



October 25, 2026 | *He's Not Finished With Us Yet* | Pastor Eddie Eddy

**Ephesians 2:8-10**      **New Living Translation**      <sup>8</sup> *God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.* <sup>9</sup> *Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.* <sup>10</sup> *For we are*

### **He's not finished with us yet.**

Two Weeks ago we started this series with a pretty simple question: **Why are you a Methodist?** We discovered that the answer has to be something more than, "Because my parents were Methodist," or "Because I grew up in this church," or "Because this church is close to my house." Those things may explain how we got here, but they don't really explain why we are Methodist.

We talked about John Wesley and that moment at Aldersgate when Wesley said his heart was "strangely warmed." What was important wasn't simply that Wesley felt something. It was that Wesley finally had an assurance that he trusted in Christ...Christ alone...for his salvation. Something that had been in his head made its way into his heart. We ended that sermon with this Wesleyan idea: **The grace of Jesus Christ can change the human heart...and a changed heart can produce a changed life.**

But that leaves us with a question. **How does that happen?** What did Wesley teach about this grace, and what does God intend His grace to accomplish in us?

Remember, Methodists don't have a different Jesus or a different Gospel. But Wesley had a particular understanding of the **reach of God's grace and what that grace can accomplish in a person's life.** And...if you remember...we discussed that one of the mistakes we've sometimes made in the Church is treating salvation like a destination. We ask somebody, "Are you saved?" and what we're often really asking is, "If you died tonight, would you go to heaven?"

That remains an important question. But what if salvation is bigger than simply getting our reservation made for heaven? **What if God's grace isn't simply concerned with where we end up, but also...with who we are becoming along the way?**

Paul says in Ephesians 2, "For 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." **By grace you have been saved.** Not by being Methodist. Not by coming to church. Not by giving enough money. Not by being a good enough person. Only **By grace you have been saved through faith.**

But then Paul continues, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus **to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**" Do you see the development? We aren't saved **by** good works, but we are saved **for** good works. **Grace doesn't just save us from something. Grace saves us for something.**

Wesley believed God's grace is active throughout our entire journey. In the Wesleyan tradition, we talk about grace in three particular ways: **prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace.** Those are kind of \$10 theological words, but let's make them simple: **Grace comes looking for us. Grace brings us home. And grace changes us once we get there.**

Prevenient grace simply means the grace that **comes before.** Before you ever thought about God, God was thinking about you. Before you reached toward God, God was reaching toward you. Before you understood who Jesus was, God was already at work in your life. That's prevenient grace. We like to say that prevenient grace is God constantly wooing us into relationship with him.

I love this part of Wesleyan theology because it changes the way we look at people who don't know Jesus yet. You know...sometimes Christians look at somebody outside the Church and think, "We've got to bring God to them." But Wesley would say...**God is already there.** We don't take Jesus into somebody's life as though Jesus was waiting out in our truck until we're ready to share him. Truth is...God is already working in their life. Our job...is to help others recognize the grace that has been reaching out and available to them...all along.

Think about your own story. Somebody may have prayed for you. Somebody brought you to church. Somebody taught your Sunday school class. Somebody showed you some kindness at exactly the right moment. Maybe you can look back now and see places

where you didn't recognize God at the time...but today you realize with your 20/20 hindsight...**He was there.** That's prevenient grace.

And that means nobody we meet is beyond the reach of God's grace. That neighbor who wants nothing to do with church...that family member who walked away from faith...that person who has made one bad decision after another...Church...**God hasn't given up on them. Grace is still reaching.**

Eventually that grace brings us to a place where we have to respond though. Here's the thing...God won't ever force us into a relationship with Him. Grace invites. Grace calls. Grace draws. But eventually...**we** have to decide what we're going to do with Jesus. That's **justifying grace.**

I believe that justifying grace has two parts. The first...is that Jesus willingly went to the cross, died as an atonement for our sins and rose from the grave to prove that there is life for us after death. There is plenty of documentation out there to validate that all of this happened. But that is only one part of Justifying grace.

