**Prevenient Grace Talk**

**Roger Morrow**

**New-Ark Area Men’s Walk to Emmaus #50**

Gentlemen, please join me in praying the prayer of the Holy Spirit, found on page 48 of your purple worship books.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations through Christ our Lord. Amen.

On March 6, 2011 in a very distant land a baby was born to very, very poor parents. They were so poor, they could not afford the two dollars required to pay for sutures or appropriate medical care when their new baby needed to be birthed by cesarean section. Alinda was born but her mother not receiving appropriate or sterile medical care would soon develop severe infections that would take her life within just a few days.

On that same day Ann and Nathaniel were in two different locations, Ann with one of her best childhood friends sharing the joy of a newly born son and Nathaniel in the prayer room of their church. Both of them had been struggling with the same question for a couple of months, “Should we have another naturally born child or adopt a child that is in need of a loving and caring home?” At approximately the same hour nearly a world away as Alinda was born, they came to the same conclusion, “God had prepared their hearts and was telling them they should adopt!”

About three months prior to this event, Ann had visited Uganda with family friends who were adopting two boys from Uganda. Her mission purpose was to be a support person for her friends. While Ann was fulfilling her missional purpose with her friends she met two young missionary women nurses.

Fifteen days after her birth, Alinda would be motherless and her father had no means to care for her and there were no family members in their village with the means or ability to care for baby Alinda. Alinda’s father’s only choice was to take her to one of the orphanages. The orphanage was not equipped to care for babies and the orphanage took her to the two missionaries. After a day or two, the missionaries made a call to Ann and Nathaniel telling them they believed God was saying Ann and Nathaniel were to adopt this bundle of joy, Alinda. Alinda, experienced God’s Prevenient Grace because Ann and Nathaniel were ready and willing to receive Alinda.

**\*The title of this talk is Prevenient Grace and my name is \*Roger Morrow.**

**Define Prevenient Grace** [SLIDE]

**\***Prevenient Grace … sounds like any number of other churchy words or terms that people use but the listener may not understand. Let us take a few moments to develop a working understanding of Prevenient Grace.

**\*Grace is from the Greek word “Charis” which means gift.** [slide]

We will start with the word “GRACE”. Grace comes from the Greek word Charis. Charis means gift. In the New Testament everywhere we find the word grace, it means Charis – gift. We could say that grace is a gift from God to us. I have heard it said, “grace is the unmerited or undeserved favor of God to us, the unearned love of God for us.

God, in Christ, offers us the gift of relationship that includes salvation, reconciliation, and eternal life.

**4But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9not by works, so that no one can boast.** **Ephesians 2:4-9 (NIV) [REPEAT]**

**18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:** **2 Corinthians 5:18 (NIV)** **[REPEAT]**

We describe grace, with different words – prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying relating to different periods in our spiritual journey but all grace is God’s grace. God’s grace is revealed uniquely and personalized for each person as you will discover on your journey this weekend.

One form of God’s grace is Prevenient Grace

. **Prevenient Grace is \*God’s grace in our lives from conception to conversion (salvation). [Repeat] {SLIDE} (add highlighted and underlined phrases to slide in list form)**

**1. The word \*prevenient in Latin means “that which comes before.”** Think about is as a prefix, something that comes before. It is God’s grace that is working within us before we know or recognize that God is working. Prevenient Grace then, comes before or precedes our conversion. It is the Grace of God that

Prevenient Grace is how God works in our lives from the time we are born until the time we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. From that point in time forward, God works with different types of grace.

We often presume that when we accept Jesus as our Savior, we have done the work, that we have accepted, perhaps we have even journeyed to find God. The reality is, God has preveniently worked an act of grace in us to call us and lead us to God. Remember the story of Alinda, Ann and Nathaniel, the missionaries thought they were the ones who found Ann and Nathaniel. God had already been at work preparing them for a life changing event. **Prevenient Grace is at work before we are even aware of it**. **[REPEAT]**

**2. Prevenient Grace is \*the love of God wooing us** – like the bridegroom courting his bride. **(Revelation 22:17)** [**REPEAT] “17The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.”**

Prevenient Grace is **\*the will of God drawing us** **(****John 6:44-47) [REPEAT]** **44“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. 45It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me.”**

3. Prevenient Grace is the **\***desire of God **pursuing us throughout our lives to bring us into friendship with God** – a love that will never let us go.

