



ROAD TO HOLY DISCERNMENT

Doing God's will....finding common ground.

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Volume 12

What We Believe (Grace)

This week our newsletter focus is Grace as understood by United Methodists. Equally important is what Grace means for us.



What
We
Believe..



Grace and its place in United Methodist doctrine is described in The United Methodist 2016 *Book of Discipline* (BOD). It can be found in the "Our Doctrinal Heritage" section of the 2016 BOD (pages 51-53).

*Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin!*



Grace – why it is important, what is it, and what it means

Why it is important.....



What it is.....

Per the 2016 BOD *Grace pervades our understanding of Christian faith and life. By grace we mean the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit. While the grace of God is undivided, it precedes salvation as “prevenient grace,” continues in “justifying grace,” and is brought to fruition in “sanctifying grace.”*

Prevenient – *Prevenient grace literally means “the grace that comes before.” Prevenient grace calls us into a relationship with God before we are even aware of God. It prepares us for the dawning awareness that God loves us so much that God seeks us out first (per UMC Website).*

Justifying – *Justifying grace happens when Christians abandon all those vain attempts to justify themselves before God, to be seen as “just” in God’s eyes through religious and moral practices. When God’s “justifying grace” is experienced and accepted, it’s a time of pardon and forgiveness, of new peace, joy and love (per UMC Website).*

Sanctifying – *Sanctifying grace enables us to grow into the image of Christ and leads to inward and outward holiness (per UMC Website).*

*Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!
Yonder on Calvary’s mount out-roured—
There where the blood of the Lamb was spillt.*

What is means.....

We are offered salvation by Grace through faith in Christ who freely offered himself as a sacrifice to atone for our sins. Grace is offered to all and is freely given. Grace cannot be earned by “good works”. In the United Methodist church, there are different “types” of grace that are encountered as we travel along our faith journeys.

PREVENIENT GRACE

We acknowledge God’s prevenient grace, the divine love that surrounds all humanity and precedes any and all of our conscious impulses. This grace prompts our first wish to please God, our first glimmer of understanding concerning God’s will, and our “first slight transient conviction” of having sinned against God. (2016 BOD, Paragraph 102, Page 52)

Prevenient grace is simply the active presence of God in people's lives. It is with us from the time we draw our first breath and allows us to realize we have sinned and are in need of forgiveness. It prepares our hearts and minds to hear and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to respond in faith.

JUSTIFYING GRACE

In justification we are, through faith, forgiven our sin and restored to God’s favor. This righting of relationships by God through Christ calls forth our faith and trust as we experience regeneration, by which we are made new creatures in Christ. (2016 BOD, Paragraph 102, Page 52)

Justifying grace is the gift of God through Christ’s sacrifice which allows all sins to be forgiven and frees us from the “guilt” of sin. It is freely offered and given and can be rejected or accepted. If accepted, grace does require a response on our part and that is faith. We must be willing to lay aside our “old life” so that we may live a “new life” that is faithful to Christ.

SANCTIFYING GRACE

Sanctifying grace draws us toward the gift of Christian perfection, which Wesley described as a heart “habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor” and as “having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked.” (2016 BOD, Paragraph 102, Page 53)

Sanctifying grace allows us to grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ as we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts and lives. It gradually frees us from the “power” of sin as we move toward living a truly Christlike life (i.e., sin free and love based).

*Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
Freely bestowed on all who believe!
All who are longing to see His face,
Will you this moment His grace receive?*

Once we have accepted God's gift of grace through faith, "good works" should follow as we continue to grow in faith, strive to follow the example of Christ, and live as His disciple.

Faith is the only response essential for salvation ... salvation evidences itself in good works. Both faith and good works belong within an all-encompassing theology of grace we see God's grace and human activity working together in the relationship of faith and good works. " (2016 BOD, Paragraph 102, Page 53)

For Wesley having faith did not just mean having the right beliefs or doctrines, but living a life transformed by the Holy Spirit to be more Christ-like. (Per Resource UMC.org Website)



The links below provide additional information on grace from a United Methodist perspective. The first link listed below provides the Our Doctrinal Heritage section (paragraph 102) of the 2016 BOD.

https://issuu.com/abingdonpress/docs/doctrinal_standards_and_our_theological_task

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/a-wesleyan-understanding-of-grace>

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/what-we-mean-by-means-of-grace>

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-is-grace-is-it-different-from-peace>

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