

# ***The Wonder of Grace***

Herman Hoeksema

2021 Edition

## **Study Guide**

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## Preface

Herman Hoeksema's *The Wonder of Grace* is an absolute treasure, a timeless classic to instruct and encourage Christians of all ages. The book was originally a set of radio broadcasts on the *Reformed Witness Hour* in the early 1940s, then published by W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company in 1944. The uniqueness of this book is that it is not an exhaustive work of dogmatics; rather, it consists of short chapters presenting the basic truths of the various elements of God's saving grace. This palatable presentation is helpful for the layman as he delves into the deep, rich truths that Hoeksema has further developed in his *Reformed Dogmatics*.

Hoeksema's theology is clear in every chapter. The thread woven throughout the book is God's eternal, loving decree to elect a chosen people, to manifest that divine mind in his Son Jesus Christ through the death of the cross, and then to apply that beautiful truth of salvation to us in our lifetime. Hoeksema's conviction is that the eternal is made real for the Christian in his or her everyday life. This is not a theology "in the clouds," but a truth that proves practical for God's children, assuring them through faith of their salvation in Christ.

The questions in this study guide are of varying forms. Some questions are simply designed as an aid to give organization and structure to the chapters. Other questions are crafted to foster and promote profitable and lively discussion on the topics raised in the book. Finally, my overall aim was that a number of questions would be personal and real for the child of God. For these questions, each individual who studies the book can respond uniquely and personally to how God has used the precious truths of grace in his or her life.

This study guide is by no means exhaustive, for anyone who studies *The Wonder of Grace* will be plunged headlong into a myriad of questions regarding the mystery of God's plan of salvation. If heaven will be an eternity of learning more of the wonder of grace, then certainly on this side of the grave there can only be seeing "through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but *then shall I know even as also I am known*" (I Cor. 13:12). Eternity to eternity! What a wonder of his amazing grace!

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# ***The Wonder of Grace***

## **Chapter 1: The Idea of Salvation by Grace**

*“For by grace are ye saved.” Ephesians 2:8*

1. The book demonstrates the beauty of God’s saving grace. What are the different uses of the concept of grace as used in Scripture? (See Phil. 1:6, 2 Cor. 12:9, 1 Pet. 4:10.)
2. What is the difference between God’s saving grace and God’s mercy?
3. Is it your experience that you never “grow weary of hearing the gospel of salvation by sovereign grace proclaimed and expounded unto him in all the riches of its implications”? How so?
4. What is the important starting point for the comfort of salvation by grace?
5. What is salvation?
6. Hoeksema references a “modernistic conception” of salvation. What is modernism, and is it still a threat today?
7. Why does non-Reformed Christianity not understand the concept of grace?
8. What is your reaction to Hoeksema’s observation that “[salvation] is a work no less divine, and even more glorious, than the work of creation”?

9. The emphasis of this first chapter is our hopeless condition. Many Christians might say that God divides the sheep and the goats *from a neutral condition*, namely, that man is neither naturally “good” nor naturally “bad.” How would you refute this assumption and demonstrate the power of God’s grace?
  
10. Describe the amazing result or “highest good” for the recipient of God’s powerful grace.
  
11. God’s grace becomes an even more amazing reality when we consider that it *even works in us desire for deliverance!* Find biblical support for this statement. Can you testify to this from your own life?
  
12. What spiritual truths do you hope to develop in understanding through studying this book?

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## **Chapter 2: Chosen by Grace**

*“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.” Ephesians 1:4*

1. Define the doctrine of election.
2. Why do many believe the ideas that “sovereign grace must needs be particular grace” and “particular grace presupposes free and sovereign election” are truths that belong in the “antique shop”?
3. As a Christian, what comfort do you take in Hoeksema’s statement regarding the doctrine of election, that “a majority vote surely cannot be trusted to determine what is truth concerning God, Christ, man, and his salvation”? Can you think of any other doctrinal views to which you hold that would be unpopular with the majority of Christians today?
4. List the three elements of the doctrine of election. Identify proof for each one from Scripture and the confessions.
5. The idea of “foreknowledge” as used in Romans 8:29 (“**for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate**”) is the same idea used in Genesis 4:1 (“**and Adam knew Eve his wife**”). How do these verses reject the false teaching regarding election that God *knew* in eternity that we would believe in him?
6. How does Scripture bring together in a beautiful way the truth of election and the church’s calling to do mission work? (See Acts 13:48, Acts 18:10, Jonah 4:9–11.)



