

Prevenient Grace  
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Prayer to the Holy Spirit- p. 48

INTRODUCTION-

How many of you remember your first kiss? Perhaps it was like this....

There was a young man liked a certain young lady. And he desperately wanted to kiss her...but he just didn't know how to go about it. He tried everything...or so he thought. Until one night, a brilliant idea flashed into his sneaky mind.

As the couple sat on the porch swing, enjoying the warm summer night, the young man looked up to the stars. (He figured a little poetry and religion might help.) So he managed to put his arm around his gal and proceeded to say:

*"Savior, Savior Up above, Let me Kiss the One I love."*

Nothing happened. Well, this went on for the next several nights. And each time, nothing happened. But fate would have it that the young man had a little brother, who just happened to catch his older brother's poetic attempt at romance. And so he thought he'd have a little fun.

So the next night, the younger brother climbed the big Oak tree next to the porch, and waited for big brother and his lady to arrive. And just as expected, they arrived at the usual time. They proceeded to the porch swing where romance was, hopefully, in the air. And then, as if on cue, the older brother, put his arm around his gal, looked up prayerfully at the stars, and said:

*"Savior, Savior Up Above; Let me kiss the one I love."*

And then, before he could even look at his starry-eyed companion, the young man heard a Voice booming out from Heaven:

***"Sinner, Sinner Down below, Pucker Up and let her go!"***

Our relationship with God may be like that first kiss. For some, it comes quite naturally; for others, it requires some urging and help from Above.

The title of this talk is *"Prevenient Grace"* and my name is Mark Chow.

## 1. Definition

Well, you may be wondering: *What in the world is Prevenient Grace!?*  
Let's start out with the *Definition of Grace*

a) **Grace** comes from the Greek word "charis" = gift, favor. It is the root word for our word "Charisma" which is defined by Webster as:

a personal magic of leadership

a special magnetic charm or appeal

related words:

allure, animal magnetism, appeal, attractiveness, captivation

b) We need to remember that there is only ONE Grace. God's Grace. But there are many facets

c) **Prevenient Grace** is God's grace in our lives from conception to conversion.

- "**Prevenient**": "*that which comes before*" (Latin)
- **God wooing us** (**Rev. 22:17**) The Spirit invites us to Come and drink life-giving water.
- **God drawing us** (**John 6:44-47**) No one can come to Jesus unless they are drawn by the Father...
- **God pursuing us**, like "The Hound of Heaven" (Rom 5:8) "God proves His love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
- **God freeing us** (**Rom. 8:31-39**) "God is on our side, sparing us from condemnation. God sets us free."
- **God empowering us** (**Rom 5:6**) In our weakness, we are made strong.

## 2. Message

Friends, the message is clear: *We are created for a relationship with God.*  
(repeat)

a) It started with Creation - "In the beginning God created... and "it was good" (**Gen. 1, 4**)

b) It continued with the first humans, created in the image of God (**Gen. 1:26-31**)

- As God's creation, we are unique and beloved
- God is love, we can love and be loved (1 John. 4:16) "*God is love, and whoever remains in love, remains in God.*"
- c) While there is Good News of God's love, there is Bad News of sin
  - Adam & Eve (the first humans) made choices that resulted in loss and disorder, but God provided for them and still loved them. (Gen. 3:1-24)
  - The Truth is, we all continue to make bad choices, yet God provides for us
  - While there is bad news of our sin, the Good News is that *God's love and grace are greater than all of our sin*

### 3. Good News:

Because of that, God continues to offer us a relationship

a) God wants us more than we want Him. (Jer. 31:3) "*I have loved you with an everlasting love.*"

b) God's love: Covenantal love

From the beginning God has been offering us a relationship. a covenant relationship. binding agreement. like a marriage covenant. two parties.

1) God made a Covenant with Noah. After a great flood, God established a covenant - a promise that never again would flood waters destroy the earth. (Genesis 9.8-17)

2) God also made a covenant with Abram. He promised that Abram would be the *Father of Many Nations*...in exchange for obedience. (Genesis 12.1-3)

3) God made a covenant with Moses and asked for obedience: "*If you obey My Voice and keep My Covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me*" (Exodus 19.3-6)

4) God establishes the New Covenant where God says, "*I will put My law on your hearts...and I will be Your God, and you will be my people.*" (Jeremiah 31.31-34)

5) Jesus give a new commandment: *Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.* (John 13:34-35)

GOD HAS CONSTANTLY BEEN OFFERING US A COVENANT RELATIONSHIP  
...AND IT IS A RELATIONSHIP OF GRACE.

Martin Bell, in his book, The Way of the Wolf, tells this story:

Once upon a time in a large forest there lived a very furry bunny. He had one lop ear, a tiny black nose, and unusually shiny eyes. His name was Barrington.

Barrington was not really a very handsome bunny. He was brown and speckled and his ears didn't stand up right. But he could hop, and he was very furry.

Now, in some ways, winter was fun for bunnies, as they could hop in the snow. But, for Barrington, it was a sad time. While all the other animals in the forest got together in their cozy homes for Christmas, Barrington was alone. As far as he knew, he was the only bunny in the forest.

When Christmas Eve finally came, Barrington did not feel like going home all by himself. So, he decided that he would hop awhile in the clearing in the center of the forest.

Hop. Hop. Hippity-hop.

Then, looking back, he thought to himself, *Bunnies can hop. And they are very warm, too, because of how furry they are.*

On his way, he passed a large oak tree. High in the branches he could hear a great deal of chattering. Looking up, he discovered it was the squirrel family!

