

UNTO A PERFECT MAN

Our last study helped us to see how a person actually comes to Christ and experiences genuine conversion. When this takes place in our lives, our "disease" of sinfulness has been brought to the heavenly Physician, and He begins the only available healing process.

At this point, some extremely important questions arise. For instance, when we submit our lives to Christ, what happens to our many past sins? What happens to all of our desires, which are ungodly and unChrist-like? What happens to the habits that we have developed from childhood that produce sin, which are as much a part of us as is our bloodstream? Do Christians sin after conversion? What is God's attitude toward a reborn Christian if he does sin? Can a Christian fall away from Christ after he has once been converted? These are important to answer.

Let us focus on two vital points in this study. First, exactly what happens to us at conversion? Second, where, when, how are all of our sinful habits weeded out of our lives? How does God relate to us and our sin problem?

1. As we have already studied, the Bible makes it very clear that we are all sinners. (Review Romans 3:10-18,23.) Thus we all need Christ and forgiveness. In John 5:1-9, we have a record of one of our Lord's many acts of healing. This story is very helpful as an illustration of what saving faith is, and how we can know we are recipients of God's promises to forgive us. Can you find these secrets, especially in verses 8 and 9? Put them in your own words.

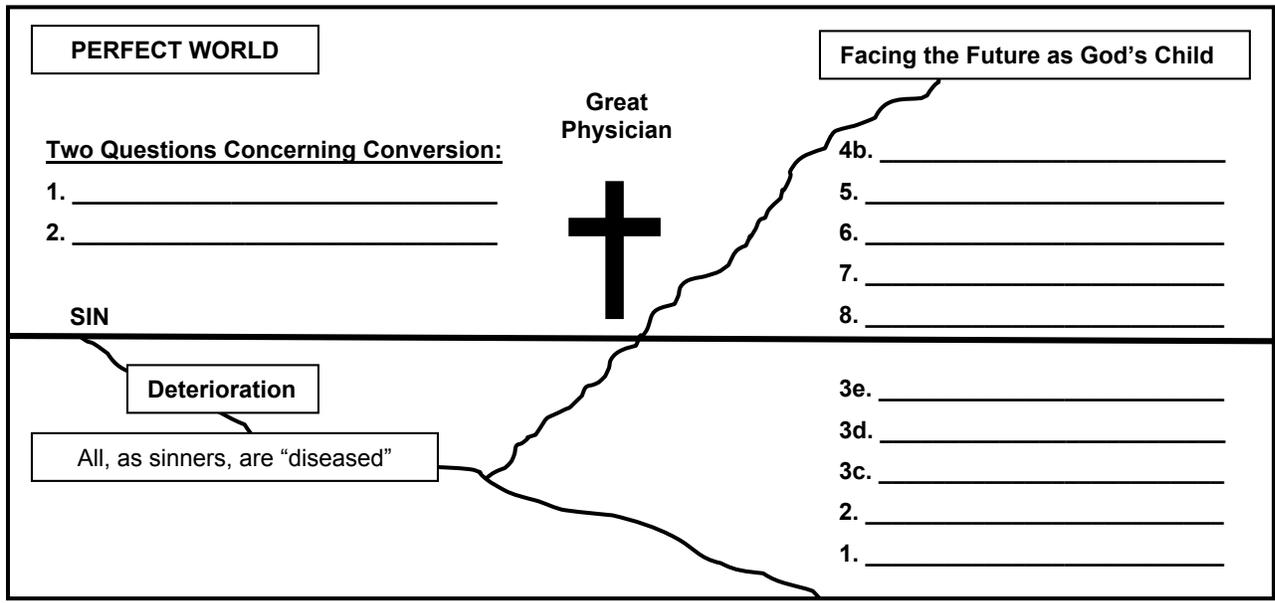
2. In Luke 7:36-50, there is a story of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet with ointment from her alabaster box. Though some present seemed shocked because Jesus accepted her act, they were even more shocked when He forgave her sins. The story says she was a great sinner. Read verses 48-50. Upon what basis did she know that her sins were actually, and totally, forgiven?