7. What does Hoeksema mean when he says, “for their very will to come is already the fruit of grace and the outflow of eternal election”?
  
8. The theme of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is “the unity of the church as the body of Christ.” How does this help understand (1) why Chapter 1 involves the doctrine of election and (2) that election is organic?
  
9. Does the fact that God doesn’t arbitrarily choose his people mean there is a *reason* why he chose you?
  
10. What is *vicarious* atonement? What is meant by the statement, “election and vicarious atonement are inseparably connected”?
  
11. The skeptic of the truly Reformed position on eternal election would say that it provides no comfort (Romans 9). How would you refute this and declare, like Hoeksema, that “this doctrine affords us unspeakable consolation and is the source of all true comfort and assurance”?

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## **Chapter 3: Reconciled by Grace**

*"Be ye reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5:20*

1. Define reconciliation. What is the full scope of God's reconciliation, as described in Colossians 1:20?
2. Summarize Hoeksema's three outstanding truths of reconciliation.
3. What is the connection between the eternal covenant of grace and the truth of reconciliation?
4. How does the story of Hosea confirm the truths (1) that man has been unfaithful in the covenant, and (2) that God is the author of the reconciliation (Hos. 1-3)?
5. Hoeksema makes a distinction between how men *can* reconcile with each other and how man and God *must* reconcile. What are some truths about God that make this distinction necessary?
6. What are some of the necessary ways for a man to reconcile to God? How does this point us to Christ?
7. How does the reality of man's hopeless condition bring you back to the wonder of grace?
8. How is the gospel the ministry of reconciliation?

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### Chapter 4: United with Christ by Grace

*“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” Romans 6:5*

1. What are three uses of *grace* found in Scripture and mentioned by Hoeksema in this chapter?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is the key difference between the second and third uses of *grace*?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What is the biblical basis for Hoeksema’s statement: “Christ *is* our salvation”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Our Lord made bold statements about himself during his earthly ministry, declaring that he *is* the bread of life, water of life, light of the world, and the resurrection and the life. Why might these statements have been so shocking, both to his hearers then and to people today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Hoeksema illustrates the truth that Christ *gives* us life, rest, peace, and everlasting satisfaction by reminding us that we receive our tap water from a reservoir and our energy from a power plant. Can you think of other examples that might help to understand this amazing truth?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How significant is our union and incorporation into Christ? How is it accomplished?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Hoeksema identifies the absurdity of preaching that we are united to Christ through our first coming to him. Why is this so absurd?

8. The preaching in many Christian churches contains such an element of coming to Christ. How are we to view these churches *and* the Christians within them? Are they genuine, yet misguided? Can they still understand *grace* in the third sense mentioned earlier in the chapter?
  
9. Why is the doxology of election from Ephesians 1:3–4 used to close this chapter on our being united to Christ by grace?

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### **Chapter 5: Regenerated by Grace**

*“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”  
John 3:3*

1. This chapter begins with the familiar picture from nature of a young scion being grafted onto the trunk of another tree. Why should this illustration draw out of our souls a deep sense of humility?
  
2. Hoeksema says, “Before a man is regenerated, he can do nothing positive in regard to the spiritual things of the kingdom of God.” How does Scripture prove this statement?
  
3. How is regeneration defined? What does this wonder of God’s grace mean to you personally?
  
4. What are three follow-up observations to the basic truth of regeneration?
  
5. It is easy for Christians to view sin *only* in the sense of behavior. Why is this not the full scope of what sin truly is? How does the doctrine of sin relate to regeneration?
  
6. Many years ago, Billy Graham was quoted as saying that God’s mercy is wide enough to save those in far-off places who have never heard the gospel. Hoeksema says that the natural man doesn’t even *possess* the power to understand and discern the truth of the gospel. How does regeneration accomplish our lack of power to know Christ through the gospel?
  
7. What is the important distinction between regeneration and conversion? How does this distinction play out practically?

8. Twice in the chapter, Hoeksema connects regeneration with resurrection. First, “let us remember that the new birth is resurrection,” and second, “[regeneration] is a beginning of the resurrection; it is a principle of the resurrection-life of Christ himself!” What is the connection between regeneration and the reality of the resurrection?
  
9. Based on what you’ve read and studied in this chapter on regeneration, why is it illogical to say that regeneration depends on the will of the sinner?
  
