**Prevenient Grace Talk**

**Women’s Walk to Emmaus #50**

Ladies, please join me in praying the prayer to 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.

They met working on a community theater play, two lonely people, she stuck in an abusive marriage, he in a loveless one. Because they had so much in common it was natural they should become friends. The more time they spent together the deeper the friendship became, until it was love. Not long after the affair began. Affairs have a way of becoming known and two marriages were destroyed. They were married in early December, 1991. It wasn’t long before the shame and guilt of what they had done drove them into depression. It seemed this new marriage was doomed to fail. They were living in Cambridge, Ohio and began attending a small church. There they met Flea and Nancy Danlelia. Flea is short for his unpronounceable Italian first name. Flea and Nancy sensed that something was wrong and took the couple under their wings. They would take the couple out to lunch after church on Sunday or invite them to their home for dinner. Finally one Sunday afternoon the couple told Flea and Nancy the story of the affair. They expect to by condemned, maybe even thrown out of the Danialey’s house. Instead Flea and Nancy showered them with the love and joy of Jesus. Little by little the couple began to feel the tug of God to have a relationship with Him. The wife, who had accepted Christ as a young girl but had fallen away, rededicated her life to Jesus. The husband, who had attended church since he was a little boy but had never made a commitment to the Savior, on a Sunday evening in March, 1992, at their dining room table gave his life to Jesus Christ. They had experienced God’s Prevenient Grace.

**The title of this talk is Prevenient Grace and my name is John Sellers**

Let’s look first at the word grace. **Grace comes from the Greek word charis. Charis means gift.** Everywhere the word grace is used in the New Teatament it is the word “charis.” It might be said that **grace is a gift from God to us.**  I have heard it said that grace is the unmerited favor of God to us, the unearned love of God for us. There are many forms of grace, but all grace is God’s grace.

One form of God’s grace is Prevenient Grace. **Prevenient Grace is the race we live under from the moment we are formed in our mother’s womb until we come to know Jesus Christ** as Savior and Lord. Prevenient is not a word we hear very often, it comes from the Latin for “that which comes before”. **Prevenient Grace is God seeking us with His love, it is God drawing us in with His love, and it is God pursuing us with His love. It is God freeing us with His love and it is God empowering us with His love. (repeat 2 or 3 times)**

In Genesis chapter one, in the story of creation, at the end of each day when God looked at what He had created, He declares it good. When God created all humanity He made us all in His own image and likeness. Just as no two snowflakes are alike no two of us are created alike. Each one of us is uniquely made by the master’s hand, and we are one of His beloved children. God makes no junk. God is love and because we are made in His image we can love and be loved. God is spirit and because we are in His likeness we too live, not just in the physical world but also in the spiritual world. We are connected to God by a spiritual bond. Our heart, soul and mind seek to be close to God, they long to be in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

I have good news and bad news today. The good news is that we are made by God to have an eternal relationship with Him. The bad news is that sin enters the picture to disrupt that relationship. In Genesis chapter three, Adam and Eve had the perfect relationship with God, but a bad choice broke the relationship. Yet even in the midst of their bad choice, their sin, God did not abandon them. In Genesis Chapters 5-9 we read the story of Noah. Evan when the world was full of sin God did not forsake humanity, but provided for our survival. We all make bad choices, to sin, even pastors. The good news is that God’s love and grace are greater than any sin we have ever commit. Let me repeat that, the good news is that God’s love and grace are greater than ANY sin we ever commit.

In spite of our bad choices **God still offers to us a relationship**. The fact is **God desire for a relationship with us is stronger than our desire to have a relationship with Him**. God wants us to have a covenantal love relationship with Him. Covenantal love is the strongest relationship in the Bible. God entered into covenant relationships with many people, In Genesis Chapter nine God makes a covenant with Abraham to give his descendants the Promised Land. In Exodus chapter 34 God makes a covenant with Moses, the covenant of the Ten Commandments. In 2 Samuel 7 God makes a covenant with David that his kingdom would be everlasting. The prophets of Israel, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, were sent by God to call the people back to a covenantal love relationship with their God. In Luke Chapter 22, At the Last Supper Jesus offers to us a new covenant, a new relationship, one of love and grace. The love that Jesus brings is the divine love; I like to call it unconditional love. Jesus also offers to us the love of the one who came to find you and me when we were lost in sin, a seeking love. Jesus wants us to have an eternal love relationship, or everlasting love. And Jesus is God’s gift of love to this world, His greatest gift, His only begotten Son.

Even when we are not looking for God or do not want Him to find us, God is looking for us, seeking us out. In Romans chapter 5 we find that Jesus died for us while we were still sinners and that is prevenient grace. In Luke chapter 15 the father in the story of the Prodigal Son searching, scanning the horizon morning and night for his lost son tells how our God searches for His lost children 24 hours a day, 7days a week, and is an example of prevenient grace. Prevenient grace draws us from our life of brokenness in sin to a place where God can fix us. Prevenient grace pulls us out of our separation from God into a loving eternal relationship with Him.

So **how do we experience Prevenient Grace**? There are several ways we encounter Prevenient Grace, **through life circumstances, good or bad.** As a pastor I have talked to many people who have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ during a time of personal trial, serious illness, an unexpected death in the family, loss of a job or marriage. It seems that in time of hardship we are more open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. Also I have people tell me that they felt the tug of God after getting married or the birth of a child. **We experience Prevenient Grace in the care, love and sacrifice of others**. The couple in the story I told at the beginning of this talk are my wife and myself, our dear friends Flea and Nancy made us ready to experience Prevenient Grace. Through the body of believers you can encountered God’s Prevenient Grace. When I am in Cambridge I drive past that little church to be reminded how that fellowship helped us find God’s grace. The Holy Spirit uses all the ways I have mentioned to open us up, awaken us to Prevenient Grace, and once we are open the Holy Spirit begins to woo us, to entice us, to draw us closer and closer to a relationship with God, through Jesus Christ. Once we have come into that relationship with God, the Holy Spirit will use us in His crusade to spread Prevenient Grace to all people.

If you get nothing else from this talk remember this, by Prevenient Grace God wants to have a loving, eternal relationship with you and me.

This is the Critical question for us this weekend: WILL WE OPEN OUR HEARTS TO GOD AND ACCEPT THE RELATIONSHIP GOD OFFERS US IN JESUS CHRIST?

**De Colores!**