

# RAISED TO LIFE

## A STUDY OF SALVATION

### Week 5 – Grace

#### Week 5, Day 1 – Prevenient Grace

##### **1 John 4:7-21**

*<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

*<sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. <sup>16</sup> So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.*

*God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. <sup>17</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. <sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup> Those who say, "I love God," and hate a brother or sister are liars, for those who do not love a brother or sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. <sup>21</sup> The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.*

##### **Understanding the Passage:**

This letter was written by the apostle, John, likely from Ephesus. As throughout many times in scripture and in our lives today, the community was fractured. John is responding to a group of false teachers who had left the church (1 John 2:19), "They went out from us". These false teachers - part of a broader movement called Gnosticism - specifically denied that Jesus truly came in the flesh and that to abide in God meant having spiritual knowledge only without considering love and care for others. John refutes these teachings to the church using straightforward language, "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2). This is a direct response to the people's denial that Jesus came in the flesh.

In today's passage, John continues his hardcore press by stating their lack of love for the community proves they do not know God at all. Before we ever seek God, God is already present. This is the heart of prevenient grace, the grace that goes before us. The sequence is important for us to note. God's initiative precedes any human response. In John 4:8, John gives us three simple words that solidify this: "God is love." Infant baptism is one of the most beautiful examples of God's prevenient grace.

Love is God's nature. It is who he is. This means the prevenient love John describes is written to heal a broken community. God's initiating love is meant to produce visible, tangible love among real people living in a hard world.

For John Wesley, this meant every person, regardless of where they are spiritually, is already being drawn by God's love. No one is beyond God's reach. Verse 19 summarizes it well, "We love because he first loved us." The entire Christian life is a response to an initiative that was always entirely God's.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. Looking back before you consciously followed Jesus, can you identify moments where God seemed to be drawing you without you fully realizing it at the time?
2. Verse 10 says "not that we loved God, but that he loved us." How does it change your understanding of your own faith journey to know that God's love came first?
3. Verse 18 says "perfect love drives out fear." Did you have an image of God that your might remember before coming to faith? After experiencing "God is love", how has your image of God changed?
4. We were created in God's image. Created to love and care for those who we do not yet know. How does God's initiating love for us guide you to love a stranger?

## **Week 5, Day 2 – Justifying Grace**

### **Ephesians 2:1-10**

*You were dead through the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, doing the will of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else, <sup>4</sup> but God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not the result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we may walk in them.*

### **Understanding the Passage:**

Ephesus was a major urban center in Asia Minor, home to one of the most cosmopolitan and religiously diverse cities in the Roman world. The Ephesian church was largely made up of Gentiles. Paul is writing to help them understand the full theological meaning of what has happened to them. They had no prior covenant history with God. They did not have grandparents telling stories passed down through the generations, no Torah, no priests or other leaders to teach, no temple. They were, as Paul says in verse 12, "without hope and without God in the world."

Paul begins this passage in a dark place, *dead in sin*. Everyone is following the broken ways of the world. Without grace, this is our condition before God. Then comes two powerful words in

scripture, "But God". God changes everything. Because of his great love and mercy, God acts. He brings us true life, he raises us up, not only is his glory revealed to us, but he also shows us that we matter. We are his children. The initiative is entirely his.

In verses 8-9, he explains how this happens, "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast." Salvation is entirely God's gift. Faith is awakened in us by the same grace that saves us. Verse 10 puts a bow on it by telling us we are created for good works. Grace does not make works irrelevant; it makes them possible and purposeful for the first time.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. Paul describes our condition before grace as "dead". How does that strong language shape your understanding of what justifying grace rescued you from?
2. To better understand justifying grace, we sometimes use the analogy of the moment when standing at the front of a house, the door is opened and we step inside. If you remember, share when you came to know Christ and decided to follow him.
3. Verse 10 says we are created for good works, yet those works follow grace, they do not produce it. How does this guide you to live out your faith with your neighbors?