10. Hoeksema closes the chapter with the practical significance of regeneration. How can parents be encouraged by the beautiful truth of regeneration?
  
11. What is the relationship between Chapter 4 (united with Christ) and regeneration?
  
12. What do you think is meant by Hoeksema in the very last sentence: “The gifts of God are without repentance”?
  
13. Hoeksema does not discuss mediate regeneration vs. immediate regeneration in this chapter. Do you believe that regeneration can take place without means? Why or why not? Which Bible passages would you use to support your answer?

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### **Chapter 6: Called by Grace**

*"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called." Romans 8:30*

1. Hoeksema continues the thought of Chapter 5 by supposing that the work of grace ends after regeneration. Why does he say that grace must continue into our *calling*?
2. To understand how the Bible speaks of this amazing truth, quote a few Scripture passages that speak of our *calling*.
3. Find examples in the confessions that speak of our *calling*.
4. What is the significance of our *calling* in God's work of salvation?
5. As you read and study the chapter, identify the four elements of our *calling*.
6. What metric must be used to determine the authority of preaching?
7. How can the church in the twenty-first century be in danger of some of Hoeksema's cautions regarding straying from preaching the whole counsel of God, namely, emphasis of moral lessons, self-help, political agendas, etc.?
8. What does it mean that our calling by grace comes with divine authority and power?

9. What is the difference between the *external* and *internal* call of the gospel?

10. Four times in this chapter, Hoeksema quotes the words of Jesus: "Come unto me and rest."  
What do these words mean to *you*?



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### **Chapter 7: Believing through Grace**

*“And that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8*

1. Hoeksema used the preposition “by” in the previous six chapter titles. Is there a reason “through” is used in Chapter 7?
2. Is there a difference between *faith in Christ* and *believing in Christ*?
3. Is it possible for a Christian to be weak in true faith so he or she operates solely through natural faith?
4. Why does Hoeksema call faith a “mysterious and wonderful spiritual power”?
5. Hoeksema unpacks the two main elements of true faith as described in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 7, Q&A 21. What are some of his main points regarding (1) faith as true spiritual knowledge and (2) faith as a sure and hearty confidence?
6. How does Hoeksema impress upon you that faith is no work of man?
7. Why is it proper to call faith a *means* of God unto our salvation?

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### **Chapter 8: Justified by Grace**

*“And whom he called, them he also justified.” Romans 8:30*

1. Why does Hoeksema say that the truth of justification is both the *greatest* and *most fundamental* of all the blessings of salvation?
  
2. Hoeksema says, “He cannot look with favor upon the ungodly. If, then, we are to become the objects of his lovingkindness, *it is a prerequisite that we are righteous.*” In the next paragraph, he says, “The wonder of this justification is that *at the very moment when God declares us righteous, we are very really sinners*, worthy of damnation in ourselves, and that of this we are deeply conscious.” How can you reconcile these two statements?
  
3. Write out the verdict that God declares to *you*.
  
4. *How* are we justified? Cite a few Scripture passages to support this.
  
5. How is it possible that the righteousness of Christ is *our* righteousness?
  
6. Hoeksema lays out an important distinction in this chapter. We are justified by faith, but faith is not the ground of our justification. Why is there a difference, and why is it important?
  
7. Define faith. What is the significance for you personally that you are justified by faith alone?

8. How would you respond to someone who says, "Your doctrine of free justification is dangerous and makes one careless in their walk with Christ"?

9. Have you ever had someone challenge you on your belief in free justification?

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### **Chapter 9: Converted by Grace**

*“Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.” Jeremiah 31:18*

1. Hoeksema begins this chapter on conversion with some powerful statements on justification and our union to Christ. What are these statements, and what is the relationship between justification and conversion?
  
2. What are some ways that Scripture speaks of conversion in the Old Testament?
  
3. What are some ways that Scripture speaks of conversion in the New Testament?
  
4. Read Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 33. What is the relationship between daily conversion and repentance? Are they the same? Is daily conversion a good work that we perform?
  
5. Based on the Scripture passages cited in the chapter, summarize the main characteristics of conversion.
  
6. What does Hoeksema mean when he says that conversion is “a turning about of the whole man”?
  
7. How do you distinguish in your own heart between *true sorrow* and *counterfeit sorrow*?

8. When you pray, as the publican did, that “God be merciful to me a sinner,” how is that evidence of God’s grace in your heart?
  
