **I Peter 4:3** "For **we have SPENT ENOUGH of our past lifetime** in doing the will of the Gentiles (non-believers), when we walked in licentiousness (no control - no rules), lusts, drunkenness, revelries (wild partying), drinking parties and abominable idolatries (false religion and witchcraft)."
- **I Peter 1:13-16** "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be SOBER, and **rest your hope fully upon the GRACE** that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as OBEIENT children, NOT conforming yourselves to the FORMER lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be HOLY in all your CONDUCT, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"
- **Romans 13:12-13** "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us CAST OFF the works of DARKNESS, and let us put on the armor of LIGHT. Let us WALK (conduct our lives) properly, as in the day, NOT in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy, but **PUT ON the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts (desires)."

2. Some people say we believe in "cheap grace" if we say that God will forgive us no matter what we do -- There is a difference between CHEAP and FREE. Our salvation was NOT cheap - **it COST God** the Father His only begotten Son, and **it COST Jesus** unbelievable pain, suffering and death. **Jesus PAID IT ALL**, so that we could receive salvation FREELY. There is NOTHING that we can do to add to what Christ did on the cross. **No amount of religious activity, keeping rules and ordinances, or doing "good works" can ever ADD to your salvation**, nor do you need to do these things to keep from LOSING your salvation. When we understand that Jesus Christ COMPLETELY PAID for our sins and took our punishment, and we HUMBLY ACCEPT what He did for us and accept Him as our Savior, we do not hold our salvation lightly, or consider it "cheap grace" and merely a "fire escape" from hell. When we truly understand what God did for us, we SERVE, OBEY and WORSHIP Him out of gratitude and love, not out of fear of losing our salvation and going to hell.

However, do not confuse FORGIVENESS from God with **ESCAPING the CONSEQUENCES** of your sin here on earth. You can be totally forgiven by God, but still have to live with the **consequences of your WRONG CHOICES in this life**. For instance, if you rob a bank or liquor store, you will still have to go to prison and pay your debt to society. God will FORGIVE you if you come to Jesus Christ for salvation and forgiveness, but you may still have to serve your full prison sentence. Another illustration - ATTITUDE SINS. If you hold onto bitterness and resentment, or if you WORRY all the time, you will most likely suffer depression or physical illness of some sort, because God did not make our bodies to handle all that emotional poison.

- **Galatians 6:7-8** "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man **sows** (planting seeds), that will he also reap. For **he who sows to his flesh** (the old SIN nature) will of the flesh reap corruption (sickness and death); but he who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap everlasting life (the blessings of God)."
- **Proverbs 13:14-15** "The law of the wise (God's word) is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death. Good understanding gains favor, but the way of the transgressors is HARD."

REMINDER: "Sin will take you places you never wanted to go; sin will cost you more than you wanted to pay; and sin will keep you longer than you wanted to stay."

3. What is our incentive for living a holy life? -- Our incentive for OBEYING GOD and living a HOLY LIFE is: **a) To please the Lord. It pleases God** when we live in holiness and obedience; **b) To be blessed** - the blessings of God will not and cannot come into our lives if we are disobedient - all the wonderful promises of God's word are **CONDITIONAL to our OBEDIENCE to His commandments**; **c) To have our prayers answered** - our prayers are hindered by our disobedience or by unconfessed sin in our lives; and **d) To experience joy and fulfillment in life** - we will never be truly happy or have real joy if we continue in a sinful lifestyle. The term used most often in the Old Testament for being obedient to God is "the fear of the Lord."

- **Psalms 34:11-13** ".....I will teach you **the FEAR of the LORD**. What man is he that desires LIFE, and loves many days, **that he may see GOOD?** Keep your TONGUE from evil, and your LIPS FROM SPEAKING guile."
- **II Corinthians 7:1** "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting HOLINESS in the FEAR OF GOD.**"

Definition: "The Fear of the Lord" -- Reverential AWE and RESPECT for God, especially as EVIDENCED by OBEDIENCE to His commands and DOING His will. The New Testament equivalent is HOLY LIVING and being FILLED with the SPIRIT. It is also the AWARENESS that God SEES and KNOWS everything that we do, think or say, and that NOTHING can be HIDDEN from Him.

- **Psalms 33:8 & 18** "Let all the earth FEAR the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world **STAND in AWE of HIM**. Behold, **the EYE of the LORD is upon them that FEAR HIM**, upon them that HOPE IN HIS MERCY, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine."
- **II Chronicles 16:9** "For **the EYES OF THE LORD** run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to SHOW HIMSELF STRONG in behalf of them whose HEART IS COMPLETELY HIS (is loyal to Him)."
- **Matthew 6:33** "But SEEK FIRST the kingdom of God, and **His righteousness**; and ALL THESE THINGS shall be added unto you."
- **Proverbs 3:7-8** "Be not wise in your own eyes; **FEAR the LORD and depart from evil**; it will be HEALTH TO YOUR BODY, and refreshment to your bones."
- **Psalms 145:19** "He will FULFILL THE DESIRE of them that FEAR HIM; He also will HEAR THEIR CRY and will save (deliver) them."
- **Psalms 31:19** "O how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that FEAR You, which you have wrought for them that TRUST in You before the sons of men!"
- **Deuteronomy 10:12** ".....what does the Lord require of you, but **to FEAR the LORD**, to walk in all His ways, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord..... **for YOUR GOOD.**"

- **Ephesians 2:10** "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for (for the purpose of) good works**, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."
- **James 2:18** "But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works. **Show me** your faith without your works, and **I will SHOW you my faith BY my works.**'"
- **Titus 2:7-8** "In all things **showing yourself to be a pattern of GOOD WORKS**; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that the one who is an opponent may be ashamed, **having NOTHING EVIL to say about you.**"
- **Colossians 1:10** "That you may have a walk **WORTHY of the Lord**, fully **PLEASING Him**, being fruitful in every **GOOD WORK.**"
- **Matthew 5:16** "Let your light so shine before men, that they may **see your GOOD WORKS** and glorify your Father in heaven."
- **I Timothy 4:8** "...but **GODLINESS** (living for God) is profitable unto all things, having promise of the **LIFE THAT NOW IS**, and of that which is to come."
- **Psalms 34:15** "The **EYES of the Lord** are on the **RIGHTEOUS**, and **His EARS are OPEN to their cry (prayers)** ."
- **Psalms 66:18** "If I regard iniquity (hold onto **SIN**) in my heart, the Lord will not hear. But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer."
- **Proverbs 15:29** "The Lord is **FAR** from the **WICKED**, but He **HEARS** the **PRAYER** of the **RIGHTEOUS.**"

Finally, God's desire is for us to be partakers of the very life of God. No, we do not become "gods" as some religions teach. **PARTAKE** means to share or participate in; to take part in something. Rather than being **PARTAKERS** in the **SIN** and **CORRUPTION** of this world, God allows us to be **PARTAKERS** of His **DIVINE NATURE**.

- **II Peter 1:3-4** "As His divine power has given to us **ALL THINGS** that pertain to life and **GODLINESS**, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and [*His*] virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises (in His word), that through these (promises) you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."
- **Romans 6:17-18** "But God be thanked, that though **you were (used to be) slaves of sin**, yet you **obeyed** from the heart that form of doctrine (teaching) that was delivered to you. And **having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.**"