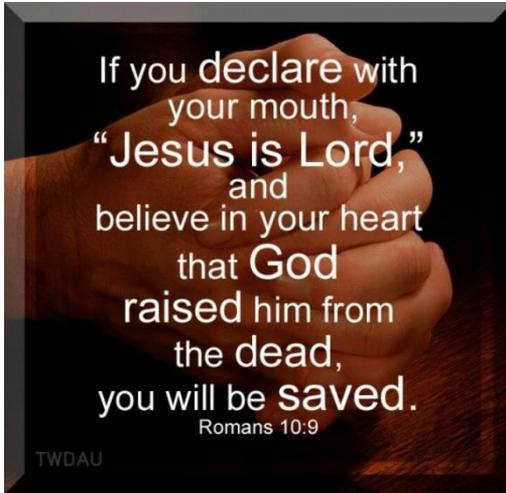


Community of Faith

A Ministry without walls

Mr. Howard, Christian Recovery Minister



Seeking God

Grace

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV) ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Celebrate Recovery

Every Friday from 6:30-7:45 pm

Main Street United Methodist Church

211 N. Main St.

Greenwood, SC 29646

864 554 0415

**Grace & “Means of Grace”
“Pastor John Wesley”**

“Means of Grace” John Wesley

Grace is defined as

Grace is God's unmerited favor. That is, grace is God doing good for us that we do not deserve. In the Bible, grace and mercy are like two heads of the same coin. Mercy is God withholding judgment or evil that I deserve; grace is God giving me blessing or good that I do not deserve. Because of God's mercy, I do not receive the judgment of God against my sins; because of God's grace, I receive eternal life and a promise of heaven though I do not deserve them. Both mercy and grace come to me through the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Grace can also be defined as God's sufficiency or God's fullness in the life of the believer. God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). That is, the grace of God in Paul enabled him and empowered him in his weakness. Another verse states, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). God's grace working in us supplies the sufficiency whereby we may abound to every good work. I like to call grace "God's enoughness." By this I mean that God is enough for us no matter what the situation we face.

<http://www.learnthebible.org/what-is-grace.html>

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John Wesley Defined “Grace” as having three distinct types;

Prevenient Grace

Wesley understood grace as God’s active presence in our lives. This presence is not dependent on human actions or human response. It is a gift — a gift that is always available, but that can be refused.

God’s grace stirs up within us a desire to know God and empowers us to respond to God’s invitation to be in relationship with God. God’s grace enables us to discern differences between good and evil and makes it possible for us to choose good....

God takes the initiative in relating to humanity. We do not have to beg and plead for God’s love and grace. God actively seeks us!1

Justifying Grace

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: **“In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19).** And in his letter to the Roman Christians, Paul wrote: **“But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).**

These verses demonstrate the justifying grace of God. They point to reconciliation, pardon, and restoration. Through the work of God in Christ our sins are forgiven, and our relationship with God is restored. According to John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, the image of God — which has been distorted by sin — is renewed within us through Christ’s death.

Again, this dimension of God’s grace is a gift. God’s grace alone brings us into relationship with God. There are no hoops through which we have to jump in order to please God and to be loved by

Grace & “Means of Grace” “Pastor John Wesley”

God. God has acted in Jesus Christ. We need only to respond in faith.¹

Conversion

This process of salvation involves a change in us that we call conversion. Conversion is a turning around, leaving one orientation for another. It may be sudden and dramatic, or gradual and cumulative. But in any case, it's a new beginning. Following Jesus' words to Nicodemus, “You must be born anew” (John 3:7 RSV), we speak of this conversion as rebirth, new life in Christ, or regeneration.

Following Paul and Luther, John Wesley called this process justification. Justification is what 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. It's a time when God's “justifying grace” is experienced and accepted, a time of pardon and forgiveness, of new peace and joy and love. Indeed, we're justified by God's grace through faith.

Justification is also a time of repentance — turning away from behaviors rooted in sin and toward actions that express God's love. In this conversion we can expect to receive assurance of our present salvation through the Holy Spirit “bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16).²

Sanctifying Grace

Salvation is not a static, one-time event in our lives. It is the ongoing experience of God's gracious presence **transforming us into whom God intends us to be**. John Wesley described this dimension of God's grace as sanctification, or **holiness**.¹

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Through God’s sanctifying grace, we grow and mature in our ability to live as Jesus lived. As we pray, study the Scriptures, fast, worship, and share in fellowship with other Christians, we deepen our knowledge of and love for God. As we respond with compassion to human need and work for justice in our communities, we strengthen our capacity to love neighbor. Our inner thoughts and motives, as well as our outer actions and behavior, are aligned with God’s will and testify to our union with God. 1

We’re to press on, with God’s help, in the path of sanctification toward perfection. By perfection, Wesley did not mean that we would not make mistakes or have weaknesses. Rather, he understood it to be a continual process of being made perfect in our love of God and each other and of removing our desire to sin

Courageous and forward-leaning mission congregations practice spiritual disciplines. Our vital work is a spiritual adventure based in John Wesley’s means of grace. John Wesley taught that God’s grace is unearned and that we were not to be idle waiting to experience grace but we are to engage in the means of grace. The means of grace are ways God works invisibly in disciples, hastening, strengthening; and confirming faith so that God’s grace pervades in and through disciples. As we look at the means of grace today, they can be divided into works of piety and the works of mercy.

Works of Piety

Individual Practices – reading, meditating and studying the scriptures, prayer, fasting, regularly attending worship, healthy living, and sharing our faith with others

Communal Practices – regularly share in the sacraments, Christian conferencing (accountability to one another), and Bible study

D:\Removable Disk\A God Moment\John Wesley Means of Grace.docx <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/our-wesleyan-heritage>

Grace & “Means of Grace” “Pastor John Wesley”

Works of Mercy

Individual Practices - doing good works, visiting the sick, visiting those in prison, feeding the hungry, and giving generously to the needs of others

Communal Practices – seeking justice, ending oppression and discrimination (for instance Wesley challenged Methodists to end slavery), and addressing the needs of the poor

Making disciples, growing vital congregations and transforming the world is part of a spiritual adventure that is empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit as churches engage in the means of grace.

Spiritual goals are accomplished by connecting the means of grace with proven vital church practices such as planning, strategic **direction, prioritization**, clear focus and alignment.

United Methodist Church

Prayer

Lord, thank you for your grace and mercy in our lives. Every day, your grace is new (Lamentations 3:22-23) and nourishes and blesses us. We need you, Father. In the flesh, we are not worthy, but by your Son, because you loved us, we have been made righteous. We find rest and peace in you, God, and again, it's because of your love and your grace and mercy. All you want is for us to trust you. All you want is for us to lay back down at your feet what you have given us. You are so good, God! You don't want our excellence. You want your excellence in us. You don't want us to do great things for you. You want to do great things through us so that you can show your glory and how much you love us. That just takes away so much religious pressure when we know that we don't have to worry about what to do, but instead just need to focus on who we are in you, Jesus. Help us to continue to tap into that and to grow in you and in our love for you. Thank you, Jesus. <https://www.givenlife.com/2011/11/prayer-grace-mercy/>