

Discussion Questions

Forgiven Even Before You Had a Chance to Sin—Ephesians 1:3-14

(Describe the most memorable gift you have ever given to someone and what made it special for you as the giver.)

- How do you think we receive God's grace?
- What role do we play? What role does God play?
- Do you think God expects or anticipates reciprocation from us for the grace He gives? Explain.

Ephesians 1:7-8 says, "*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*"

- According to this scripture, how do we receive God's grace?
- According to this scripture, what is the purpose of God redeeming and forgiving our trespasses?
- Do you think there is an end or limit to God's grace? If so, what is it? Can you find scripture to support your idea?

Space and time (chronological time) are created realities. So, if you were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the cosmos (as Ephesians 1:4 states)... that means God chose to forgive you in Christ at least 14 billion years ago (as we measure time)... before you chose to sin. And He hasn't forgiven some of your sin; He has forgiven all of it. It was all nailed to the cross in Christ Jesus, and that was the decision, the plan, from before the foundation of the world. —Peter Hiatt

- How does it feel to know that you were forgiven your sins even before you were born and that God's plan will not only be victorious for you but for "all things" "things in heaven and things on earth"?
- Does the idea of abundant grace and forgiveness for everyone—even from the very beginning make you uncomfortable, excited, nervous for yourself or others? Why?

Sometimes when we are confronted with the richness and abundance of God's grace, forgiveness, and love we start wondering:

- "If God doesn't change this world through threats of punishment and promises of rewards, how will it ever change?"
- "If God doesn't lead us to repentance with a fear of Hell and a lust for Heaven, how will He lead us to repentance?..."
- "If God doesn't punish us for spilling His own blood, how's He going to keep us from spilling more blood?"

The proclamation of forgiveness is like judgment: it fills us with this outrageous hope and abject terror. Psalm 130:3-4: "*If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared.*" Maybe the thing we fear most is the very thing we most desperately desire. We fear perfect love, and perfect love casts out fear. Maybe forgiveness is the very holiness of God, the judgment of God, the will of God, the decision of God, the very lifeblood of God. We long for it and are utterly terrified by it. For in its presence we are utterly undone. This entire world is utterly undone—consumed, in fact—by the eternal, fiery substance of God. —Peter Hiatt

We often think that God's qualities like love, grace, and forgiveness are the exact opposite of His qualities like wrath, justice, and judgment.

- What do you think about the idea that, rather than being opposites, God's justice *is* forgiveness, His judgment *is* love, His wrath *is* grace? They aren't opposites they are one for "God is One."