



Amazing *Grace*

— *Study Guide* —

Prevenient Grace

Week 1 - Jan. 10
Romans 7:7-25; 8:31-39

As we come to look at, consider and get in touch with the grace of God over the next four weeks we will be considering our Wesleyan roots and understanding of God's grace. As we do so we will come to understand that there is only one grace of God but that there are differing ways that we experience it. Today we come to look at Prevenient Grace.

Prevenient grace is the grace of God working in our lives before we have knowledge or awareness of Him. God's Word tells us that He loves us even before we even know it. It is God's grace working in a way that He is preparing our hearts to be supple and receptive to His work in us. Prevenient Grace is God working in our lives even before we are aware of Him, wooing us into a relationship with Him, never pressing us, but rather knocking - knocking at the doors of our hearts. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him/her, and he/she with me."

While all of us want to experience the great hope and promise that nothing can separate us from the love of God we need to understand that the journey begins with Prevenient Grace. For us to be ready to respond to God's offer of salvation (His saving grace), we need to be awakened to our need for it. Paul in Romans Chapter 7 begins to show us how God's prevenient grace works to awaken us and woo us into a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus.

1. Paul points out that it is God's law found in His Word that makes us aware of our sinfulness.

Romans 7:7-11 "What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. 9 Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. 10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. 11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death."

Paul wants us to understand that the Word of God helps us understand our brokenness, our sinfulness and our sin nature that separates us from God.

How has God's Word helped you understand these things in your life? What feelings/emotions did it evoke? Do we allow God's Word to speak the truth concerning our sinfulness or do we tend to gloss it over seeking to convince ourselves that we aren't really all that bad?

What changes need to take place in order that we might begin to come to terms with our sinfulness?

2. Paul goes on to point out that God's law found in His word is holy and righteous and that as we come to understand it we begin to become aware of our guilt.

Romans 7:12-20 "So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. 13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the

commandment sin might become utterly sinful. 14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 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. 19 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. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.”

Paul is seeking to help the Romans and us to understand that no matter how hard we try we are always going to fall short. He likewise wants us to know that God in His Word and through His prevenient grace works in our lives bringing about an understanding that we stand guilty before a Holy God. While we don't like the feeling of guilt we need to understand that it has a very real purpose as it exposes our sin and shows us our need for forgiveness.

Do we tend to shy away from God's Word and/or being in His presence because it makes us aware of our guilt? How willing are we to allow God's prevenient grace to help bring about that awareness? What needs to happen in our lives and faith journey to help us do so?

3. Paul continues by pointing out that we are a wretched people who stand in need of hope and help.

Romans 7:21-24 “So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Paul is seeking to help us understand that there is a constant battle raging within us. We know what is right to do, but yet we do not do it as we allow our sinful nature have control. If we are not careful we can get comfortable in our sin and in so doing resistant to God's law and holiness. As we do we find ourselves being miserable. We need to understand that God's prevenient grace continues to work in our lives calling us to a life of forgiveness and holiness.

How have you experienced this battle within you? Are you experiencing this battle now? How have you found yourself becoming an overcomer of it?

4. Paul shares the good news that there is a way to be rescued.

Romans 7:25 “Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”

Paul declares the Good News that we can be rescued, not by anything we have done or can do, but through Christ.

What do you hear God saying concerning His prevenient grace?

What will you do about it? How will you respond?

How can the group help?

How can we help one another better understand God's grace working in our lives?

How can we help others understand God's grace working in their life?





Justifying Grace

Week 2 - Jan 17
Romans 8:1-11, 31-39

Last week we looked at and considered God's prevenient grace and saw how God works in our lives to help us understand that we live in brokenness because of sin in our lives. We saw that He extends His grace to us wooing us into a relationship with Himself through His Son Jesus. We looked at Revelation 3:20 where Jesus says, ***"Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him/her, and he/she with me."***

Today we come to look at, consider and get in touch with justifying grace - God's grace working in our lives when we say our yes to the personal relationship He is offering us - allowing Him to be both Savior and Lord. It is that moment when we not only hear Jesus knocking at the door of our hearts, but taking the step of opening it and inviting Him in. Paul wants us to know the good news that anyone and everyone can be rescued and experience the promise that nothing can separate us from the love of God. In the scripture passage for today he explains the work of justifying grace.