The completion of justification is...that there comes a point where faith becomes personal. I have to accept what Jesus did for me myself. I can't live on Grandma's faith. I can't live on Mom and Dad's faith. I can't live on the fact that my name has been on the church roll for forty years. There comes a point when I have to say, **"Jesus, I know what you did for me and I trust You."**

Justifying grace is God's forgiveness and acceptance made possible through Jesus Christ. We don't earn it. We receive it. Our sin is forgiven, we are reconciled to God, and we are given new life. Wesley wasn't saying at Aldersgate, "I finally became good enough for God." He was saying, **"I finally realized Christ had done for me what I could never do for myself."**

#### Pause

But hear this church...Because here's where Wesley has something extremely important to say to the Church today: **That's not the finish line.** It's not like getting a certification in CPR. I read the book, I took the class, I practiced on the manikin, I received my award...so I'm done. Now...I hope I never have to use it. But here's what Wesley taught...were not done...**No...we're just getting started.**

You see...God's purpose isn't simply to forgive us. God wants to restore us. He wants to heal what sin has damaged in us, God wants to reshape our priorities, teach us how to love, and make us more like Jesus. That's what we call **sanctifying grace.**

Sanctification is the lifelong work of God's grace making us holy. And for Wesley, holiness was ultimately about **love**...loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. Sanctification is God's grace slowly bringing every part of our lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

I can tell you what that looks like in my own life. I grew up in a home where manipulation was part of how we related to one another. My mom was a master at it. My brothers and I were often played against one another, and when that's what you grow up around, you learn some of those same behaviors yourself. And I did. I learned how to read people. I learned how to protect myself. I learned how to work situations so I wouldn't be the one who got hurt.

For a long time, I could have justified that by saying, "Look at what I grew up with. Look at what happened to me." There was truth in that, but eventually God's grace showed me something: **There is a difference between understanding why I became a certain way and using my past as permission to stay that way.**

Through my marriage to Jeanie, through having a family of my own, through relationships, mistakes, forgiveness, and faith, God started **changing me.** I began recognizing behaviors in myself that I didn't want to carry into my marriage or pass on to my children. I began to understand that I didn't have to spend the rest of my life with a victim mentality because of what had happened to me. And I didn't have to protect myself by manipulating or controlling the people around me. **God's grace was teaching me a different way to live.**

I wish I could tell you God just flipped a switch and suddenly Eddie had everything figured out. But that's not how it works and Jeanie could probably expand on that better than I can. You see...for me ...it was a process...and it still is. But I can look back and see that I am not the same man I once was. And that's not because I finally tried hard enough to change. It was only by God's **sanctifying grace** through the Holy Spirit.

Then God took that work even deeper through my trip to Africa. I spent time in extremely remote areas, out in the bush and villages where people had very little compared to what we consider normal here. Yet I watched the way people treated one another. I watched the way they shared and cared for each other, and something in those villages began challenging something in me.

Somewhere in that experience, God gave me this overwhelming understanding of what it means to **love people the way Jesus loves people**. I don't know that I can explain everything that happened inside of me, but I knew God was working.

Looking back, I suppose that was my own kind of Aldersgate experience. Wesley described his heart as “strangely warmed.” For me, it happened thousands of miles from home in the bush of Africa.

And what I experienced wasn't simply an emotion. It was **surrender**. For so much of my life, relationships had been about protecting myself. Don't let somebody get too close. Don't let them hurt you. Control the situation so you don't get hurt. But suddenly...Jesus was showing me something completely different: **Love people**. Not because they can do something for you. Not because they deserve it. Not because loving them guarantees they won't hurt you. Love them because **that's how Jesus loves**.

Somewhere in that surrender, I understood that God wasn't simply asking me to behave better. **God wanted a relationship with me**. And His grace was taking things that had been broken in me and it was beginning to reshape them.

Church, that's one of the most beautiful things about Wesleyan theology: **Your past may explain you...but it does not have to define you**. The grace of God can actually change us. Maybe I used to hold grudges and God is teaching me to forgive. Maybe I used to respond with anger and God is teaching me patience. Maybe I used to have to win every argument and God is teaching me humility. Maybe I spent my life protecting myself and Jesus is teaching me how to love. **That's sanctification**.

Grace finds me. Grace saves me. Grace changes me. From beginning to end, it's all grace. That's why our Wesleyan heritage is not simply about a destination. **It is a way of living while we travel toward that final destination**.