4. Prevenient Grace is **\*the gift of God freeing us** that we might have the opportunity to respond to God’s offer of a relationship and a place of trust in Jesus Christ.

**1 John 4: 10****[REPEAT]**“10This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

This is real love – not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

5. Prevenient Grace is **\***the activity of God **empowering us, giving us spiritual strength**.

The Book of **Romans 5:6 [REPEAT]** “6You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” We are utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for our sins.

II. **The biblical message is clear: \* Human being are created in God’s likeness for a relationship with the divine. {SLIDE AND LIST OF HIGHLIGHTED AND UNDERLINED PHRASES}**

A. In the beginning **God created the world, the cosmos, and all things** in it – “and God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:1-25)

B. God **created humankind, male and female, in God’s own image and likeness** and declared that they were good (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:4-22) The divine human relationship was deep and meaningful.

1. Like Adam and Eve, **\***each of us is a **unique and beloved child of God**.

2. **Because God is love** **(1 John 4:16)** **[REPEAT]** **\***each of us has **the capacity to love and**

3. Because God is Spirit (John 4:24) and we are **created in the image and likeness of God, \* each of us is a spiritual being** – you could say that “we are wired for God” from the very beginning

4. Because we are created in the image and likeness of God the **\*** **deepest and most essential part of us longs for a relationship with God**. Augustine said it this way in his Confessions, “Our hearts will not find rest until they find rest in Thee [God]”

C. **\***The bad news of **human sin is preceded by the good news** of our origin in God

1. Adam and Eve made wrong choices that cost them their place in the Garden and brought disorder to all creation. Yet, **\*God provided for them**.**[REPEAT]**

2. Each of us has made wrong choices that separate us from God and weakens our spiritual lives. Yet, **\*God provides for us**. **[REPEAT]**

**3. \*God’s love and grace are greater than all of our wrong choices** – **[REPEAT]**

**III \*God continues to offer us a relationship {SLIDE} (list highlighted phrases)**

A. God **\*desires a relationship with us** even more that we want a relationship with God.

**(****Jeremiah 31:3)** **[REPEAT]** The Lord said to Israel, “I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love, I have drawn you to myself.”

B. The nature of this **relationship is that of \*covenant love**.

1. A covenant is the strongest form of relationship identified in the Bible. See the covenants of Noah (Genesis 9:8-17); Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21); Moses and the Israelites (Exodus 19:3-6); and David (2 Samuel 7:5-16)

2. The prophets repeatedly called the Hebrew people back to a genuine relationship of love and obedience to God. (Ezekiel 12:1-6; Hosea 3:1-5) They proclaimed God’s promise to make a new covenant with the people. (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

3. **\*Jesus offers us a new covenant and a new relationship with God**.**[REPEAT]** **{SLIDE WITH LIST}**

(Luke 22:14-20; Matthew 28:18-20) It is **a relationship of love and grace.**

(John 13:34-35; Ephesians 2:4-10)

a. **\*Divine Love** – John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

b. **\*Seeking Love** – The Book of Ezekiel 34:11-16

c. **\*Everlasting Love** – The Book of Psalms 136 has a wonderful refrain that says, “His love endures forever”

d. **\*A Gift of Love** – Once again John 3:16 – God gives!

C. **\*God takes the initiative to seek us**:{**slide with list}**

it is not up to us to seek God. This is how it has been from the beginning.

**Genesis 3:8-9[repeat]**  “8Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”

1. We **\***experience this divine initiate – God seeking us – **as grace**.

2. Prevenient Grace helps us **\*overcome our brokenness and alienation.**

**Romans 5:6-8 [REPEAT]**– “6You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: **\*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us**.”

