



Your NAWE Companion

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Living Water in Dry Times

Tony Elder, *Conyers, GA*

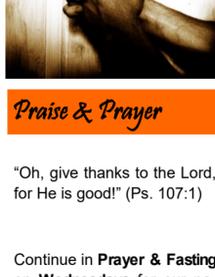
One day my daughter and her family dropped by our place a couple of times for an unusual reason. They weren't just there to visit Nana and Papaw. There were needing to shower, brush teeth, etc. in light of their not having much water at their house as a result of their well starting to run dry due to the lack of rain we've been experiencing recently.

Aren't you glad that we as followers of Christ don't have to worry about our spiritual well running dry? Jesus isn't a well of water that runs low or dry in times of drought. He's more like a fountain or a spring that keeps flowing no matter what the conditions may be around it. Even in times of severe spiritual dryness, His living water is still in abundant supply and is available to us.

That's good to know considering the times in which we're living. Do you believe that in the landscape of a spiritual desert in which we find ourselves today that the Lord can make you like an oasis? Jeremiah believed so. He wrote, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is in the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit" (Jeremiah 17:8). Do you believe that in the midst of all the spiritual deadness we're witnessing in the world, as well as in so much of the Christian church today, that the Lord can revive you and fill you with abundant life? David declared such when he wrote, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me" (Psalm 138:7). Whether it's troublesome times in the world around us or challenges we're facing in our own circumstances in life, we can affirm that God can still revive our souls. He can draw us closer to Him and help us to be purveyors of His light, truth, holiness, and love.

When the wells around you are running dry, yours doesn't have to. You can still drink from the ever-gushing fountain of living water and experience an abundance of spiritual life and fruitfulness.

October—November 2019



Praise & Prayer

"Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!" (Ps. 107:1)

Continue in **Prayer & Fasting** on **Wednesdays** for our nation, its leaders, and revival in the Church. The need is greater than ever and is growing more urgent.

Pray for **Ann Roe** and her family (Douglasville, GA) upon the recent death of her husband after a long battle with brain cancer.

Doctrine

Great Wesleyan Distinctives: Grace

Ronnie Jones, *Dalton, GA*

Our Wesleyan Heritage

Beloved friends and Kingdom Travelers, we are facing a very unique however sad and long and difficult work of rebuilding the church and remembering our heritage. Why you might ask? It is because of all the trauma those of us in the ever-flowing stream of Wesleyan Theology have experienced in the last few years. Perhaps it might be helpful to dedicate a few articles to the great themes of our Wesleyan heritage. We will start out with the Wesleyan view of grace.

Prevenient Grace

Wesley accepted the Reformation emphasis on justifying grace, but lovingly reminded the church that to equate salvation with justification was a great loss to the biblical doctrine of salvation. Wesley saw God's grace punctuating the whole of our lives within an expansive understanding of biblical salvation. God's grace comes to us before we even become Christians. It is prevenient grace which enables us to respond to the gospel. This is why although we describe this as free will, we really mean freed will, i.e. God has taken the first step and sovereignly acted to free us from Adamic guilt and sinful depravity, thereby enabling the whole human race to hear the gospel and respond.

For Wesley, all spiritual formation begins with God's prior action on behalf of the sinner. Prevenient grace is the bridge between human depravity and the free exercise of human will. Jesus declared that "no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). This clearly refers to a drawing rooted in the Triune God which precedes our justification. It is God's act of unmerited favor. It is God's light "which enlightens everyone" (John 1:9), which lifts us up and allows us to exercise our will and respond to the grace of Christ. Prevenient grace is God's universal grace to the entire human race, situating Wesleyanism between Augustinian pessimism and Pelagian optimism. Because prevenient grace means that which comes "before," some Wesleyans mistakenly think that this is grace which only comes to us prior to justifying grace. [Pelagianism, also called Pelagian heresy, is the position that original sin did not taint human nature and mortal will is still capable of choosing good or evil is without special divine aid or assistance.]

However, prevenient grace also includes all the ways God moves in sovereign prior action calling us to respond throughout our Christian experience. Again, Wesley manages to perfectly balance the classic tension between monergistic and synergistic views of salvation. Prevenient grace is a testimony to monergism, whereas the full collaboration with God through our freed wills is a testimony to synergism. [Monergism is the view within Christian theology which holds that God works through the Holy Spirit to bring about the salvation of an individual through spiritual regeneration, regardless of the individual's cooperation. Synergy is the creation of a whole that is greater than the simple sum of its parts.]

Sanctifying Grace

In addition to prevenient grace, Wesley speaks of sanctifying grace. Just as God in Christ meets us to justify us, so the Spirit of God meets us to sanctify us and make us holy. Prevenient and justifying grace enables you to "become" a Christian, but it is sanctifying grace which enables you to "be" a Christian. A future article will be dedicated to saying more about this, but it is important for now to see how sanctification fits into Wesley's larger view of grace.

Glorifying Grace

Finally, it is glorifying grace which enables you to be fully conformed to the image of Christ in the New Creation. So, Wesley unfolds for us a great vision of God's grace which is rich and textured and punctuates the whole of our pre-Christian and Christian lives stretching even into the New Creation.

The Means of Grace

Wesley developed a whole doctrine of the means of grace he defined as "outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God . . . whereby he might convey preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace" (Sermon 16, Means of Grace). Like a trail of bread crumbs, Wesley saw that however far we stray God leaves little markers of his grace so we can find our way home and reorient ourselves to Jesus Christ. Wesley identified three primary "means of grace": Prayer (private or public), Scripture (reading or listening), and the Lord's Supper.

Now most Christians accept the general idea that prayer, Scripture and the Lord's Supper are "means of grace" to help us grow in Christ. However, Wesley has a much broader understanding of the means of grace. What makes Wesleyan thought distinctive is that he sees these means of grace as a channel to convey not just sanctifying grace, but also prevenient, and justifying grace.

In other words, Wesley understood that prayer, Scripture reading and even the Lord's Supper can be used by God to convert someone to the faith. This is why we practice open communion. Wesley understood this because the "means of grace" only have power because of Christ's presence in them. Christ is the only true "means of grace" and He meets us at the Table, in prayer and in the reading of Scripture.

If you would like to receive other articles from Ronnie Jones, including more from this series, contact him at rjlk418@gmail.com

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Calendar

Upcoming opportunities:

October 11-12: National Conference on Christian Apologetics; <https://conference.ses.edu/>