In the first few verses of Romans chapter 8, the Apostle Paul explains the work of justifying grace in simple, yet profound terms:

1. Paul begins by pointing out that there is now no condemnation because the law of the Spirit sets us free.

Romans 8:1-4 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, 4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit."

Paul speaks of our sinful nature that keeps us bound in shame that keeps us from experiencing the freedom God wants us to have in Christ. But more importantly he declares with boldness that as we say our "yes" to Jesus and allow his grace to begin to work in our lives we are set free from condemnation.

What kind of thoughts, feelings, and insights does this evoke?

Do you think we fully understand the freedom offered to us in God's justifying grace?

What are some ways we can live that freedom out?

What are some ways that we can help others find that same freedom?

2. He continues to share about the change that takes place in our minds which in turn changes our view of God and ourselves.

Romans 8:5-8 "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."

Justifying grace brings about a change in the way that we think about and view God, others and ourselves. We begin to see things, situations, people and ourselves from a heavenly perspective. As Paul puts it we are no longer held captive by our sinful nature that keeps us looking at things, including ourselves, from a worldly point of view. It starts us on the path of seeking to live our lives in such a way that our desire is to please God in all we do.

When you experienced God's justifying grace how did it change your view of God? Of others? Of yourself? How did these changes affect your desire to live your life in a way that pleased God in all that you do? In what ways can we know we are growing in our desire to please God?

3. Finally, Paul wants us to understand that in justifying grace the Spirit of Jesus begins to live in us and gives us right standing with God as well as new life.

Romans 8:9-11 "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

One of the most amazing truths of the New Testament is that when we accept Jesus and live under justifying grace the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives inside of us. We possess and become possessed by the Spirit of the risen and living Jesus. This means that we begin to receive the gifts and fruit of the Spirit. It likewise means we have standing before a righteous and holy God. When God looks at us—he sees his Son's righteousness and not our sinfulness. It is as if our sin had never happened and we get a new and fresh start.

Someone has said, ***"Justification is the sovereign act of God whereby He declares righteous the believing sinner while he/she is still in the sinning state. It means that while we were still prone to sin, God saw us in Christ and says, 'You're righteous! I declare you to be right in my eyes. You don't have to work to find favor with me.'"***

Do you think we fully understand this or do we continue to seek to "earn" our righteousness?

What do you hear God saying concerning His justifying grace?

What will you do about it? How will you respond?

How can the group help?

How can we help one another better understand God's grace working in our lives?

How can we help others understand and find God's grace in their life?



Sanctifying Grace

Week 3 - Jan 24
Romans 8:9-17, 31-39

Thus far we have looked at and considered prevenient grace - God's grace working in our lives from conception on wooing us into a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus. We then looked at and considered justifying grace - God's grace working in our lives when we come to realize our sinfulness and brokenness and say our yes to God who redeems us and makes us new. Today we come to look at, consider, and get in touch with sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace is the grace God gives that allows His life to be formed in us. Sanctifying grace is seen in the development of the fruit of the Spirit in us as we grow in our walk with the Lord.

Sanctifying grace is the gift of God providing the desire and the power to grow in our relationship with God - forever. Just as our physical birth begins for us the physical process of growth and maturity, so our spiritual birth begins for us the process of spiritual growth and maturity. When we are young what is one of the things that is uppermost on our minds? Growing up! Well the same holds true for us spiritually. It is great to experience God's grace initially, but then we begin to have a hunger to experience even more of God. Sanctifying grace is the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit working in and through our hearts perfecting us in God's love and grace, helping us to grow into the very image of His Son Jesus Christ moment by moment, day by day, month after month, and year after year.

Paul in our scripture passage for today helps us gain insight into sanctifying grace. He points out that it is the Spirit of Jesus who gives us right standing and new life in Christ. He likewise points out that in this new life we are adopted into God's family as His children. As His children we have an obligation to avoid sin. Paul likewise wants us to understand that as we grow in God's grace we are set free from sin, fear, and death itself. We are forgiven, redeemed and set free to live the life God desires for us as we allow the Holy Spirit to be our guide helping us to grow in God's grace.

