

Journey Through the New Testament

Acts 26-28, Romans 1-2

Series: Deep Thoughts with Paul

“Prevenient Grace”

6-16-19

Introduction

In this week’s reading, the book of Acts drew to a close and Paul’s letter to the Romans began. At the end of Acts, Paul was still under arrest and sailed to Rome to make his case before Caesar. After being shipwrecked and stranded for three months, Paul finally arrived in Rome. He was under house arrest for two more years, yet preaching and teaching about the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ. His letter to the Roman church gives a thorough explanation of salvation through faith and grace. Paul wrote the letter before he had actually visited Rome. This letter is Paul’s last and contains his deepest thoughts on faith.

Opening Prayer

Lord, we give you thanks for your unfailing mercy, grace and love. Increase our faith and understanding of grace. Enable us to extend grace, to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you. In Jesus we pray. Amen.

Sin, Salvation, Faith and Grace

Bible Study Romans 1:16-17 (CEB)

What?

1. What might have prompted Paul to point out that he wasn’t “ashamed” of the gospel? (Recall the ongoing disagreements with the Jews and the fact that Paul was a Jew promoting “The Way.”)
2. What is Paul’s summary of the gospel in these two verses? (v. 16-17)
3. Who is the gospel message for?

Romans 3:9-12, 21-31

1. What is the condition of *all* humanity? (v. 9-10)
2. What has taken place that makes redemption (salvation) possible? (v. 22-25)
3. What must a person do in order to be justified, or made “right” before God? (v. 22)

So What?

1. So, what does it mean that “mercy is found by means of his blood?” (3:25)
Refer to other translations and note the word “atonement.”

Lesson Notes: In our sinful human condition, we are separated from God. Because of sin, we deserve God’s judgment and punishment. Through Christ’s sacrificial death and resurrection, we can be *reconciled, justified, restored*, put into a *right relationship* with God. All of these words describe what is made possible through faith in Jesus Christ. Christ is our hope and our salvation. God is righteous and justifies (makes us *righteous*) anyone who has faith in Jesus. Through Christ, we can receive mercy and grace rather than condemnation and punishment. (John 3:16-19) The Jews of the New Testament would have understood the idea of atonement through sacrifice. In following the law of Moses, an animal was sacrificed and blood was put on the altar before God, symbolizing the removal of sin and guilt. Additionally, the high priest would symbolically place the sins of the people on a goat and then send it into the wilderness—the scapegoat! —showing that sin was gone.

A Quotable Quote

Grace is getting what we don’t deserve—a restored relationship with God.

Mercy is **NOT** getting what we deserve—punishment.

Prevenient Grace is a hallmark of Wesleyan theology. Before we were aware, God acted through Christ’s death and resurrection, and continues to work through the Spirit to bring us to salvation. *Prevenient* grace is the grace that “goes before.” God pursues us so that we can be brought into a right relationship with him. Refer to Romans 5:6-8. Discuss infant baptism as an example of prevenient grace.

Now What?

1. Now, what is clearer to you in regard to sin, salvation, faith and grace?
2. In what way have you seen God’s grace working to move you toward himself?
3. What’s so amazing about grace?
4. In what area of your life are you in need of God’s grace?

Closing *I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.*

(John Newton, *Amazing Grace*)