IV. **\*How do we experience God’s Prevenient Grace? {SLIDE WITH LIST HIGHLIGHTED}**

You might be asking yourself, “How do I know Prevenient Grace is really working?”

Remember the story about Alinda, Anne, and Nathaniel? While they were excited and willing to complete the process for adoption they were going to experience many more events in their lives before they were finished with the adoption.

The Ugandan judge did not want the case in his court. He was very annoyed that Americans were coming to their country and taking their future, children. Even though all the proper planning and paperwork had been completed and followed to the letter, a few words from a disgruntled judge can cause questions of “What will be next?” Before they went to court, they had decided they were willing to risk whatever was needed to get their new daughter.

On the night before they were to go to court, unbeknownst to them, some of their friends were praying for them and making calls to an Ugandan official to see if he would be willing to intervene on their behalf. Their friends knew the official but he had no clue who Anne and Nathaniel were. After the initial hearing, Anne and Nathaniel were instructed to return later in the day and he would render his decision. During the interlude, many of their church family were in constant prayer for a positive verdict. The judge went to lunch with the unnamed Ugandan official where he did in fact intercede on behalf of Anne and Nathaniel. The verdict was positive and an adoption would truly take place in due time.

A. You can experience Prevenient Grace **\*in the events of your life, both positive and**  **negative.**

The Holy Spirit can speak to our minds and hearts through the struggles, frustrations, difficulties, and pain of uncertainty.

**John 16:13-14** **[REPEAT]–** “13But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.”

B. Prevenient Grace can be **\*experienced in the care and sacrifice of others who embody**  **God’s love toward us,** as Anne and Nathaniel when their friends made calls that were not requested but truly appreciated.

**2 Timothy 1: 5** **[REPEAT]**– “5I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.”

C. Prevenient Grace is evidenced **\***through the **Body of Believers.** The body of believers, the church, helps us experience God’s grace and presence through corporate worship, prayer, sacraments, and small groups.

D. Prevenient Grace is the **\*Holy Spirit awakening our conscience and convincing us** that we can never reform or earn a place in God’s family. **(2 Corinthians 7:9-19) REPEAT**

**The Holy Spirit works within us to call us to God, to lead us into grace, to seek us out and to draw us into a relationship with God. [REPEAT]**

E. Prevenient Grace is **\*experienced through us to others.** Do not forget that you are a vehicle God can use to speak to someone else, leave yourself open to what God may have for you. While Anne and Nathaniel waited for a positive outcome in court, they continued to witness to their faith for all those who were uncertain how their day in court would end.

F. Prevenient Grace is the Holy Spirit **courting us, not forcing us**.

V. **\*The critical question for each of us for this weekend is, will we open our hearts to God and accept the relationship God offers us in Jesus Christ. [REPEAT] {SLIDE}**

Anne and Nathaniel willingly opened their heart to God and accepted a life changing relationship with a baby girl, Alinda. Today Alinda, is no longer known by that Alinda (her Ugandan name), but is Alinda Rose (Ali Rose). She will be celebrating her seventh birthday in just a few days. I could not be more blessed by a son and daughter-in-law who are still open to the presence of the Holy Spirit and a granddaughter who bring great joy to my life.

**\*De Colores!**

**LIST OF SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:**

Ephesians 2:4-9

2 Corinthians 5:18

Revelation 22:17

John 6:44-47

1 John 4: 10

Romans 5:6

Genesis 1:1-25

Genesis 1:26-31; 2:4-22

1 John 4:16

John 4:24

Jeremiah 31:3

Genesis 9:8-17

Genesis 15:18-21

Exodus 19:3-6

2 Samuel 7:5-16

Ezekiel 12:1-6

Hosea 3:1-5

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Matthew 28:18-20 Luke 22:14-20

John 13:34-35

Ephesians 2:4-10

John 3:16

Ezekiel 34:11-16

Psalms 136

Genesis 3:8-9

Romans 5:6-8

John 16:13-14

2 Timothy 1: 5

2 Corinthians 7:9-19)

Prayer Partner: Linda Morrow