## **Week 5, Day 3 – Regenerating Grace**

### **2 Corinthians 5:14-21**

*<sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore, all have died. <sup>15</sup>And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for the one who for their sake died and was raised.*

*<sup>16</sup>From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we no longer know him in that way. <sup>17</sup>So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup>So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

### **Understanding the Passage:**

This writing is Paul's fourth communication with the church in Corinth. The relationship was complicated and often painful. Relationships are hard! Paul reminds us that even though they are hard, they are so worth it. How grateful we are that God finds each of us "worth it" to love and be in a faithful relationship.

The Corinthian church had questioned Paul's authority, been influenced by outside teachers who challenged him, and had a faction that had turned against him. 2 Corinthians is in many ways Paul's most personal and emotionally raw letter. He is defending his ministry while simultaneously expressing deep love for a community that had wounded him.

Paul opens this passage with "Christ's love compels us." Regeneration is not self-improvement or a religious task, rather it is being so captured by the love of Christ that our life is changed, reoriented, redesigned. The old way of seeing, living, and defining ourselves gives way to something entirely new.

Look at verse 17. "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here." This is regenerating grace. The justified person is not just forgiven or pardoned; we are made new. God makes all things new, not just in the future, but right now, whatever you are doing or where you are, God is making all things new (Revelation 21:5). John Wesley understood regeneration as the beginning of real inward transformation. Justification changes our standing before God; regeneration changes our nature within. Both happen together, but they are distinct works of grace.

Paul continues to teach us in verses 18-21 that the new creation is not just a personal renewal, it is also being drawn into God's own reconciling mission in the world.

### Questions for Reflection:

1. Verse 17 says the old has gone and the new has come. Where in your own life have you most clearly seen evidence of that newness, something distinctly and uniquely different than who you were before?
2. Wesley distinguished between *justification*, what God does **for** us, and *regeneration*, what God does **in** us. Why do you think both matter? What is lost if we only emphasize one?
3. Paul says Christ's love *compels* us in verse 14. How would you describe the difference between living the Christian life out of obligation versus being compelled by love? Who in your life has demonstrated this kind of compelling love?

## Week 5, Day 4 – Sanctifying Grace

### 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

*<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup> Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Do not despise prophecies, <sup>21</sup> but test everything; hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup> abstain from every form of evil.*

*<sup>23</sup> May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.*

### Understanding the Passage:

1 Thessalonians is likely Paul's earliest surviving letter, written around 50-51 AD from Corinth. The Thessalonian church was probably only months old when Paul wrote to them. Paul had been forced to leave Thessalonica abruptly due to persecution (Acts 17:1-10). He was deeply worried about this young and vulnerable community facing hostility without his ongoing presence, teaching, and support. He sent Timothy to check on them and wrote this letter in response to Timothy's report.

Verses 16-22 outlines essential and practical instructions for Christian living with sanctifying grace: *Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks. Don't quench the Spirit.* For Wesley, these were the means of grace, the practices through which God's transforming work moves in us.

Let's go back to the house image mentioned in Day 2. Now that you are in the house, you can navigate the entire home. Explore, wonder, open every drawer, study the paintings on the walls, notice the hidden shelves in the closets. This is sanctifying grace. The more you know him, the more there is to explore. Seek to know everything about him, while uncovering more about yourself that will draw you nearer to him.

Paul's message shifts from instruction to promise in his benediction in v. 23-24 "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through." The words "through and through" refers to *spirit, soul, and body*, our entire selves, resulting in a complete transformation. Wesley's vision of entire sanctification: the love of God fills a person completely so that sin is removed, resulting in perfect love. The benediction of verses 23-24 takes on added weight knowing it was written to brand new believers who were facing persecution. Paul is not writing to mature Christians. He is writing to young, struggling, pressured believers and declaring that God's sanctifying intention reaches even them, even now, even in their fragility.