3. Analyze the following Scriptures in order to gain a fuller understanding of what conversion is, what it involves, and the full acceptance by God that is promised.

- (a) John 3:1-5 _____
- (b) John 20:30,31 _____
- (c) Romans 5:1 _____
- (d) Romans 8:1 _____
- (e) Micah 7:18,19 _____

4. The converted individual has a future to face as God's child. Will he sin again? Do "Christians" sin? What about our ugly, sin-producing habits? What happens to them? An illustration from nature can help us understand the future, daily life of the Christian. Read Mark 4: 26-29. Note the three phases of the life of a plant: Seed sprouting, growth to earing time, and the matured ear. The Christian life has the same three phases. Find them in these texts:

- (a) Seed sprouting: 2 Corinthians 5:17 _____
 - (b) Daily growth: 2 Peter 3:17,18 _____
 - (c) Final maturity: Ephesians 4:13 _____
5. One critical point in relation to question four is found in Galatians 2:20 and 1 Corinthians 15:31. What is this most important truth?
- _____
- _____
6. In relation to both questions 4 and 5, will a Christian, as he or she grows, sin? The Bible answers this question many times. Read about godly Moses and his mistake in Numbers 20:1,2,7,8,11,12. Could we say that true Christians do sin, but far more accidentally than intentionally. The Christian doesn't want to sin, but he is still learning and growing, not full-grown. As he grows, and is re-converted daily, as self is crucified daily, God reveals his habits that cause sin and removes them. Thus, the Christian finds that he is not falling where he once did. Growth is taking place, but it is a life-long process.
7. What, then, is our part from day to day? James 4:17 _____
8. What is God's part as He works with us from day to day? Phil. 4:13; 1 John 2:1 _____
- _____



1. (Review) Romans 3:10-18, 23

¹⁰As it is written:

"There is none righteous, no, not one;

¹¹*There is none who understands;*

There is none who seeks after God.

¹²*They have all turned aside;*

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one."

¹³*"Their throat is an open tomb;*

With their tongues they have practiced deceit";

"The poison of asps is under their lips";

¹⁴*"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."*

¹⁵*"Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

¹⁶*Destruction and misery are in their ways;*

¹⁷*And the way of peace they have not known."*

¹⁸*"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, . . .

John 5:1-9

¹After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ²Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. ³In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. ⁴For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. ⁵Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been *in that condition* a long time, He said to him, **"Do you want to be made well?"**

⁷The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

⁸Jesus said to him, **"Rise, take up your bed and walk."** ⁹And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.

Answer: When we act on what God has said or told us to do, it (what God has said) becomes a reality.

2. Luke 7:35-50

⁶Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. ³⁷And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, ³⁸and stood at His feet behind *Him* weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped *them* with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed *them* with the fragrant oil. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw *this*, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman *this is* who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."

⁴⁰And Jesus answered and said to him, **"Simon, I have something to say to you."**

So he said, "Teacher, say it."

⁴¹**"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.**

⁴²**And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"**

⁴³Simon answered and said, "I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more."

And He said to him, "**You have rightly judged.**" ⁴⁴Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "**Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. ⁴⁵You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. ⁴⁶You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. ⁴⁷Therefore I say to you, her sins, *which are many*, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little."**

⁴⁸Then He said to her, "**Your sins are forgiven.**"

⁴⁹And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

⁵⁰Then He said to the woman, "**Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.**"

Answer: Jesus told her she was "saved" and she didn't have to worry about them, she could be at "peace".

3a. John 3:1-5

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

³Jesus answered and said to him, "**Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**"

⁴Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

⁵Jesus answered, "**Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**

Answer: One must be "born again" of "water and the Spirit".

3b. John 20:30, 31

³⁰And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

³¹but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Answer: God has given us evidence that Jesus is the "Son of God" and that by believing in Him we might have life (eternal life).

3c. Romans 5:1

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, . . .

Answer: Our faith in Jesus allows us to be justified (considered just) by God and gives us peace with God.

3d. Romans 8:1

¹*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Answer: We will not be condemned when we live our lives as one led by the Spirit.