9. Read Ephesians 4:22–24 and Colossians 3:10. Consider the illustration of two winter coats: a dirty, smelly coat and a clean, brand-new coat. It is a truism<sup>1</sup> that you would choose the clean coat to put on each day. According to daily conversion, we are commanded to spiritually *put on* the “new coat” of true holiness in a sanctified walk with the Lord, but we often choose the dirty, smelly coat. How does this relate to our struggle with daily conversion?
  
10. Read Acts 9:1–6 and Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus. The Lord came to him when he was at the height of his hatred for the church, and powerfully changed his heart in an instant. Can you identify with this type of conversion, or do you find yourself unable to pinpoint the very moment of your conversion? What are some of Hoeksema’s reasons that a person might prefer the latter experience of a “gradual and unnoticeable” conversion?
  
11. Why is our conversion, regardless of our experience, solely the power of God’s grace?

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<sup>1</sup> A statement that is obviously true and says nothing new or interesting.

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Chapter 10: Working Out Our Salvation by Grace

*“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Philippians 2:12*

1. What is the motivation of the “thoughtless quoting” of Philippians 2:12?
  
2. Who is Philippians 2:12 addressed to? How does this provide clear meaning to the text?
  
3. How can Philippians 2:12 be understood correctly *without* the context of being addressed to those who are saved?
  
4. What is the relationship between *working out your own salvation* and the analogy Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 9:24–26?
  
5. What is meant when Hoeksema says we must “let our salvation serve and reach the purpose for which it was given to us”?
  
6. What are a few ideas that capture the meaning of *working out your own salvation*”?
  
7. Is there a unique, personal salvation for each elect child of God, because their sins are unique to them only?

8. What comfort do you take from Hoeksema's warning not to think that each believer must work out his own salvation to a special, high, and lofty purpose (for example, improving the world, being office-bearers, bringing souls to Christ, etc.)?
  
9. If God's grace will automatically work such a response in us, why is the exhortation to work out our salvation necessary?
  
10. What does Hoeksema mean when he says, "For we must walk as children of the light and *manifest* the salvation of God in the midst of a world that lies in darkness"?
  
11. Why should we tremble and fear as we work out our own salvation?
  
12. How can you relate to the final paragraph of the chapter?

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### Chapter 11: Good Works through Grace

*“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” John 15:8*

1. Write out the definition of good works according to Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 91. Is it significant that Q&A 86, a few questions before, assumes the concept of good works?
  
2. Why is it important to understand that our good works were ordained by God in eternity?
  
3. How striking is the analogy of Handel’s *Messiah* to help us understand the eternal nature of our good works? How does God’s amazing counsel regarding our good works connect back to page 13 of Chapter 2, in which Hoeksema describes election as *organic*?
  
4. Give a few important characteristics of our good works.
  
5. The world creates the concept of what is “good” in many ways, including as that which is tested by experience, or that which benefits the person (even though, from an earthly perspective, doing the right thing can get one killed, and doing the wrong thing can lead to a reward). Explain the freedom for you as a Christian in defining “good” as that which flows out of the law of God.
  
6. How personal for *you* is it to read the emphasis that an outward act (giving to charity, for example) is not in and of itself a good work?
  
7. What are the two reasons given for why an outward act is not sufficient to determine what is good before God?



8. How are purpose and motive related in connection with our good works?
  
9. Ponder all the ways your actions and attitudes can parallel the example of the Pharisee in Jesus' day. How does this outward show relate to what Hoeksema wrote?

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### **Chapter 12: Suffering through Grace**

*“For unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” Philippians 1:29*

1. In what ways is grace involved in the suffering of God’s people?
2. How is Chapter 10 connected with the idea of suffering in Chapter 12?
3. What are the different kinds of suffering and persecution that God’s people can endure?
4. Is there a Scripture passage related to suffering that has brought you comfort in your own unique experiences? Write it out here.
5. What is striking about the original Greek of Philippians 1:29?
6. In Chapter 9 on conversion, Hoeksema suggested that different experiences of conversion might be preferred over others (page 70). Do either of these experiences of conversion affect the suffering that a Christian will face in this life?
7. Many nominal Christians identify Jesus Christ as their Savior. Genuine Christians identify Jesus Christ as their Savior *and* Lord. What is the key difference in this latter group, and why will genuine Christians always be the focus of persecution?