### Questions for Reflection:

1. Verses 16-22 describe practices like prayer, rejoicing, and thanksgiving as part of the sanctified life. Which of these feels most natural to you, and which feels most like a struggle? Why?
2. Verse 19 says "do not quench the Spirit." What are the things in your life – habits, practices, opinions, judgments, patterns that you sense might be quenching the Spirit's sanctifying work in you?
3. Verse 24, "The one who calls you faithful" grounds sanctification in God's, not in us. We cooperate, but God completes. How does knowing that God is the one who "will do it" change the way you approach your own spiritual growth?

## Week 5, Day 5 – Perfection

### Philippians 1:6-11

*<sup>6</sup> I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart, for all of you are my partners in God's grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the tender affection of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup> And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight <sup>10</sup> to help you to determine what really matters, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, <sup>11</sup> having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.*

### Titus 2:11-14

*<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, <sup>12</sup> training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, <sup>13</sup> while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.*

### Understanding the Passages:

**Philippians 1:3-11** Paul writes from prison, likely in Rome, around 61-62 AD. Philippi was a Roman colony in Macedonia and held special affection for Paul. The Philippian church was the first church he established in Europe (Acts 16) and had consistently supported and encouraged him both financially and personally throughout his ministry.

Paul is facing possible execution. The letter is written under genuine uncertainty about whether he will live or die. Yet it is widely considered his most joyful letter. Let that sink in for a moment.

Verse 6 carries the promise of perfecting grace, "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." God finishes what he starts. The grace that awakened (prevenient), justified, regenerated, and sanctified is driving toward completion.

Verses 9-11 then describe what completion looks like. Love that is abounding in knowledge, discernment, purity, blamelessness, filled with the fruit of righteousness. This is Wesley's picture of perfect love.

**Titus 2:11-14** Paul writes to Titus, his trusted co-worker, who has been left on the island of Crete to organize and strengthen young churches there. Crete had a reputation in the ancient world for being untrustworthy, dishonest and lazy. Titus is dealing with false teachers and a community who needs clarity, guidance and support on how the gospel shapes their everyday life, their relationships, their character, their work, and, most of all, their relationship with Jesus.

Paul's instructions are intensely practical. Grace has appeared to *all people*, not just some, but all. And this grace is like an active teacher shaping a willing student, actively forming us toward a perfect life in Christ, and simultaneously driving us away from what keeps us from this perfect life.

Verse 14 closes with the goal, "a people purified, redeemed, eager to do good". Perfecting grace is love formed in us so that goodness becomes our natural desire rather than our reluctant duty.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. Philippians 1:6 promises that God will complete the work he began in you. Where in your journey do you most need to hear that promise right now?
2. Titus 2:12 says grace *teaches* us. What has grace been teaching you in this season of your life — and has it been a gentle lesson or a harder one?
3. Verse 14 describes the goal as a people "eager to do good" not dutiful or reluctant, but eager. What would it look like in your daily life if goodness became your natural desire rather than your disciplined effort?
4. Looking back across all five days, prevenient, justifying, regenerating, sanctifying, and perfecting grace, where do you most clearly see yourself in that journey right now? Where do you sense God is inviting you to move forward?

### **Video Discussion Questions:**

1. What part(s) of the video stood out to you?
2. Was there a discussion point in the video that was new or different from your understanding? If so, share with your group.
3. John Wesley taught that we are to engage in "means of grace", ways that God works within us to shape and form us to be more like Christ. Discuss some of the ways you open your heart to allow God to shape and form you.
4. Dr. Pace shared that his daughter chose her college, saying, "They were the ones who really wanted me". She was being pursued. God pursues you. How have you experienced God "really wanting you"?
5. One analogy of "justifying grace" is a recent dating term, "DTR – Define the Relationship". How do you "Define the Relationship" between you and God?
6. Read Philippians 3:12-14. How do you press on, put forth your effort, to continue towards perfection?
7. Looking back at this past week, how might others have seen Jesus' reign over your life lived out through your words or actions?

### **Prayer requests and other notes:**