*Hello, up there! Having a Christmas party?*

*Oh yes! It's Christmas Eve! Everybody's having a party!*

*May I come to your party?*

*Are you a squirrel?*

*No. I'm a bunny.*

*A bunny? Well, how can you come to our party if you're a bunny? Bunnies can't climb trees.*

*That's true. But I can hop and I'm very furry and warm.*

*We're sorry. We don't know anything about hopping or being furry, but we do know that in order to come to our house you have to be able to climb trees.*

*Oh, well. Merry Christmas!*

*Merry Christmas!*

And so, Barrington hopped away. It was beginning to snow when he reached the river.

Coming upon the Beavers, he discovered that he could not attend their party either, because he could not swim.

*Oh, well. Merry Christmas, anyway!* he said, as tears filled his eyes.

By this time, even as furry as he was, Barrington was beginning to get cold.

Then, he found the field mice having a party as well.

*Hello! This is Barrington Bunny. May I join your party?*

But the wind was howling so loudly and he was sobbing so much that no one could hear him.

Just then, he sat down in the snow and began to cry even harder.

*Bunnies aren't any good to anyone. What good is it to be furry and to be able to hop if you don't have any family on Christmas Eve?*

Then, a great silver wolf appeared and just stood there and looked at Barrington. Finally, after a long time, he reminded Barrington that he wasn't worthless. After all, he was a bunny, and bunnies were warm and furry, and they could hop.

*But what good is that?* Barrington sniffed.

*It is very good indeed, because it is a gift that bunnies are given, a free gift with no strings attached. And every gift that is given is given for a reason. Someday you will see why it is good to hop and to be warm and furry.*

*But it's Christmas! And I'm all alone. I don't have any family at all!*

*Of course you do! All of the animals in the forest are your family.*

And with that, the wolf was gone.

And so, Barrington set out.

*All of the animals in the forest are my family. It's good to be a bunny. Bunnies can hop. That's a gift. A free gift.*

So he hopped all through the forest looking for special gifts. To the Beavers, he found the best stick; to the squirrels, he left leaves and grass for their nest; With each gift he left a note:

*A gift. a Free Gift. From a member of your family.*

Well, on his way home, the snow storm engulfed the forest to the point that he could barely see the whiskers in front of his furry little face.

*Boy, he thought, I'm glad I'm a bunny, 'cause I'm warm and furry. And I can hop.*

As he got deeper into the forest, he couldn't tell where he was, but he just kept on going. Suddenly, he heard a faint cry. As he moved closer to where the sound was coming, he discovered a tiny field mouse, lost in the storm. the poor little guy was shivering and shaking, crying in the cold.

*I'm lost, he cried. "and I'm cold, too!"*

*That's alright," Barrington told him. "I'll keep you warm. I'm a bunny. And bunnies are warm and furry."*

All night long the snow blew, and the storm seemed to get worse. So Barrington, warm and furry, wrapped himself around the tiny field mouse to keep him warm and safe all night. The tiny fellow felt himself surrounded by warm fur. He cried for a while but soon, snug and warm, he fell asleep.

Barrington had only two thoughts that long, cold night. First, he thought, *It's good to be a bunny, because I'm warm and furry.* Secondly, when he felt the heart of the tiny mouse beneath him beating regularly, he thought, *All of the animals in the forest are my family.*

The next morning, the field mice found their little boy, asleep in the snow, warm and snug beneath the furry carcass of a dead bunny. Their relief and excitement was so great that they didn't even think to question where the bunny had come from.

The beavers and squirrels were left wondering which family member left them little gifts.

After the field mice left, Barrington's frozen body simply lay in the snow. Only the sound of the howling wind filled the air. And no one noticed the great silver wolf who came to stand beside the brown, lop-eared carcass.

But the wolf did come, and he stood there all day long. All Christmas Day. Until it was night. Then he disappeared into the forest.

*A gift, a free gift. With no strings attached.*

That is Prevenient Grace.

**God offers us a Gift. A free Gift. With no Strings attached.**

#### 4. Experience

So how do we experience God's Prevenient Grace?

Through:

- a) **Events in life** – positive or negative - through good and bad, God is always with us.
- b) **Care and sacrifice of others** - through the example of those around us, we experience God's love
- c) **Body of believers** - through God's children, we are loved; maybe keeping us from doing what we know we should not do. (example: like a harness parents use to keep their child from wandering too far away)
- d) **Holy Spirit awakening us** - through the power of the Holy Spirit, we sense and discern God's amazing love for us - perhaps through our conscience: *that inner force or voice that urges us to do or not to do certain things.*
- e) **Holy Spirit courting or wooing us** - through God's persistence in pursuing us, we experience unconditional love - like strong **magnet** -

As a young Preacher's Kid, I thought my life was pretty good. I was like a **Nail** stuck in the wood. I enjoyed being right where I was. I DIDN'T WANT TO MOVE!

But God was like a **Giant Magnet** that was pulling me - inviting me - wooing me - drawing me - into a personal relationship. But I resisted with all my might.

And then when I was about twelve years old- attending a church camp- I gave in to God's Magnetic Pull. It was then- for the first time- that I really Let Go and allowed God to have me.

As I came toward the altar, with tears welling up inside, I felt God's love and forgiveness. I felt like I was Coming Home.

Even Today, as a pastor, God continually has been nudging me into a right relationship. I'm know I'm not perfect. I still make mistakes. I still let God down. I still cling to the Wood of Security and fear Letting Go. But God continues to pursue me... invite me... woo me... draw me into a deeper relationship of love.

f) **Through us to others** - through our words, actions and attitude toward others, we can be a conduit of God's love to others.

Friends, God's Love is offered freely to you and me. And because God loves us, we are invited to enter into a covenant relationship of Grace.

*Will you freely receive the Gift of God's Grace?*

*Will you be open to God's gift of a loving relationship?*

It's A GIFT. A FREE GIFT. WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED!

De Colores!