

The New International Version of the Bible translates the first part of verse 7 as “dear friends.” Many other translations choose to render the first part of this verse as “beloved,” a term that is commonly associated with John’s writing. In calling the reader to a life of love, John begins with the reminder that we are already “much loved” by God. The love we share in life “comes from God.”

According to verse 9, how has God chosen to show us his love? What do these verses reveal to us about God’s grace?

John wraps up this section by saying, “If we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is made complete in us.” What does this mean to you? In what ways can you see evidence that God lives in you and his love is being made complete in your life?

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In our opening message of this series, we talked about three distinct forms of grace. Prevenient grace is “the grace that precedes” our decision to follow Christ. It is the grace that draws us into relationship with God and invites us to commit our lives to living as God originally intended us to live. This grace, at work in the world and in the lives of those who surround us, invites us to discover that we are in fact God’s child who is both well known and well loved.

Take a few moments and read these verses again. What do these words reveal about God’s relationship with the world and with each person? What does it mean to you that God “has searched you and knows you”?

How has God drawn you into relationship with him? Who has God used in the pursuing of that relationship?

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Love begins with God. We affirmed that truth in our reading from I John on Monday. The prevenient grace of God draws us into a relationship with God. We looked at this essential idea in yesterday’s reading. Faith begins with a choice, a belief that is born in our hearts and a confession that is shared with our lips. Justifying grace is the grace that sets us right with God at the time we decide to turn our lives over to Jesus.

Justifying grace wipes the slate clean, or as David expressed in Psalm 51, it washes us “whiter than snow.” Can you remember when you decided to follow Christ? What led you to that moment of commitment?

If you have not yet made a commitment to Christ, what is keeping you from that choice? What help do you need?

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In the verses that precede today’s text, Paul talks about the “attitude of Christ.” In the third verse of chapter 2, Paul writes, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” The first 11 verses of chapter 2 detail “the goal” that Paul believes all Christians should be striving towards.

Sanctifying grace is the life-long process of being restored into the person we were always meant to be. According to verse 13, who is leading this work in our lives?

God does not expect immediate perfection. God expects us to be open and committed to his perfecting work. How does this thought influence the way you understand your own growth in grace? In what ways do you need to remain open and committed to this work? What is God doing in your heart right now?

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