Being Methodist isn't simply saying, “I know where I'm going when I die.” It's saying, **“I know who I'm following while I'm alive.”** If Jesus is simply my ticket to heaven, then once I've got the ticket, there isn't much left to do. But if Jesus is my Lord, every day becomes another opportunity for His grace to shape me.

Wesley believed we should expect that grace to actually accomplish something. He believed we could grow in holiness and become more loving, patient, generous, forgiving, compassionate, and Christlike. He even talked about **Christian perfection**, but he wasn't saying Christians eventually stop making mistakes. Christian perfection was about being **perfected in love**...God's grace so transforming our hearts that love for God and love for neighbor increasingly become the driving force behind the way we live.

Friends...most of us are still under construction. Some of us have a few orange barrels and road-closed signs scattered around our lives. But that's the point. **God isn't finished with us**.

Sometimes we look at ourselves and say, “That's just who I am. I've always had a temper. I've always been impatient. I've always been stubborn. I've always protected myself this way.” Wesleyan theology says, **Maybe that's who you have been...but by the grace of God, that doesn't have to be who you remain**.

Paul says, **“We are God's handiwork.”** God is still working. He's shaping. He's forming. He's restoring. Sometimes He's tearing out a few things that shouldn't have been there in the first place.

Maybe that's one of the most important answers we can give when somebody asks, **“Why are you a Methodist?”** Because I believe in a grace that reaches beyond my imagination. I believe God is working in people's lives before they even know His name. I believe that when we respond to that grace through faith in Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven and we are made right with God. But I also believe God isn't finished with us just because believe...**that's when the journey really begins**.

So maybe the question this week should be, **“Where is God's grace working on me right now?”** What part of your life is God trying to change? Where is God asking you to forgive? Where is God asking you to surrender? Where is God asking you to trust? Where is God saying, “We're not finished with this yet”?

Because that's the Wesleyan way. We're not simply waiting around for heaven. **We're walking with Jesus toward it, and along the way...grace is doing something in us**.

Prevenient grace comes looking for us. Justifying grace brings us into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Sanctifying grace spends the rest of our lives making us more like Him. **Grace before. Grace when. Grace after. Grace from beginning to end.**

In two more weeks...we're going to take the next step, because if God's grace really is changing us, eventually that change ought to become visible. What do Wesleyans actually **do**? How do people who have experienced this grace live differently? Wesley never intended Methodism to be something we simply believed. It was always intended to become **a way of life.**

So this week, Ask yourself: **Am I being changed?** Am I more loving than I was five years ago? Am I more forgiving? Am I more patient? Do I look more like Jesus today than I did when I first started following Him?

Church...we are God's handiwork. And thank God...**He's not finished with us yet.**

To God be the glory. Amen.

### **Invitation to the Offering**

Paul reminds us that we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do the good works God has prepared for us. Giving is one of the ways we participate in that work. What we place before God today becomes ministry beyond ourselves. It helps teach children, care for neighbors, strengthen families, reach people who are searching, and carry the message of Christ beyond these walls.

Friends...we don't give simply because the church has expenses. We give because God has entrusted something to us that can become a blessing to somebody else. As we receive today's offering, may we give freely and thankfully, trusting God to use what we offer for purposes greater than ourselves.

### **Closing Prayer and Dedication**

Lord Jesus, as we prepare to leave this place, send us out ready to follow You. When we encounter difficult people, teach us patience. When someone needs compassion, help us notice. When old habits begin pulling us backward, give us strength to choose a better way. When pride tells us we have arrived, remind us that there is still room to grow.

We also place before You the gifts that have been offered today. Take what we have given and put it to work in places we may never see. Use these resources to proclaim the Gospel, strengthen Your Church, care for those in need, raise up new disciples, and bring hope into our communities. May every gift ultimately point someone toward Jesus.

And dedicate us as well. Send our hands to serve, our voices to encourage, our ears to listen, and our lives to bear witness to Christ. May the people we encounter this week see something in the way we live that helps them recognize You.

We leave today knowing that You are not finished with us. Keep leading, teaching, correcting, and forming us until our lives increasingly reflect the love of Jesus Christ.

In His name we pray. Amen.