8. Read Acts 7. The reason for the intense hatred by the Sanhedrin of Stephen was that he was a *living testimony of Jesus Christ*. Hoeksema states that “[Christ] is really in his church, in his saints, in whom he dwells by his spirit and whom he calls and instructs through his Word.” How does this statement relate to why we are easily identified with him, and therefore, hated by the world?
  
9. What does Hoeksema mean when he repeatedly says that we *choose* suffering, and that it is voluntary?
  
10. There is comfort at the end of the chapter for the Christian’s life of suffering. How do you testify that grace is the only explanation for our perseverance?

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### **Chapter 13: Victory through Grace**

*“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Revelation 2:10*

1. What does it mean “to overcome”? How does this fit with the references in Revelation 2–3?
  
2. Hoeksema says on page 98 that “All [the references in Revelations 2–3] presupposes, of course, that the believer in this world has a battle to fight, and that only in the way of battle can he gain the victory and obtain the crown.” Describe the battle for *you* as a Christian.
  
3. Describe the “very precarious position” which the Christian occupies in this spiritual battle.
  
4. In describing the battle, Hoeksema affirms the reality (page 99) that no one can attain perfection. What does this have to do with our spiritual battle?
  
5. In addition to our internal warfare, which two other factors make the battle precarious? How powerful are they?
  
6. After setting up the precarious battle for each Christian, Hoeksema asks, “Will he, then, be able to stand and to persevere even unto the end?” The answer: “Yes, he will be able, *but only through preserving grace.*” How can this be explained?
  
7. Quote from articles in Head 5 of the Canons of Dordt that comfort you in your spiritual battle.

8. Read Revelation 12:10–17. Which verse provides comfort that the Christian does not fight *for* victory, but *in* victory? Why is this so counterintuitive for the world?
  
9. Five times in *The Wonder of Grace*, including on page 103, Hoeksema quotes Romans 11:29, that “The gifts of God are without repentance.” What does this verse have to do with our victory?
  
10. Read the doxology of praise from 1 Corinthians 15:57 (quoted by Hoeksema on page 102). What is the relationship between the resurrection of our Lord and our final victory?

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### **Chapter 14: Assurance of Grace**

*“Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” 2 Peter 1:10*

1. Define election. What are some characteristics of it that are important to establish?
  
2. 2 Peter 2:10 admonishes believers to “make their calling and election sure.” Hoeksema responds, “It is evident, then, that we have something to do with election.” Reconcile Hoeksema’s statement with Canons, Head 1, articles 9 & 10.
  
3. Why is 1 Peter 1:3–4 so important in understanding 1 Peter 2:10?
  
4. What is the meaning of the fact that the word *calling* precedes *election* in 1 Peter 1:10?
  
5. For the second time in this book, Hoeksema declares the truism that the believer is not always on the mountaintops of faith but still has the full assurance of eternal glory. How does this relate to the value, importance, and meaning of *making our calling and election sure*?
  
6. What must we *do* to “make our calling and election sure”?
  
7. How do we obtain assurance of our election and calling?
  
8. Is “making our calling and election sure” ever finished? Explain.

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### Chapter 15: Glorified through Grace

*“And whom he justified, them he also justified.” Romans 8:30*

1. How important is the first line of the chapter, that “The believer in this world *is* saved,” for understanding Hoeksema’s system of theology expressed throughout this book?
  
2. The two sets of references on pages 113 and 114 provide the truth that the principle of our salvation is *accomplished*, but that the *goal* has not been realized. Why is understanding this balance so important for the child of God?
  
3. Do any of the Scripture passages on pages 114–115 speak in an especially powerful way to your soul?
  
4. What does eternal life mean to *you*?
  
5. What are the three aspects of the change that will take place in us?
  
6. How is transformation possible for each one of God’s elect children?
  
7. The phrase that serves as the title of this book, *wonder of grace*, is used repeatedly through this final chapter. What are some of its uses?

8. The doxology of praise found in Romans 11:33–36 concludes both the chapter and book. What does this doxology have to do with God’s purpose in determining all things revealed in this book?
  
9. Is Hoeksema’s theology set forth in *The Wonder of Grace* also *your* theology according to the inspired Word of God? Explain.
  
10. Take note of a few ideas from *The Wonder of Grace* that you hadn’t considered before your reading. Have these ideas rejuvenated your soul in response to the great wonder of God’s sovereign grace in *your* heart? Explain.