3e. Micah 7:18, 19

- ¹⁸ Who *is* a God like You,
 Pardoning iniquity
 And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?
 He does not retain His anger forever,
 Because He delights *in* mercy.
- ¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us,
 And will subdue our iniquities.
 You will cast all our sins
 Into the depths of the sea.

Answer: God forgives us our sins because He “delights in mercy” and He casts (forgets) our sins because He throws them into the ocean where they disappear into the depths.

4. Mark 4:26-29

²⁶ And He said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷ and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. ²⁸ For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; . . .

Answer: We grow (develop) just like a plant, in phases – **first**, the tender shoots, **second**, the early fruit appears, but not yet ripe, **third**, the fruit matures and is ready to be used.

4a. 2 Corinthians 5:17

⁷ Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Answer: When we become a follower of Christ (become born again) we become a “new” person through and through, but there is still growth (development) to take place.

4b. 2 Peter 3:17, 18

¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; ¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Answer: The more we grow (get to know God and the kind of Person He is) the more steadfast we will become and we won't be “led away with the error the wicked”.

4c. Ephesians 4:13

¹³till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; . . .

Answer: The more we know about the kind of Person God is, the more we will be attracted to Him, trust Him, follow Him, and become like Jesus.

5. Galatians 2:20

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

5. 1 Corinthians 15:31

³¹I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

Answer: Jesus gave evidence of His love for us by dying in our place and we must be willing to “die daily” (surrender our lives) to Christ and allow Him to live in and through us as our faith (trust) grows the more we know and understand God’s love.

6. Numbers 20:1, 2, 7, 8, 11, 12

¹Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.

²Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. ³And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: “If only we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! ⁴Why have you brought up the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? ⁵And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It *is* not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor *is* there any water to drink.” ⁶So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them.

⁷Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ⁸“Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.” ⁹So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him.

¹⁰And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?” ¹¹Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

¹²Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”

Note: We could say that true Christians do sin, but far more accidentally than intentionally. The Christian doesn’t want to sin, but he is still learning and growing, not fully grown. As he grows, and is re-converted daily, as self is crucified daily, God reveals his habits that cause sin and removes them. Thus, the Christian finds that he is not falling where he once did. Growth is taking place, but it is a life-long process.

7. Our Part:

James 4:7

⁷Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Answer: We are to “submit” (surrender) to God and actively “resist the devil”.

8. God’s Part:

Philippians 4:13

¹³I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

1 John 2:1

¹My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Answer: God provides “strength” that we may not sin, but if we do accidentally sin, He graciously forgives us through Jesus Christ the righteous.

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Notes for the Instructor

Purpose of Lesson 7: Many who accept Christ (as in lesson 6) find much confusion when they find themselves confronted with many of the same temptations after their conversion. Many also find guilt difficult to handle even though they have asked, and believed in, forgiveness. It is the purpose here to deal with these problems, and to see that Christian growth involves "steps" in a sense just as accepting Christ involved "steps."

During the study itself: In connection with question 1, Ellen White uses the story of John 5:1-9, to illustrate how the sinner is made whole spiritually. Read Steps to Christ, pages 50, 51. The idea is excellent to give strength to what the new Christian did in the previous lesson. You do not need to reveal the source of your idea. The same book contains an excellent discussion on growth in connection with question 4 and 5.

Appeal: After reading the Scriptures of questions 7 and 8, it is important that we help the student to know that it is far more important to know what to do when we make a mistake, than to sit and mourn the mistake itself. Teach people to get rid of the sin immediately. And help them to be patient as God polishes the stone through testing and trial.

Illustration: In connection with the appeal, and as a final illustration, you might draw a tree on the transparency. Label it "sin." Then add a shadow, and label it "guilt." When we claim forgiveness, God cuts the tree down. And when a tree is cut down, what happens to the shadow? The point: In the lifelong following of Christ, and with the tripping of the toe at times, God always forgives in answer to the sincere request, and leaves us with no need to carry guilt when we have been forgiven. This is, in itself, a powerful dynamic to further and more rapid growth.