Romans 8:9-11

9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. 12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation - but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

*Do you think we fully understand the meaning and impact of the Spirit of God living in us?
What are some ways that you have seen evidence of this in your life?
Do you think we fully understand the freedom from our sinful nature that is ours in Christ?
Do we fully live our lives in this freedom? If not, what hinders us from doing so?
How have you utilized this freedom to grow in your relationship with God and others?
What does it mean to you to be a child of God?*

*What does it mean to you when Paul says, **"Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."***

Paul wants us to know that it is not enough for us to just experience God's grace, but we also need to be responding to it and growing in it.

What do you hear God saying concerning His sanctifying grace?

What will you do about it? How will you respond?

How can the group help?

How can we help one another, as the Body of Christ, grow in God's grace?



Glorifying Grace

Week 4 - Jan 31
Romans 8:17-30, 31-39

Today we come to look at, consider and get in touch with the final aspect of God's grace namely glorifying grace. Glorifying grace is the grace that removes the last 'bent toward sinning' that remains in our hearts when we prepare to leave this life and enter the next. Some would refer to this as "entire sanctification," but it is better known as glorifying grace. This is what Samuel Wesley was taking about when he wrote these words found in that great hymn Love Divine All Love Excelling. He writes these words: "take away our bent to sinning, Alpha and Omega be, end of faith as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty."

In a very real sense Romans chapter 8 ends where most of us wanted to begin this series—with words promising God turning everything together for good. What we need to understand is that the key in this turning is the result of the deeper working of prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace in our lives. In the end—there is one last expression of grace and it is glorifying grace.

Paul in our scripture passage for today helps us to understand glorifying grace.

1. Paul wants us to understand that as children of God who share life with Jesus, there is more to come.

Romans 8:17-18 "Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

Paul seeks to lift our eyes from the things and situations we face here on earth to the future glory that is yet to come. Do you think we understand the call for us to share in Christ's sufferings in order that we may share in His glory? What does this mean to you? Do you think that we too often allow our "present sufferings", those things that we come up against in our daily lives, to cause us to lose hope as we take our eyes off Jesus and His promise of glory? What changes might need to take place in order to keep this from happening?

2. Paul continues as he shares that creation is waiting and needing to see who you are as a child of God.

Romans 8:19-21 "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."

Paul wants us to know that as we allow justifying and sanctifying grace to work in our lives the world around us is waiting to see our identity as children of God to be revealed. That is the world is looking for the change God has brought about in us – in our relationship with Him, with others, in every aspect of our lives. Paul seeks to point our eyes to that day when all of creation will be restored from the effects of the Fall and that includes us.

Do you think we see ourselves as children of God? What makes it easy? What, if anything, makes it difficult?

How might we live our lives differently that the world might see God's grace working in our lives? That they might see that we are children of God?

Do you think we look forward to that day when God will restore "all" things from the effects of the Fall?

3. Paul shares with us the need for hope, but not just any hope, but rather a hope that comes from God points out the very real fact that we all know the pain of longing for hope, which God alone provides.

Romans 8:22-25 "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Paul wants us to understand that this hope that comes from God is one that is obtained through patient waiting in faith. It has been said that this is not a "hope so" kind of faith but rather a "know so" kind of hope.

Do you think that we understand this hope that Paul speaks about?

Do you think we tend to lean more toward a "hope so" kind of faith?

How would life be lived differently if we lived with a "know so" kind of faith?

4. Paul wants us to know that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in our weakness.

Romans 8:26-27 "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."

What does it mean to you that the Holy Spirit intercedes on your behalf?

Do you think we rely on the Spirit as much as we should? If not, why not?

What might happen if we did rely on the Spirit in every situation of life?

5. Finally, Paul shares God's promise that nothing that happens to us will be wasted.

Romans 8:28-30 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

Do you think that we believe that God works all things for our good? Are there times when that is difficult?

How would it change our outlook if we laid hold of this belief?

What might happen if we were to ask God to show us what he wants us to learn when we face the various situations in our lives, especially the more difficult ones?

Paul wants us to know that it is not enough for us to just experience God's grace, but we also need to be responding to it and growing in it and allowing it to be the very bases of our hope.

What do you hear God saying concerning His glorifying grace?

What will you do about it? How will you respond?

How can the group help?

How can we help one another, as the Body of Christ, grow in God's grace and His hope?

For further thought:

What do you believe about God's grace?

How does it shape who you are and how you live your life?

How does it bring about hope in your life?

How does it shape your view of eternity and your hope of glory?

