PREVENIENT GRACE

Introduction: Rev. Fred Kinne Central Ohio Emmaus Men’s Walk #6. Table of Paul

Share a personal story of God’s Prevenient Grace: Scuba Diving as a teenager

I am here tonight to tell you about Prevenient Grace.

Let me begin with a definition. **Prevenient** comes from a Latin word which means “that which comes before.” **The word grace** comes from the Greek word “charis” which means gift. **Prevenient Grace** is God’s presence (guiding, protecting, encouraging) in our lives from conception to conversion. **All grace is God’s grace**, with many facets.

**God woos us**. Listen to Rev. 22:17, “The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

**God draws us** toward himself. In John 6:44-47 Jesus talks of this. Listen to verse 44: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”

**God pursues us**. Paul spoke of this in Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

**God frees us**. Paul speaks of this in Romans 8:31-39. In verse 31 Paul says, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” God, who wants a relationship with us, is for us. Who can be against us? But, what if I have done something really terrible, will God still want me? Paul responds in verses 38-39, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, not anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**God is empowering us**. In Romans 5^ we find, “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

So, from the moment of our conception God is working to open a relationship with us. You might say we are **created for** a relationship with God.

And you remember the creation story in Genesis, chapter 1, at the end of each day of creating God looked at what had been created and said, “**This is good**.”

And then in verses 26-31 God decides to make man in His own image and when He completes that task he says, “**It was very good.**”

That should tell us that **we are unique** and that our creation was seen by God as a good thing. We are unique and we are loved by God. Now, if we are created by God who loves us, then, **we can love others** and we can be loved.

God is also Spirit and according to John 4:24 we are spiritual beings also. John 4:24 says, “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

All of this means **that our deepest** and most essential parts belong to

God. You might say we are wired for God. Some people speak of this by saying that there is a place inside each of us which is the place where God wishes to reside.

**This call from God** does not happen once but continues. God wants us more than we want him. The prophet Jeremiah records these words in chapter 31:3, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.”

In the Old Testament stories we find God **offering Covenant love relationships**. These are some of the **strongest relationships** in the Bible. God says that He will always be faithful to the covenant. The first one he spoke to was Abraham. God told **Abraham** to gather his family and his possession and to go to where God directed. If he would do this God would make him the father of many nations and give to him and his family a land flowing with milk and honey.

God made a covenant with Noah that there would never be another flood.

God made a covenant with Moses that he would use him to free the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and take them to the “promised land”.

God made a covenant with King David that he would make him a great ruler if he would always follow God’s direction.

God made a covenant with the Israelites that if they would put aside other Gods and worship only him then he would bless them mightily. Generations after King David sometimes did not obey the directive to worship God only and God sent the prophets to remind them of the covenant. Sometimes the people listened and obeyed and sometimes they did not.

**In God’s time He sent his Son**, Jesus into the world. Jesus was God’s sign of divine love. Listen to the way John describes this in John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

**Jesus came to seek the sheep** of his pasture. Ezekiel says it well in chapter 34:11, “For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out.”

In Luke 19:2-10 we find the story of Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus the tax collector. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus who was passing by but he was to short to see over the crowds. So, he climbed a tree and when Jesus went by the tree, Jesus told him to come down so he (Jesus) could visit with him in his house. Because of this experience Zacchaeus promised to return any money he had taken from the people. We see this story and say that Zacchaeus was a changed man because of his encounter with Jesus.

Now we need to note that this experience of love shown by Jesus was not just a one time thing. It is not something that happens in this moment or during this weekend and then we go on with life. When a person discovers **the love of Jesus in their life**, it is an everlasting love. Listen to how John talks of it in a famous passage, John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. So that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” **This loving relationship** begins when we invite Jesus into our lives and it last for eternity.

How do we know or experience this change? John speaks of it this way in chapter 13:34-35, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one anther. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

When you invite Jesus into your life, another way that you will experience God’s presence is it helps you overcome your brokenness and alienation. Luke tells a story of a Prodigal Son which illustrates this. When the son returns his father sees him coming and welcomes him with a party. God is so excited by our willingness to be in right relationship with him that he showers us with blessings.

We experience Prevenient Grace through the events of our lives. I told you about one of those events in my life earlier.

We experience it in the care and sacrifice of others who touch our lives.

We experience it in the body of believers, in the church family.

We experience it in the Holy Spirit which surrounds us awakening us to God’s love and which woos us into God’s ways.

And we experience it in our actions toward others. Have you ever done a good or kind thing for someone else and then wondered what prompted you to go out of your way to do that? I suggest to you it was the Holy Spirit.

The good news is that God wants relationship with you right now. And the great part is that when we are in relationship with Him He continues to protect and guide us. A story of a 25 mile drive.

Now I come to the critical question: Will you open your heart to God and accept the relationship God offers you in Jesus Christ?

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